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The One-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

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SUMMARY

| | |
|--|----|
| ABSTRACT | 3 |
| INTRODUCTION | 5 |
| <i>Research work and methodology</i> | 7 |
| 1. MANDATE: ZIONIST DEBATE AND PALESTINIAN POLITICS | 9 |
| 2. FROM NAKBA TO OSLO: SHIFT AND DEBATE WITHIN PLO | 35 |
| 3. THE FAILURE OF OSLO AND THE REVIVAL OF BINATIONAL PARADIGM ... | 60 |
| CONCLUSIONS | 80 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 84 |
| <i>Books</i> | 84 |
| <i>Academic papers</i> | 84 |
| <i>Articles</i> | 86 |
| <i>Documents</i> | 87 |

Abstract

The following work is aimed to deal with the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict against the background of an analysis of one of the paradigms which has been used within international politics together with the academic world, that is the one-state solution to it. Several motivations led to the choice of this subject for the writing of the Master thesis, the first one being the evident actuality of it.

Until the very last days before the conclusion of the work in fact, a concurrent surveillance of the news regarding the conflict, from the December Trump statement over the role of Jerusalem as Israeli capital city to the July Israeli Nation State Law on the fundamental character of the Jewish State, was necessary to integrate and often modify portions of the work itself. An enhanced personal acknowledgment of the importance and of the longevity of this conflict was surely furthermore made possible by a period of staying in Israel/Palestine occurred concurrently with the last months worsening of the conflict, which convinced me definitely of the actual importance to orientate the final thesis work towards the study of this extremely harsh and hard to solve conflict.

The further choice to focus this analysis on one of the two paradigms into which it is possible to summarise the several proposals to solve the conflict, the two-states and the one-state ones, derived precisely from the readings and the discovery of several articles which declared, following Trump statement, as extremely unlikely any future development of the Oslo process. The failure of a peace process epitome of the two-states paradigm would have led among many analysts, politics and political scientists towards a new consideration of the opposite approach to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that is to say the one-state paradigm. The consequent scope of this work consists therefore not to propose a one-state solution as inherently just or morally superior to the parallel two-states one, but to try to discover, through an historical and of political philosophy analysis, if such a solution is actually by now the only one possible to gradually solve the conflict without any further major political or demographic shock, as the 1948 *Nakba*.

In order to do so, the structure of the following analysis has been divided into three brief chapters, each one focusing on different historical periods and on these lasts' dominant trends with regards with the two-states and one-state paradigms. By order of chronology, the first part will be analysed the relevance of the binational discourse within the history of the British Mandate of Palestine, stressing the fact that it was present exclusively among Zionist pacifist thinkers, such as the previously cited Martin Buber and Hannah Arendt, without however any significant Palestinian Arab political positive answer to it.

It will be instead described in the following chapter how the one-state rhetoric, in its secular (not binational) and unitary form, became eventually the dominant discourse among Palestinian *fidā'īyyūn* groups, and its progressive formal abandonment caused by historical events, such as the Lebanon War and the PLO fled to Tunis, which posed in a position of serious difficulty the Palestinian political leadership.

Finally, in the third and conclusive part, the rise of the two-states paradigm and its following failures will be described in relation with the contemporary revival of the one-state discourse, while the rise of new political currents, such as the Islamist *Hamas* movement, and the progressive annexation of the Occupied Territories by Israel through the settlements will be analysed in relationship with their key role in the progressive shrinking of the Oslo process and therefore of a viable two-states solution.

In conclusion, it would appear evident from the events described that the reality on the ground in Israel/Palestine is already *de facto* a binational one, with a two-states solution made increasingly difficult to be implemented due to a policy of tolerance, with long-term annexationist goals, by Israel of the activity of settlement of the Territories occupied in 1967, the resulting presence now both in Israel and in the Arab Territories of a consistent minority respectively of Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews and the inherent interdependency of both Israel and of the Territories due to the shared natural resources, as the water sources.

Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is often described, rightly, as the epitome of the unsolvable conundrum. Its impressive longevity, almost 90 years if we consider as a starting point the 1929 Riots in the British ruled Palestine and almost 100 if we want to make it start with the 1921 Jaffa intercommunal violence, is extremely discouraging in itself in approaching the historical analysis of this conflict.

It appears as very little has changed, if not in worst, in a century of never ending violence between the two ethnic groups, Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, inhabiting the Biblical land and which therefore are, very unwillingly, forced to confront and relate to each other, whether violently or not.

Furthermore, despite the extremely reduced real dimensions of the conflict, around 6 million of Israeli Jews and 6 millions of Palestinian Arabs (without taking into account the refugees) contending few more than 20.000 square kilometres, this intercommunal strife has dragged down with it at least once all the neighbouring countries, causing political revolutions and sudden falls, as the Nasser rise and fall respectively in 1952 and 1967, together with mass population displacements, as the 1948 *Nakba* itself, which in turn caused demographic shifts leading to other interethnic conflicts, as in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990 and in general constituted and still constitutes one of the key factors of the Middle Eastern instability.

A long-standing settlement of the Israel/Palestine question appears therefore as fundamental not only for the obvious right of its population to live in peace and freely, but also for its role of fundamental step towards a general improvement of the inter-state relationships in the Middle East and thus finally towards a general political equilibrium in the broader area.

Given the nature of this Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a struggle of two nationalisms, the Palestinian Arab one and Jewish Zionism, for the same land between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean Sea, the solutions proposed for a definitive settlement of it can be, very synthetically, defined as of two types.

These two different settlement proposals consist in the two-states paradigm, based on a division of this land into two separated political entities for each of the two rival claimers, and the one-state one, which found itself on the opposite principle, that is the coexistence of whoever lives in Israel/Palestine in a singular entity, whether of unitarian, binational, federative or confederative nature.

The work will therefore focus especially on the analysis of the history of the second solution proposed and will be based on the principle that the strife between Palestinian Arabs and Israelis can be settled without necessarily separates the two people, or better, that because of the historical events which interested the history of the conflict, the two-states alternative result nowadays impossible to be implemented.

However, it will also be taken into account the fact that within the broader definition of one-state solution, many political formulas have been proposed for such a proposed state during the 20th and 21st centuries.

The first and most basic of these divisions consists in the one among one-state supporters who actually intended to share the future state with the counterpart and the ones who had no intention to do so. The irredentist component of both sides is represented in this last group. Its main representatives are to be found, with regards with the Mandate years (1917-1948) in political and social groups such as the Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionists of the Mandate years and their rival Arab ruling class of the *a'ayan*.

In more recent years, instead, their political descendants are represented, both within Israeli and Palestinians, by two apparently opposites political fronts. These are the Israeli right-wing parties, such as the Netanyahu's *Likud*, which has more and more acquired the same political discourse of religious nationalist Israeli settlers in the West Bank (such as *Gush Emunim*), who consider the Occupied Territories of 1967 as the core ones of Ancient Israel, *Yehuda VeShomron* (Judea and Samaria), which have to be "Judaized" through settlement, and the Islamist movement *Hamas*, which claims the whole of the former Mandate territory as an Islamic entrusted land, a *waqf*.

These groups, despite their opposite background, showed and show a great similarity of views and dynamics, claiming during their existence, for their ethnic group, the whole of historical Palestine, conceding, at best, minority rights, and not national ones, to the other one inhabiting the same land.

Within the "sharist" group of one-state supporters we find, instead, a great variety of formulas proposed to settle the issue.

A spectrum of proposals comprising, on one opposite, a secular unitary democratic state, centralizing and not recognizing both nationalisms, as proposed by the *fidā'īyyūn* movement of *Fatah* during the 60s and the 70s, and a binational one, based on a decentralized state, a federation or a confederation, on the other, such as it was the proposal of minoritarian Zionist thinkers of high moral and intellectual stance, such as Martin Buber, Judah Leon Magnes and Hannah Arendt.

The traditional critics moved to the one-state school of thought are based on its supposed naivety and unjustified optimism, given the bloody ends of many binational or multi-ethnic states, such as Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Cyprus and the British India. Realism and pragmatism have been often invoked by two-state supporters, against the ingenuity of their counterpart. A pragmatism that has led the decisions of the Israeli and, later, Palestinian political class for almost the entirety of the conflict, relegating the one-state parties to an almost permanent state of minority.

However, one-state supporters affirm, and have always defended, on the opposite, the inherent pragmatism of a single state entity in Israel/Palestine. A political partition in such a scarcely extended land, inevitably economic tied within its sub-regions and with the rest of Middle East, is, according to them, short-sighted and unrealistic on the long run.

The continuous failures of the two-states paradigm within the whole history of the conflict, as the nowadays agonizing Oslo peace process based on it, seem to have finally rehabilitated the one-state discourse and brought it to a new revival among academics and intellectuals among both Israelis and Palestinians.

This work will therefore focus mainly on the two most relevant versions of the one-state paradigm, the binational and the secular democratic one, describing the historical context in which they found their development.

In the first part will be analysed the relevance of the binational discourse within the history of the British Mandate of Palestine, stressing the fact that it was present exclusively among Zionist pacifist thinkers, such as the previously cited Martin Buber and Hannah Arendt, without however any significant Palestinian Arab political positive answer to it.

It will be instead described in the following chapter how the one-state rhetoric, in its secular (not binational) and unitary form, became eventually the dominant discourse among Palestinian *fidā'īyyūn* groups, and its progressive formal abandonment caused by historical events, such as the Lebanon War and the PLO fled to Tunis, which posed in a position of serious difficulty the Palestinian political leadership.

Finally, in the third and conclusive part, the rise of the two-states paradigm and its following failures will be described in relation with the contemporary revival of the one-state discourse, while the rise of new political currents, such as the Islamist *Hamas* movement, and the progressive annexation of the Occupied Territories by Israel through the settlements will be analysed in relationship with their key role in the progressive shrinking of the Oslo process and therefore of a viable two-states solution.

Research work and methodology

The research work needed to elaborate this brief historical and of political philosophy analysis has been developed mostly directly on the ground, in Israel, during a semester which allowed me to find data, monographies and academic articles, to get to know sources of both sides and to deepen in general my knowledge of this particular conflict through academic courses, especially a Research Seminar conducted at the host university, IDC-Herzliya, on the core issues of the conflict, headed by the professor Galia Golan, on which final Research paper this thesis' work is based.

The purpose that I tried to pursue has been to maintain an equilibrium in utilizing sources coming from both sides and to present the historical events as objective as possible, being however aware of the difficulty of it and knowing that it is impossible to represent and analyse in such a limited work all the different stances and point of views produced and inspired by a conflict of such a sensitive nature.

The main sources utilised are therefore both Israeli and Palestinians alike, and are represented by monographies of historians such as Ilan Pappé, Benny Morris and Jean-Pierre Filiu, together with academic

articles published on magazines dedicated to the Middle East in general and Israel/Palestine in particular, especially the Journal of Palestine Studies.

Other non-academic sources have also played a great role, such as the Arendt and Buber letters and articles, the few articles which I was able to find of *fidā'īyyūn* movements' journals in English language, such as the PFLP Bulletin, the polls effectuated by the Palestinian Research Center jointly with the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace and Research, and the analysis papers of think tanks as the Mitvim Institute and the Chatham House.

1. Mandate: Zionist debate and Palestinian politics

The debate between supporters of the binational state and the one convinced of the advantages deriving from two separate entities for Jewish and Arabs is not a recent one. It was already present before and during the British Mandate era, a period in which were committed a series of mistakes and short-sighted policies that eventually led to the actual harsh and enduring conflict.

In fact, the Palestinian society, over which the British governance was imposed the 25th of April of 1920 by the League of Nations¹, was already showing the early symptoms of the future conflict during the final years of the Ottoman dominion over the area, and especially after the advent of the British rule in the area, which, in force of the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, would have had to be divided between the Entente allies at the end of the Great War².

The origin itself of the concept of Palestine as a land distinct from the rest of the Levant is unclear the area now embracing the State of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza was considered, under the Ottoman rule, as sub-province of the Damascus *eyalet* and of Greater Syria which included the provinces of Tripoli and Aleppo as well³. According to the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, a first event that could have led to an increasing administrative distinctiveness of Palestine within the Syrian area can be ascribed to the Ottoman reorganization of the regional set-up, occurred at the mid of the 19th century⁴.

The Ottoman Empire, in fact, because of the growing political and cultural European influence, was at that time interested by a series of political reforms aiming to the “modernization” of the declining Ottoman state. This period of reforms, which is commonly referred to as *Tanzimat*, began in 1839 to end in 1876, and interested in various ways all the territories subjected to the Istanbul authorities, and therefore also the Palestinian area⁵. In 1864 the new province of Beirut was created, which included the sub-provinces of Akko and Nablus, while the sub-province, *sanjak*, of Jerusalem, remained under Damascus rule only up to 1872, when it became an autonomous governorate, a *Mutasarrifate*⁶.

This administrative reorganization led also to some sort of transformations within the Palestinian Arab society, in which the urban upper class of notables, the *a'ayan*, traditionally landowners and detainers of high religious and secular offices, was interested by a growth of dynamism and influence, due to the progressive centralization and which led to a new key role assumed by the urban centres of the Empire.

The mixed municipality of Jerusalem, for example, was the second to be established, immediately after the Istanbul one, previously to the draft of the 1877 Ottoman law on the provinces' municipality (*vilayet belediye*

¹ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi, Torino 2005, pp.110-111.

² *Storia del Medio Oriente 1798-2005*, Massimo Campanini, il Mulino, Bologna, 2006, p. 65.

³ Ivi, pp. 34-37.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Ivi, pp. 38-40.

kanunu)⁷. Several members of the most prominent *a'ayan* families acquired new administrative key roles, in Palestine and in the whole empire, as the first mayor of Jerusalem, Yusuf Ziya' al-Khalidi⁸, or Abd al Latif Salah from Nablus, who served as first secretary of the Ottoman Senate, and Asad al Shuqayri of Acre, religious judge and Mufti of the Ottoman Fourth Army in the Great War⁹.

The Ottoman reforms are therefore to be seen as the main cause of the rise of the *a'ayan* class within Palestinian society since:

“The reformers, after all, needed the urban notables to apply their reforms, while the common people also needed them as shield against excessive conscription and taxation¹⁰.”

The reform process was able to provide, through the enhanced economic integration of the Palestinian provinces within the Ottoman and global market, new possibilities of development also for families other than the traditional religious aristocracy, such as the Nashashibi of Jerusalem, enlarging the borders of the traditional ruling class. A key element in the birth of this sort of middle-class within the Palestinian Arab society was represented by the Ottoman instruction's reforms, which, together with the enhanced presence of Christian European private schools, such as the Valley of the Cross School in Haifa and the Sahayun Anglican School in Jerusalem, led to the first spread of nationalist ideas, and of the awareness of the very concept of an Arab Palestine, firstly within this new class¹¹.

The foundation of newspapers as *al Karmil* in Haifa and *Filastin* in Jaffa, respectively in 1908 and 1911, promoters of different political attitudes within Palestine, is a remarkable witness of cultural and social vitality, while the participation of around 100 Palestinians to the Arab Congress of Paris of 1913 proves the increasing national awareness among at least the Palestinian elite¹².

The factor that, however, would have the most introduced a radical mutation within the Palestinian society, and would have continued to do so, consisted in the sudden appearing of Jewish European settlers and in the rise of Zionist ideology.

The main cause of these phenomena has to be found in the general growth of the nationalist sentiment in the whole of Europe, a sentiment that led both to the spread of nationalist ideas within the European Jewry and to the sudden reappearance of antisemitism.

⁷ *De la modernité administrative à la modernisation urbaine: une réévaluation de la municipalité ottomane de Jérusalem (1867-1917)*, Avci et Lemire, pp.73-138, from *Gerusalemme, storia di una città-mondo*, Vincent Lemire, Einaudi, Torino, 2017, p.218.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, <http://www.passia.org/personalities/763>.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, Rashid Khalidi, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997, pp. 35-63.

¹² *La Palestina e la nascita di Israele*, Guido Valabrega, in *La Storia*, cap.18, vol. 14, diretto da Enrico Cravetto, De Agostini, Novara, 2004, p. 611.

This last phenomenon, in fact, after decades of quiescence following the French revolutionary principles of secularism and the consequent integration of the Jewish communities of Western Europe within the rest of the citizenry, found new ground and alimentionation in the second half of 19th century, as demonstrated by the famous *Affaire Dreyfus*, which will be later described.

This general antisemitic attitude was in fact starting to put pressure on the European Jewish communities, whose lives appeared to be impossible to be lived freely in the whole of Europe and especially in the Eastern part of it.

In fact, the first *Aliyah*¹³, an act of migration to the biblical Land of Israel, from the Czarist Russia occurred in the decade immediately after the end of the *Tanzimat* era, in the early 80s of the 19th century. This exodus was directly caused by the wave of *pogrom* that afflicted the Jewish communities of the Russian Empire which followed the assassination of the Czar Alexander the 2nd and the antisemitic May Laws of his successor, Alexander the 3rd¹⁴.

While the vast majority of Polish and Russian Jews favoured, by far, to try to resettle in the United States following the persecutions, a minority decided to settle in Ottoman Palestine. Small groups of Russian Jewish nationalist students which defined themselves as Hovevei Zion, Lovers of Zion, decided to find refuge from the *pogrom* in the ancient *Eretz Yisrael*. Inspired by socialist and nationalist principles, these groups of *haluzim*, pioneers, the oldest one called *Bilu*, posed the basis of the first European Jewish agricultural settlements in Palestine, such as Rishon le-Zion and Petah Tikva on the coastal plain near Jaffa¹⁵.

The presence of Jewish people in the area, however, was everything but new for the Palestinian society. The almost constant presence of Jewish pilgrims and of relevant Sephardi and Mizrahi communities (the Ottoman Jewish ones which formed what is now defined the old *Yishuv*)¹⁶ especially the ones of Safed, Hebron and Jerusalem, did not led to any relevant conflict among the communities of Palestine, in terms of a religious or ethnic strife. The reason of it should probably be found in the modest size of previous migrations, never mass ones, and in the absence of a consequent mass settlement.

The difference between the traditional religious inspired migration of Jews and the new wave of 1882 and 1884 of the new *Yishuv* of *haluzim* appeared nevertheless immediately clear to the eyes of the local population since they sent, already in 1891, a formal protest to the Ottoman Sultan, asking to limit the

¹³ Literally "Ascension".

¹⁴ Ivi, pp. 49-51.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Settlement.

number of European Jewish immigrants and to stop their purchasing of land. Their requests and the inherent nature of the conflict would have changed little since then¹⁷.

One of the key investors in the movement of the first Jewish settlers during the 90s of the 19th century was the French Jewish banker Edmond de Rothschild, which in the same years refused to finance another a second Zionist project, parallel to the Russian settlers one, which was, however, born for the same core reason, the European growing antisemitism.

The action of Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian Jewish journalist, was in fact also oriented to the establishment of a Nation-State for the Jewish people in *Eretz Yisrael*, as stated in the Basel Program of 1897, drafted following the First Zionist Congress called by Herzl and held in the Swiss city in the same year¹⁸.

The Program stated that:

“Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael secured under public law. The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end:

1. The promotion by appropriate means of the settlement in Eretz-Israel of Jewish farmers, artisans, and manufacturers.
2. The organization and uniting of the whole of Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, both local and international, in accordance with the laws of each country.
3. The strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and national consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps toward obtaining the consent of governments, where necessary, in order to reach the goals of Zionism.”¹⁹

Herzl, considered nowadays as the founding father of Zionism, given his key role in its ideological definition, was inspired in his action, as affirmed himself, by his direct witness of the infamous *Affaire Dreyfus*, occurred in 1894 in the Third French Republic. This scandal, in which Alfred Dreyfus, an Alsatian officer of Jewish origins of the French Army, faced a patently unjust accusation of treason, was clearly due to the diffused antisemitism within conservative and right-wing environments of French society. An antisemitism to which was not possible to escape even for Jews who were completely assimilated into French culture, as demonstrated by the Dreyfus case.

Herzl was deeply convinced, therefore, that a future for the Jewish people in Europe was impossible, whether if culturally integrated in a liberal regime, as in the *fin de siècle* France, or clearly separated, as in the Russian Empire, and to this scope he proposed his project to the chancelleries of Europe, even travelling to Istanbul in 1898 to meet, without success, with the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid the 2nd.²⁰

¹⁷ *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p.2.

¹⁸ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi, Torino 2005, pp.45-49.

¹⁹ Basel Program, The Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/first-zionist-congress-and-basel-program-1897>.

²⁰ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi, Torino 2005, pp.45-49.

European nationalism however, according to Herzl, would have provided, together with antisemitism, also an ideological solution to it for the Jewish people. The Jews would have had to follow the example of the rest of the peoples of Europe, which in the same century fought to obtain a Nation State, as in Italy, Germany and in the Balkans, and settle in their ancestral homeland, Palestine, considered as a “land without a people, for a people without land”^{21, 22}.

The basic problem, however, was the blatant falsity of this last statement. This was clear to whoever would have travelled in the region, as Ahad Ha'am, one of the first dissident voices among the rising Zionist world, did, as he reported in an article of 1891²³.

In fact,

“From abroad we are accustomed to believing that *Eretz Yisrael* is presently almost totally desolate, an uncultivated desert, and that anyone is wishing to buy land there can come and buy all he wants. But in truth is not so. In the entire land, it is hard to find tillable land that is not already tilled [...].”

At the same time

“The Arabs, and especially those in the cities²⁴, understand our deeds and our desires in Eretz Israel, but they keep quiet and pretend not to understand [...]. However, [...] they will not easily yield their place.”

The *haluzim*, according to the Russian Jewish thinker, were on their side developing an “impulse to despotism”:

“[...] They walk in hostility and cruelty, unjustly encroaching on them, shamefully beating them for no good reason, and even bragging about what they do [...].”²⁵

It was therefore clear since the very beginnings of the Jewish settlement in the area that the Zionists nationalistic ambitions in Palestine had inevitably to collide with the interests of the Arab people dwelling since centuries in the same area.

The difficulties in coexistence were meanwhile worsened by the advent of a second *Aliyah* occurred in the first decade of 20th century, again mainly from the Czarist Empire. Together with the usual refugees from the *pogrom*, this second wave of settlement brought to Palestine a generation of secular revolutionaries and Zionist ideologues, escaping from Russia after the repression of the 1905 Revolution, such as David Ben-Gurion himself²⁶. They played a key role in posing the very basis of the future Zionist community in Palestine, conjugating nationalism to socialist principles, founding the first Jewish self-defence organization

²¹ *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948 (Studies in Jewish History)*, Anita Shapira, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 41

²² A slogan widely used among Christian and Jewish Zionists.

²³ *Una terra e due popoli. Sulla questione ebraico-araba*, Martin Buber, La Giuntina Firenze 2008 p.21 and *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, pp. 1-2.

²⁴ *The a'ayan*.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi, Torino 2005, pp. 67-72.

in 1909, *HaShomer*, and the first collective settlements, the *kibbutzim*, and promoting the usage of the ancient Hebrew language instead of the Yiddish one²⁷.

It is worth of notice that the very first opponents to this new settlement were the members of the old *Yishuv*, the Ottoman Jew population of Palestine, which did not really appreciate the presence of secular Jewish settlers and of their secular and radical ideologies among their communities. An only Jewish and secular city, Tel-Aviv, was founded in this historical context, in 1909, and quickly became the centre of the Zionist presence in the region²⁸.

Whether if only consisting of about 50.000 people, the Zionist community was nevertheless beginning to organize itself in an ordered, ideological and, most importantly, separate way from the rest of the population of Palestine.

It must be taken into account, in fact, in the examination of the historical events that occurred in Mandatary Palestine, that the process that would have led to the creation of two parallel nations within it, the Palestinian Jews and the rest of the population, was the result of a deliberate policy of separation led by the ruling classes of these two sides. The Zionist one in particular was particularly keen to obtain this scope, since the creation of a separated Jewish polity within Palestine was essential to the claim of a Jewish Homeland, when intended as a Jewish State, in Palestine itself.

One of the first attitude to be fought according to Zionist leaders was in fact, for example, the tendency to trade union cooperation among workers of the same sectors, Arabs and European Jews alike. As reported by Pappé, this natural tendency was found its early expression in the creation, in 1920, of the first mixed trade union of Palestine, of railroaders in Haifa. The local representative of the Zionist trade union, the *Histadrut*, criticized the Jewish adherents, affirming that

“Railroaders forgot that the mission of Jewish workers, as part of the settler’s movement of Palestine, is not about worrying about mutual assistance with the Arab workers, but to contribute to the strengthening of the Zionist project on this land^{29, 30}”

Another key aspect of this approach to separate politically and socially the two communities, seen as necessary to claim for the Zionist Jews the status of a separate nation within Palestine, was the campaign for *Avodah Ivrit*, Jewish labour. An initial key issue among the Zionist community was in fact whether if the usage of Arab labour force, cheaper than the Jewish one, was to be allowed or not.³¹

The action of Ben-Gurion and of his Labour Zionist party, *Ahdut HaAvoda*, played a fundamental role in the promotion of Jewish-only labour among Zionists, *Avoda Ivrit*, creating a deep cleavage between Jewish

²⁷ Ibidem, The Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-second-aliyah-1904-1914> .

²⁸ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi, Torino 2005, pp. 67-72.

²⁹ My translation.

³⁰ Ivi, p. 142.

³¹ Ibidem, and *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p.74.

workers and the rest of the Palestinian ones and posing an additional level of dangerousness to the still underground conflict. The consequent eviction by Zionists of Arab peasants from the land purchased by them, which had to be worked only by Jewish settlers, would have finally presented severe repercussions, becoming one of the central aspects of the conflict.

A conflict that erupted especially after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, hostile to both Zionism and the rising Arab national awareness, and the advent of the British one in the area.

In fact, a sharp contrast between the Ottoman and British attitude towards the relationship towards a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional reality in Palestine. The Ottoman efforts were all keen to discourage any form of communitarianism among its subjects within its borders, and therefore also in Palestine, despite the Zionist will of segregation. The obvious concurrent national aspirations of the different peoples of the empire would have to be satisfied within a liberal reformed Ottoman state, and within a broader Ottoman nationalism.

This “Ottomanist” vision, a sort of one-state solution ante litteram, was far than utopic as it is demonstrated by the vividly description of the celebrations in Jerusalem following the Young Turks coup of 1908 in Istanbul and the following proclamation of the liberal Ottoman Constitution of 1876, which seemed to open the road to a true democratization of the empire.

All the inhabitants of Jerusalem participated to the event:

“People shouts, sings, the marching band tries to be heard but the musicians, separated by the crowd, can not gather or finish a bar [...] Turks, Greeks, Jews, Latins, Armenians gather in every neighbourhood, then march singing, shouting in air. Many discourses are made, they call each other “brothers”, they hug each other, swearing loyalty with the Young Turks’ motto, “Freedom, equality, justice, fraternity”. [...] The Jews, with their wonderful yellow or purple velvet cloaks and their fur hats, are gathered around their flag, on which you can notice the Tables of the Law [...] Following there is the Greek group, always united around their white and blue flags. Everyone shouts: *Zito i eleftheria!* Hooray for Freedom!”³²

This ambitious project of an Ottoman empire’s democratization into which all nationalisms could have been satisfied would, sadly, nevertheless made impossible firstly for the Young Turks’ shift towards Turkish nationalism and the empire’s Turkification³³, which alienated partly the Arabs to them, and most importantly the British rule following the Great War.

The British Empire rule over the relatively small piece of land now corresponding to Israel, West Bank and Gaza was in fact formally established following the San Remo Conference of 1920, according to which the Mandate on the territory defined as Palestine was assigned by the League of Nations to the British government. The newly born mandate system was employed for several African and Asian territories

³² *Proclamazione della Costituzione turca a Gerusalemme*, Jerusalem, LII, ottobre 1908, pp.218-222, from *Gerusalemme, storia di una città-mondo*, Vincent Lemire, Einaudi, Torino, 2017, pp.229-231.

³³ *Storia del Medio Oriente 1798-2005*, Massimo Campanini, il Mulino, Bologna, 2006, pp.31-33.

formerly part of the defeated empires, as the Ottoman one, whose native people was not “able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world”.³⁴

The mandatory power was therefore in charged to rule and develop the territory assigned in order to lead its people to independence, on the base of the self-determination principle. In the case of Palestine, however, the right of self-determination over the same land was claimed by two people, the native Arab population and the Jewish European one.

Precisely the rule of the British Empire, and its ambiguity towards both nationalisms, settled the ideal conditions for the ongoing conflict in the area.

The first of these conditions can be found in the British position towards Zionism, way more open than the Ottoman one.

A proof of it can be found in the Balfour Declaration, a letter sent by Lord Arthur James Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, to Lord Walter Rothschild³⁵, a prominent member of the Zionist movement, in which was stated that:

“[...] His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country. [...]”³⁶

Together with the invitation to participate to the Paris Conference of 1919 (the first in which the future of Palestine was to discuss) to both Zionists and Arabs, the Declaration demonstrated clearly a positive attitude towards Zionism by the British government even before the establishment of the Mandate.

According to Ilan Pappé, several reasons may have driven the British establishment to look with favour to the Zionist enterprise, the most important of them seems to have been an overstatement of the Jewish influence in Russia, where the political turmoil and the consequent 1917 Revolution were undermining the Allies efforts to defeat the German Empire. Given these suppositions, new favourable conditions for Zionism were now present and the appointment of Herbert Samuel, a committed Zionist, as first High Commissioner together with the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration in the Charter of the Mandate in 1920, gave hope and courage to the Zionist Organization³⁷.

The British Commissioner attitude set, therefore, the conditions for a Third *Aliyah*, during which the size of the Zionist community arrived to count about 90.000 members, and fundamental *Yishuv* institutions, such as the *Histadrut*, a Zionist and Jewish-only trade union (in 1920) and the *Haganah*, self-defence organization

³⁴ Art. 22, Treaty of Versailles, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/parti.asp>.

³⁵ Distantly related to the banker Edmond de Rothschild cited earlier.

³⁶ The Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/text-of-the-balfour-declaration>.

³⁷ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi, Torino 2005, pp.84-91.

which replaced the previous *HaShomer* (in 1920 as well), were founded. All these events led to a remarkable reinforcement of the Zionist presence in Palestine, which consisted of a still small, but well organized, minority, which was actively pursuing an activity of national separation from the rest of the Palestinian society³⁸.

To the British positive attitude towards Zionism must be added, as one of the main causes of the conflict between Zionist communities and Palestinian Arabs, the strong British encouragement towards communitarianism and divisions within the Mandate population, privileging religious institutions over secular ones. A clear example of this is provided by the British authorities' actions in Jerusalem in the very first years of their rule.

In fact

“A symbolic measure illustrates this fatal mistake: as soon as they entered in Jerusalem, the British decide to destroy the Clock tower of 25 metres high above the Jaffa gate, which offered to all citizens a secular time, independently from any religious referral, which has been erected in 1907 thanks to a petition launched by the municipality. [...] [Furthermore] Already in March 1918, with the death of Husseini al Husseini, the British authorities decided to modify unilaterally the composition of the municipality council nominating two Muslims, two Christians and two Jews, as if the confessionalization of the municipality could avoid the risks of conflict. This obsession for religious categories is manifested with the occasion of the 1926 municipality reform, which provide for the organization of the future municipal elections on the base of confessional districts.”³⁹

The British *divide et impera* attitude, however, appear already clear when it is taken into account that, almost in the same period of the Balfour Declaration, Whitehall made identical promises of self-determination to the Arab people, whether to the Hashemite dynasty and not to the Palestinian Arabs, as demonstrated by the letter sent to Husseini ibn Ali al Hashemi, *sharif* of Mecca, by Sir Henry McMahon, Consul at Cairo.

The letter affirmed that the British government:

“[...] Acknowledges and approves the independence of the Arabs in the limits and borders proposed by the Mecca's *sharif*.”⁴⁰

This tragic British ambiguity promoted caused both an advancement of the Jewish settlement and of the Zionist project but settled also the basis for the birth of a fiercely anti-Zionist Palestinian and broader Arab nationalism.

This Arab nationalism presented obvious similarities with the ones of the rest of the region but had to confront not only with British Imperialism but also, and most importantly, in Palestine with Zionism and its project of settlement.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ *Gerusalemme, storia di una città-mondo*, Vincent Lemire, Einaudi, Torino, 2017, pp. 245-246.

⁴⁰ *Storia del Medio Oriente 1798-2005*, Massimo Campanini, il Mulino, Bologna, 2006, p. 65.

Dynamism characterised immediately the newly born nationalist Arab movement in Palestine, with the foundation of the Muslim-Christian Association in 1918, right after the Ottoman withdrawal, and the first meeting of a Palestinian Arab Congress in Jerusalem in 1919. The opposition to Zionism immediately constituted a common political basis for the Congress, which sent, in 1922, a delegation, headed by Moussa Kazim al Husseini, in order to contest with the Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, the British policy in the Mandate based on the Balfour Declaration.

It rejected the assurances provided by the Colonial Office, which insisted in affirming that Zionists did not have intention to claim the whole of Palestine as their national home, stating that

“[...] public security in Palestine has been greatly disturbed by those Jews who have been admitted into the country from Poland and Russia [...] their economic competition with the Arabs is very keen [...] division and tension between Arabs and Zionists increasing day by day and resulting in general retrogression. Because the immigrants dumped upon the country from different parts of the world are ignorant of the language, customs, and character of the Arabs, and enter Palestine by the might of England against the will of the people who are convinced that these have come to strangle them [...].”

Whether if al Husseini delegation did not succeed in its purpose, that is the stop to Jewish immigration and a British rejection of Balfour Declaration, it demonstrates the early awareness and worrying of the Palestinian Arab nationalists towards Zionism and its goals.

The Arab nationalism was nevertheless initially not only unable to politically involve the rural *fellahin* masses, remaining the expression of a secular, educated, but minor part of the Arab population of Palestine, but also totally incapable to form a united front through the whole period of the British Mandate.

In fact, the Palestinian nationalist movements faced a situation of constant division among themselves, mainly between the supporters of the Supreme Muslim Council headed by Ami'n al-Husseini, founded in 1922, the *Majlissiyun*, and their opponents, the *Mu'aridun*. The strife between them constituted mainly the continuation of ancient rivalries between *a'ayan* families and resulted in a severe weakening of the whole of the Palestinian nationalist movement.

In this aspect the contrast with the Zionist movement, in which all the *Yishuv* found cohesiveness, was clear and brought to relevant consequences.

The history of the Mandate, since the first violent Jewish-Arab clashes, occurred during the Muslim festival of Nabi Musa of 1920, will be in fact constituted of a continuous strife between the two nationalisms, and of both against the British rule, which will find its tragic end in the civil war of 1947 following the British withdrawal, passing throughout a series of acts of terrorism by the extreme fringes of both sides.

Given this political environment, which was yet deeply conflictual between the two communities, was the idea of a single binational political entity already shared by at least some prominent figures? It was there a debate between supporters of this solution and supporters of two separate states? The answer is yes, but only

within one of the two communities, that is among Zionist thinkers and philosophers, rather than politicians, of high moral and philosophical standing, such as Martin Buber, Hannah Arendt, Hans Kohn, Henrietta Szold, Judah Leon Magnes and others.

The binational solution or the two-state solution were both, with regards to the Arab side, simply not considered acceptable by the Arab Palestinian *a'ayan*.

The whole ruling Arab class, which was collectively called by the Zionists with the Turkish term “*effendi*”, actually found agreement only in a staunch, rigid opposition to whatever Zionist project and to whatever quote of Jewish immigration.

A one-state solution was seen as dangerous since, citing the historian Albert Hourani,

“it would lead to one of two things: either to a complete deadlock involving perhaps the intervention of foreign powers, or else the domination of the whole life of the state by communal considerations.”⁴¹

Furhtermore, a binational state would have implied, according to the *a'ayan* interpretation of it, a principle of political equality between the two communities.

An equality fiercely, and comprehensibly, opposed by them, given the fact that the Palestinian Jews still represented only a little minority within the Mandate⁴². On the other hand, a separation of Mandate Palestine into two states, or better the establishment of a Jewish state in Arab land, was also seen as inconceivable, since, and this argument will be a constant in Palestinian political thought, Judaism was, and is, considered only as a religion and therefore the Jewish people are also to be considered as a religious group and not a national one⁴³.

Given this situation, the division and the internal debate within the Arab ruling class, very fierce and main cause of the Palestinian Arab political weakness in comparison with the very cohesive *Yishuv*, was not on the question of a shared state or a partition with the Palestinian Jews. The ruling *a'ayan* families, such as the “radical” Husseini and the “moderate” Nashashibi of Jerusalem, found their political divisions on whether opting for a Pan-Arab nationalism (*qawmiyya*) or a Palestinian one (*wataniyya*)⁴⁴, between a Palestinian independence or a union with the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan and/or with a Greater Arab federation.

The King ‘Abd Allah was probably the only one, on the Arab (not Palestinian Arab) side, sincerely interested in partition since he aspired to annex to his kingdom several parts of the Palestinian Mandate.

⁴¹ *One State, Two States. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Benny Morris, Yale University Press, New Haven & London 2009, p.96.

⁴² *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.110-111.

⁴³ *The Bi-National State Solution*, As’ad Ghanem, Israel Studies, Vol. 14, No. 2, Summer 2009.

⁴⁴ *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p.106.

However, these disagreements were merely on the means to achieve the same final goal: an Arab state in Palestine with, maybe, a Jewish minority⁴⁵.

As a consequence, only within Zionist movement the earlier supporters of the one-state solution, expressed through the binational paradigm, can be found. While their voice was undoubtedly representative of a minority within the *Yishuv*, they nevertheless existed and were the firsts to propose a settlement able to conciliate the Jewish desire for a National Home (not a Jewish state) and the natural request of self-determination by the local Arab population.

It is useful so to distinguish, approximately, at least three major factions, or currents, within the Zionist organization in the period of the Mandate: the first, roughly corresponding to the centre right and centre left parties, was constituted by the General Zionists of Chaim Weizmann, liberals and faithful to the British Mandate, and the Labour Zionists, the *Ahdut HaAvoda* of Ben-Gurion.

These two groups can be considered, as the historian Benny Morris do, collectively as representative of the so-called Mainstream Zionism. At the extreme fringes of the political spectrum the Revisionists, led by Vladimir Jabotinsky, constituted the far right, while the *HaShomer HaTzair* movement, the Marxist wing of *Poalei Zion* and the *Brit Shalom* group posed themselves at the left of Ben-Gurion labourists⁴⁶.

Given this reductive description of the Zionist political framework, which were the positions of the different groups relatively to the establishment of a Jewish state or a Jewish Homeland? That is to say, which were their answers to the dilemma posed by the presence of native Arabs in the area corresponding to biblical Kingdoms of Israel and Judah? The opposed extreme fringes, Revisionists and leftist socialists, were awkwardly united in being oriented towards a one-state solution.

The Mandate did not have to be divided in two separate states. The key difference between them lied in the will of coexistence with the Arab population. The Revisionist movement was indeed not only aspiring for Zionism to the achievement of a single state encompassing the British Mandate of Palestine, but also the Transjordan portion of it, ceded to the Hashemite dynasty by the Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill in 1921.

The very name of the movement came from the refusal of the British partition, and their call for a revision of the Whitehall decision. So, not just a single state, but also a single state unifying the two banks of the Jordan river. Their request was therefore of irredentist nature, since they have also always claimed the whole territory of both the banks of Jordan to be turned into a Jewish state. The Arabs destiny, in Jabotinsky's view, was the one of a minority, granted with civil rights but not with self-determination.

⁴⁵ *One State, Two States. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Benny Morris, Yale University Press, New Haven & London 2009, pp.100-101.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

An idea that was similar, roles reversed, to the one of the Arab *a'ayan*. A greater Jewish state, not a mere a Jewish Homeland, not binational, with a clear Jewish majority, achieved through unlimited immigration, was the ultimate goal⁴⁷.

The main difference on this aspect with the Mainstream Zionists as Chaim Weizmann was, however, of strategical nature. Weizmann himself, for example, despite always adopting moderate tones and manifesting loyalty to Great Britain, asked to Churchill to revise his decision in 1921. But, contrarily to Revisionists, he, together with the other Mainstream Zionists (always the vast majority within the Zionist Organization) opted for a practical withdrawal from the most extreme irredentist requests, focusing in the strengthening of the already existing *Yishuv* on the West Bank of Jordan, adopting a *Realpolitik* attitude⁴⁸.

In both currents, the interpretation of the ultimate intent of Zionist ideology as relying in the establishment of a Jewish State, and not only a Jewish Homeland, as stated in the Balfour Declaration, was then the leading one since the beginning of the Mandate.

The intention of building a Jewish Homeland within a shared state with the local Palestinian Arab population was therefore always proposed by a small minority within the Zionist Movement, mainly represented by the *Brit Shalom* association and the Marxists among the Zionist community. This minority counted among its ranks intellectuals, as the founders of institutions such as the Hebrew University and the Hadassah, whose efforts to peace and collaboration during three decades of interethnic violence are worth to be cited. Their predictions on the future nature and fate of a Jewish state and its role in the Middle East revealed to be disquieting in their precision.

The *Brit Shalom* association, founded in 1925, was the first that unified several of these thinkers, for whom the binational solution was not just the only fair one but the only possible one. Accepting that both peoples had a right to the same land, the association promoted interethnic dialogue and comprehension in order to build the trust necessary to reach an absolute political equality.

For them the ultimate Zionist goal was therefore intended unequivocally as the establishment of a Jewish Homeland rather than a Jewish state⁴⁹. Active members of these Zionist movements were figures such as Arthur Ruppin, one of the key Zionist settlement investors and among the founders of Tel-Aviv, Yitzhak Epstein and Haim Kalvarisky, veteran Zionist settlers, which regarded the prospective of a future coexistence as necessary and from a strategic point of view.

⁴⁷ Ibid. pp. 43-44 and *The Jewish Writings*, Hannah Arendt, edited by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. 343-353 and *Palestinian Zionism*, Sadik J. Al-Azm, Die Welt des Islams, New Series, Bd. 28, No. 1/4, 1988.

⁴⁸ *One State, Two States. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Benny Morris, Yale University Press, New Haven & London 2009, pp. 38-42.

⁴⁹ Ibid. and *Una terra e due popoli. Sulla questione ebraico-araba*, Martin Buber, La Giuntina Firenze 2008, *The Bi-National State Solution*, As'ad Ghanem, Israel Studies, Vol. 14, No. 2, Summer 2009.

Others, such as Hugo Bergmann and Hans Kohn, were driven by moral reasons and the belief in a universalist interpretation of the Zionist mission, as not exclusive to the Palestinian Jewish community. Among them a prominent figure of the association since its birth was Martin Buber, one of the first thinkers within the Zionism Movement that posed at the very centre of Zionist ideology itself the coexistence question⁵⁰.

Born in Vienna, philosopher, theologian and committed Zionist and Socialist, he adhered to the Herzl's movement in 1898 and expressed his commitment to the binational solution until his death in Jerusalem in 1965. The key aspect of Buber thought about the question of coexistence has to be found in its not only practical but ideological and moral necessity.

Clearly, this statement does not involve that other Zionist leading figures simply ignored the moral issue deriving from the conflict. Ben-Gurion or Jabotinsky were also well aware of the tragedy deriving from the rivalry of two nationalisms claiming the same land.

The difference between them, and other Zionist leaders, and Buber was, citing Mendes-Flohr

“not consisting in a moral sensitiveness as such, but in the political meaning given from time to time to the moral dimension of the Arab question”⁵¹.

The awareness of the vast majority of Zionist leaders of the local Arab opposition to Zionism resulted in a mere resignation to the inevitable conflict deriving from the Arab enmity. *Realpolitik* imposed the conflict and drove several decisions of power politics of Zionist leadership during and after the Mandate and, again, *Realpolitik* commanded a consequential separation between moral and politics.

The whole political life of Buber found instead its meaning in the opposition to this approach. Zionism, intended as Buber did, had to find its true meaning in being different from any other nationalist movement; as a tool to promote a new Jewish Humanism, it would have had the mission to close the gap between moral and politics through the creation of a Jewish Homeland, intended not as a Nation-state, but as a new polity based on Truth and Justice.

According to his highly ethical conception of Zionism, this ideology found its very testbed in the moral dimension of the conflict, and it would have lost its moral direction, and its meaning, ceding to the power politics towards the native Palestinian Arabs. The distinction between moral and politics and the guidance of *Realpolitik* that characterised the Zionist leadership approach were therefore utterly refused by Buber. Zion could have not been built with every mean possible but only through *bemishpat*, Justice. He stated in 1932 that

⁵⁰ *Una terra e due popoli. Sulla questione ebraico-araba*, Martin Buber, La Giuntina Firenze 2008 and *The Jewish Writings*, Hannah Arendt, edited by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, Schocken Books, New York, 2007.

⁵¹ *Una terra e due popoli. Sulla questione ebraico-araba*, Martin Buber, La Giuntina Firenze 2008, p.25.

“in historical reality, we do not set ourselves a righteous goal, choose whatever way to it an auspicious hour offers, and, following that way, reach the set goal. If the goal to be reached is like the goal which was set, then the nature of the way must be like the goal. A wrong way, that is, a way in contradiction to the goal, must lead to a wrong goal. What is accomplished through lies can assume the mask of truth; what is accomplished through violence, can go in the guise of justice, and for a while the hoax may be successful. But soon people will realize that lies are lies at bottom, that in the final analysis, violence is violence, and both lies and violence will suffer the destiny history has in store for all that is false”⁵².

This apparent utopianism may appear naïve when confronted with the realism and the craftiness demonstrated by the Mainstream Zionist leadership but had also practical implications, deriving from a deep and realist concern over the future of the *Yishuv*, in opposition to power politics that he regarded as politically short-sighted. The Arab fear to be dispossessed of their own land was real and their enmity had to be dispelled without renouncing to the Zionist aim to create a Jewish Homeland.

In order to do so, a climate of trust had to be created renouncing, by both sides, to national ambitions which exceeded what was necessary to guarantee the fundamental interests of both Palestinian Jews and Arabs. Promoting peace and trust in order to overcome Arab enmity. Buber understood that the idea of a Jewish autonomous political entity and the reaching of a Jewish majority would have only undermined every attempt to establish a durable peace with the Arab population. On the contrary, it would have confirmed the worst Arab fears of a Jewish, European backed, dominion in Palestine, with the progressive expulsion of the local population.

Furthermore, the whole Arab world would have identified the Jewish people in its entirety as an agent of British (and later American) Imperialism.⁵³

Consequentially, he was not only contrary to the idea of a Jewish State and to the necessity of a Jewish majority in the Mandate territory, but also open even to the possibility of setting a limit to Jewish *Aliyah* in Palestine, a radical position even among other binationalists, such as Ruppin.⁵⁴

His ideas can be considered representative of many “radical” members of *Brit Shalom*, such as Henrietta Szold, Robert Weltsch and the already mentioned philosophers Hans Kohn and Hugo Bergman.

The group as a whole, however, promoted dialogue and the binational solution within the *Yishuv* political community during its existence, basing its action on some basic points, such as its promotion of the concept of a Jewish National Homeland in Palestine instead of a Jewish State, the opposition to the campaign for only Jewish Labour in Jewish property lands of Ben-Gurion, and especially, as expressed in Buber’s thought, the rejection of British Imperialism as a mean to achieve the Zionist goals.

⁵² Ibid., p.141.

⁵³ Ibid. and *The Jewish Writings*, Hannah Arendt, edited by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, Schocken Books, New York, 2007.

⁵⁴ Ibid. pp.37-38

These last, the purchasing of land and continuing Jewish immigration in the country, remained essentials but they had to be achieved through an agreement with the local Palestinian Arabs.

Furhtermore, it is important to stress the presence of different coexistence paradigms also among the lines of other political Zionist political subjects, that is to say the Marxists of the Communist Party of Palestine and the *HaShomer HaTzair*.

The first originated from the 1919 split which interested the early Labour Zionist movement *Poalei Zion*, in occurrence with the decision for the party to enter the Comintern or not. The right-wing, which would have formed the Ben-Gurion *Ahdut HaAvoda*, remained keen to Zionist goals, rejecting the supremacy of international socialist ones.

The remaining left-wing part formed the Socialist Workers Party, a political group that faced an ideological struggle between their presence in Palestine, deriving from Zionism, and Marxist principles, together with a gap between their claims to be an Arab-Jewish workers party and the reality of its composition, almost completely Jewish.

Their political influence within the Yishuv was also severely compromised by their anti-Zionism, which was for example absent from the *Brit Shalom* political discourse.

According to Ran Greenstein

“There was thus an inevitable clash between their ‘objective’ social position as Jewish settlers and their ‘subjective’ political stand as anti-Zionist activists, who identified with the Arab national cause [regarded as an anti-Imperialist one] but – for the most part – without speaking Arabic or sharing physical space with Arabs or having culture, religion and history in common with them.”⁵⁵

The *kibbutzim* movement *HaShomer HaTzair*, finally, was also a coexistence advocating political group in Mandatory Palestine, substantially differing however from the *Brit Shalom* with regards with the acknowledgment of the Arab fears to be dispossessed and the asset of a binational state.

The movement was also as *Brit Shalom* willing to compromise about the institution of a Jewish State. Its proposal of a binational state would have been a federalist one, based on ethnicity, in which the two communities would have collaborated on neutral issues, as infrastructures, health and economic development.

The movement was nevertheless firm in the affirmation of all the Zionist principles, without compromises on immigration and land acquisition, and in the rejection of the Arab fears to be dispossessed, in this resembling the Mainstream Zionist view rather than the *Brit Shalom* intellectuals one. In fact, these fears were regarded as ill-founded or deriving from jealousy since it was evident, for them, that, together with

⁵⁵ *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p. 102.

Jewish immigration, also rise in agricultural and industrial production, modernization and general economic advance was spread in the country.

However, it was this attitude of the *kibbutzim* to be ill-founded. The Zionist policy of acquisition of land together with eviction and the constant growth of “Jewish-only” areas within the Mandate severely jeopardized the credibility among Palestinian Arabs of assurances and promises of a shared economic development⁵⁶. Their scepticism would have sadly been proven right during the 1947-49 War and in its aftermath.

The shared macroscopic weakness of the supporters of coexistence among Zionists in Palestine, in conclusion, resided precisely in the almost complete absence of any appreciable acknowledgment by the Palestinian Arab leadership, for the reasons cited previously, until the Arab Riots of the summer of 1929.⁵⁷

This event can be considered a pivotal point in the history of the Mandatory Palestine. The nationalist and anti-Zionist discourse of the *a'ayan* leaders was, in fact, unable to raise interest in the Arab *fellahin* masses during the 20s. Where nationalism failed, religious factors and especially economic deprivation succeeded in the creation of a hostile attitude of the Arab population toward Jewish settlers.

This new mix of religious and economic factors was however spreading among impoverished masses also in the neighbouring countries, as in Egypt, where the Muslim Brotherhood movement was founded only one year before the riots by the teacher Hasan al Banna. Political Islam would have found fertile political terrain in Palestine, especially in Gaza where, already in 1928, the school teacher Hamdi al Hussein (unrelated to the Jerusalem's Hussein) founded local branches of the Egyptian Young Muslims Association.

The Islamist influence on the outbreak of the Riot, in fact, is evident since this last originated from incidents occurred around the Western Wall and the *Haram al-Sharif* in Jerusalem, a key issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since then. Rumours of Jewish plans of claiming the ownership of the site, sacred to both Muslim and Jews, spread and, after a series of disturbance actions at the Wall between the local Muslim community and the Revisionist youth group *Betar*, violence erupted.

However, the underground resentment against the Jewish presence in Palestine among *fellahin* lied not in religious fanaticism, the incidental cause, but essentially in the increasing unemployment and transfer caused by the Zionist policy of Jewish-only Labour, which led to evictions and to the urbanization of impoverished peasants.⁵⁸

These *fellahin* masses eventually reacted violently to the augmented Jewish presence, but autonomously, without obeying to an order of the *a'ayan* (who, in any case, exploited the Riot), and finding a reason in

⁵⁶ Ivi, pp.31-35.

⁵⁷ Ivi, p.20.

⁵⁸ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005 pp. 124-130.

religious motivations and in identifying in the Jews the cause of their misery, similarly to *pogroms* that occurred for centuries in Medieval Europe⁵⁹.

The Commission appointed in 1930 by the British government, headed by Sir Walter Shaw, in fact, reported at the conclusion of the inquiry, that the eruption of violence had to be ascribed to the deteriorating conditions of life of the Palestinian peasantry and in the concurrent immigration of Jews in the country. Therefore, the Commission recommended to modify the British policy in the area with a less pro-Zionist attitude and in a limitation to Jewish immigration.

The result of all this, unsurprisingly, was that, intransigence and pragmatism dominated the *Yishuv* action after the 1929 Riots. The establishment of the Jewish Agency, an autonomous governmental institution within the *Yishuv*, and the foundation by Jabotinsky of a new Revisionist paramilitary organization, the *Irgun*, in the same years, testifies the new increased autarchic and self-defence oriented attitude that characterised the Palestinian Jewish community from that point onward⁶⁰.

The diffused distrust and pessimism of this period led to the disbandment in 1940 of *Brit Shalom*, also because of the progressive abandonment of several founding figures, as Ruppin and Kohn.⁶¹ However, as pointed out by Ran Greenstein, the reasons that led these two to leave the association were of opposite nature, mirroring the initial division within it between who saw in coexistence a practical necessity and the “radical” promoters of Zionism as a New Humanism, as Kohn and Buber⁶².

Arthur Ruppin, in fact, was driven to complete scepticism towards the prospective of the realization of the main Zionist goals, settlement and land, to be accomplished with the agreement with the Palestinian Arabs.

“I would say: What we can get we do not need, and what we need – we cannot get. At most, what the Arabs are willing to give us is rights of a Jewish national minority [...]. But we have learnt from the state of affairs in Eastern Europe, how difficult it is to force a majority nation holding power to grant the minority national equality. [...] A Zionism willing to reach such a compromise with the Arabs will lose the support of Jews in Eastern Europe and will quickly become Zionism without Zionists⁶³.”

Therefore, given the impossibility to dialogue with the Arabs, it was necessary, to promote the Zionist goals, that they would have to

“be forced to recognise us as a fait accompli.⁶⁴”

On the contrary, Hans Kohn explained, through a correspondence with Martin Buber and Berthold Feiwel⁶⁵, the reasons that led him to abandon not only *Brit Shalom*, but the whole Zionist movement as well.

⁵⁹Ivi pp.116-124 and *One State, Two States. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Benny Morris, Yale University Press, New Haven & London 2009 pp.100-106.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹*Una terra e due popoli. Sulla questione ebraico-araba*, Martin Buber, La Giuntina Firenze 2008, pp.130-135.

⁶² *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, pp. 12-15.

⁶³ Ibidem.

⁶⁴ Ibidem.

A reaction that contrasted sharply with the one of Ruppin to the same 1929 events. In fact, Kohn saw in the Riot as the confirmation that Zionism, with its reliance on the British Empire and its refusal to deal with the “Arab Question”, was condemned to base its presence in Palestine on

“the British aid and then later [on] the help of our own bayonets, which we shamefully define *Haganah*, since we are not brave enough to follow an our own politic. But by that time, we will not be able to do without the bayonets. The means will have determined the goal. Jewish Palestine will no longer have anything of that Zion for which I once put myself on the line.”⁶⁶

However, Ruppin conclusions are sadly to be considered representative of the damage that the 1929 revolt caused to the perspective of a constructive dialogue with the Palestinian Arabs among Zionists, especially because of the atrocities perpetuated by the mob in that occasion also against historical Palestinian Jewish communities, such as the ones of Hebron and Safed, polarizing even more, if possible, the conflict in the Mandate as one between the local Arabs and the Jewish people.

Kohn’s reflections on how much Zionism was becoming a mere nationalist ideology relying on Imperialism to oppress the local population of Palestine, instead of promoting a Jewish humanism and providing a safe Homeland for the Jewish people, were unable to penetrate the *Yishuv* community.

This last, in fact, was developing within itself a sense of siege and of separation from the rest of the Palestine, thanks to the continuous political work in this sense not only of Revisionists, but also of the Mainstream Zionist leadership.

During the 30s, and especially because of the Great Arab Revolt of 1936 against the British rule and Zionism and the contemporary rise of fascist and antisemitic regimes in Europe, the separation between the communities and the extremely conflictual economic environment made in fact the possibility of a shared political entity between two peoples even more unrealistic.

The 1936 Revolt, in particular, played a key role in the development of the following events that characterised the history of the region. Its origins have to be found in the persistence of the immediately previous economic and social phenomena, that led the Palestinian rural population to another rebellion, this time openly against the British rule and its perceived support to the Zionists settlers.

The *fellahin* masses, in fact, continued to face during the 30s a constant impoverishment, which was mainly due to the lack of investments by the Mandate government in the agricultural sector, the increasing urbanization and the progressive acquisition of private land by the Zionist institutions. The very same factors that led to the 1929 violence.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Executive of the *Keren Hayesod*, the Jewish National Found.

⁶⁶ *Una terra e due popoli. Sulla questione ebraico-araba*, Martin Buber, La Giuntina Firenze 2008, p. 135 and *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁷ Ivi, p.111 and *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p. 132-134.

The development policy towards the rural areas of the Mandate started in fact to be considered by the British authorities only with the publication of the Shaw Commission Report, which, as cited earlier, recommended the promotion of the *fellahin* conditions of life through a policy of investments, together with a limitation of the Jewish immigration into Palestine. Both of these recommendations were neglected.

According to Ilan Pappé the reason of it should be also ascribed to political dynamics internal to the British government at home. The contemporary rise of a Labour government in 1929, which aimed to increase public expense at home cutting the colonial one, together with the necessity of this last to enter into an alliance with the Whigs, promoters of *laissez-faire* and free market policies, in 1931, led to the final result of a reduced budget for the Mandate government.

Furthermore, this last used this reduced budget mainly to finance the economic growth of the urban centres and of the coastal plain, where the Palestinian Jewish population was concentrated.

In the very same years, the rise of the German Nazi regime led to a wave of mass migration of European Jews, increasing the size of the *Yishuv* of 200.000 units, and transforming it in a minority consistent of the 30 % of the Palestinian society. In conclusion, again, the causes of the 1929 riots were not only not been addressed, but they were still present in even worse terms than before.

An early symptom of what these conditions would have led, consisted in the rise in 1933 of the Black Hand, a guerrilla organization led by the preacher *sheikh* 'Izz al Din al Qassam.

Leading this small resistance movement in the North, he found active members for its organization precisely in the urban masses of eradicated *fellahin* which lived in slums in the outskirts of Haifa.

The death of the Sheikh, killed by British soldiers at the end 1935, played the same role of the incidents related to the Holy Places in Jerusalem in 1929, causing an eruption of general discontent, towards British and Zionists, within the Palestinian Arab population. However, this time the Palestinian *a'ayan* tried to govern it instead of simply riding it, as they clumsily did during the 1929 Riots⁶⁸.

In 1936 the Arab Higher Committee was founded, an executive institution mirroring the Jewish Agency, headed by the Mufti Amin al Husseini. The Committee called for a General Strike in April 1936. The strike succeeded in calling for a mass mobilization of the Palestinian Arab society, with mass demonstrations along the whole country. Only in Jerusalem more than 2000 people marched in the Old City.

The British, impressed by the size and the extent of the strike, instituted an inquiry commission, headed by Lord William Peel, in charged to elaborate a plan to find a long-term solution to the Palestinian Question. The plan proposed by the Peel Commission, consisting in a partition of the Mandate with the annexation of

⁶⁸ Ibid.

the majority of the country to the Hashemite Kingdom, was not particularly favoured by anyone, except obviously the prince ‘Abd Allah of Transjordan.

A new wave of protests, much more violent than the previous one, led to the eruption of a guerrilla movement and to a general revolt within the all country, led by the younger members of the *a’ayan* families, such as the popular hero ‘Abd al Qadir al Husseini, nephew of the Grand Mufti.

The Great Arab Revolt, which lasted until 1939, was fiercely repressed by the British Army, and led to results that are to be considered as fundamentals for the development of the future conflict, such as the damage inflicted to the Palestinian Arab nationalist cause, which faced the arrest or the expulsion of key figures, such as the Grand Mufti al Husseini himself.

Most importantly, the Revolt led to a radical mutation of policy towards Zionism by the British authorities. In fact, while the Revolt faced a brutal repression, it nevertheless induced the British government to finally address the requests of the Palestinian Arab population. The resulting White Paper of May 1939 therefore was developed in order to satisfy these requests: self-governing institutions, the limitation of Jewish immigration and purchasing of land and the refusal of the concept of a Jewish State in Palestine.

The Paper consisted precisely in the formal acquisition of these principles within the British policy in the Mandate, a policy followed until the 1948 withdrawal, stating that

“His Majesty's Government therefore now declare unequivocally that *it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State*. They would indeed regard it as contrary to their obligations to the Arabs under the Mandate, as well as to the assurances which have been given to the Arab people in the past, that the Arab population of Palestine should be made the subjects of a Jewish State against their will.⁶⁹”

At the same time Jewish immigration had to be reduced since

“Although it is not difficult to contend that the large number of Jewish immigrants who have been admitted so far have been absorbed economically, the fear of the Arabs that this influx will continue indefinitely until the Jewish population is in a position to dominate them has produced consequences which are extremely grave for Jews and Arabs alike and for the peace and prosperity of Palestine.⁷⁰”

[...]

Jewish immigration during the next five years will be at a rate which, if economic absorptive capacity permits, will bring the Jewish population up to approximately one third of the total population of the country. Taking into account the expected natural increase of the Arab and Jewish populations, and the number of illegal Jewish immigrants now in the country, this would allow of the admission, as from the beginning of April this year, of some 75,000 immigrants over the next five years. [...] After the period of five years, no further Jewish immigration will be permitted unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it⁷¹.”

⁶⁹ British White Paper of 1939, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/british-white-paper-of-1939> .

⁷⁰ Ibidem.

⁷¹ Ibidem.

Finally, also the transferral and the acquisition of land had to be reduced and regulated by the Mandate High Commissioner.⁷²

Indeed, the reactions of the Zionist movement and of the *Yishuv* were of indignation and rage, also since the limit to Jewish immigration to Palestine occurred in coincidence with the expansion of Nazism in Europe. As a result, Revisionist and terrorist groups such as the Irgun, founded by Jabotinsky in 1930, and Lehi (called the Stern Gang by the British) started a terroristic campaign against British and Palestinians alike. At the same time, in the *Yishuv*, moderate figures within the Mainstream Zionist leadership, such as the pro-British Chaim Weizmann, lose influence in favour of “hawks” as Ben-Gurion.

The world Zionist leadership, not only the representatives of the Palestinian Jewish community, which considered the Paper a treason by the British government, shifted also to a maximalist and separationist approach. The acme of this extremization process resulted in the Biltmore Conference of 1942, held in the US city, during which a Plan was elaborated, under the Ben-Gurion supervision.

The resulting Biltmore Program, a Zionist political answer to the White Paper, called for what were until that moment requests only coming from the Revisionists.

Through the Program, in fact, the Conference affirmed

“its unalterable rejection of the White Paper of May 1939 and denies its moral or legal validity. The White Paper seeks to limit, and in fact to nullify Jewish rights to immigration and settlement in Palestine. [...] The policy of the White Paper is cruel and indefensible in its denial of sanctuary to Jews fleeing from Nazi persecution [...]”⁷³.”

Therefore:

“The Conference urges that the gates of Palestine be opened; that the Jewish Agency be vested with control of immigration into Palestine and with the necessary authority for upbuilding the country, including the development of its unoccupied and uncultivated lands; and that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world⁷⁴.”

The Jewish Agency, in conclusion, in order to save as much Jews as possible from the European catastrophe, reclaimed the whole of Palestine for the establishment of a Jewish State, and the full control of immigration to the Mandate⁷⁵. To the Arabs, as Hannah Arendt pointed out in a contemporary article, were granted minority rights, despite being the majority⁷⁶.

The shift towards positions previously shared only among Revisionists by the Mainstream leadership is thought by the German philosopher to be not only the result of the indignation to the reaction to the British

⁷² Ibidem.

⁷³ Biltmore Program, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-biltmore-conference-1942> .

⁷⁴ Ibidem.

⁷⁵ *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014 pp.205-209 and *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.136-138 and *The Jewish Writings*, Hannah Arendt, edited by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p.343.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

White Paper, but also of the “Herzlian” Zionist thought, which became dominant in Zionist policy precisely after the White Paper of 1939, the Biltmore Plan and the discover of the horrors of the Holocaust.

Arendt, as a Zionist, criticized and commented several times the events that occurred in Palestinian Zionist politics. Strong critic of the Biltmore Plan, she warned about the dangers posed by the Herzl’s vision of Zionism, well described in an article of 1946 “*THE JEWISH STATE: Fifty Years After, Where Have Herzl's Politics Led?*”:

“Herzl’s doctrine, deprived as it now of its original confidence in the helpful nature of antisemitism, can only encourage suicidal gestures for whose ends the natural heroism of people who have become accustomed to death can be easily exploited.

Some of the Zionist leaders pretend to believe that the Jews can maintain themselves in Palestine against the whole world and that they themselves can persevere in claiming everything or nothing against everybody and everything. However, behind this spurious optimism lurks a despair of everything and a genuine readiness for suicide that can become extremely dangerous should they grow to be the mood and atmosphere of Palestinian politics.

There is nothing in Herzlian Zionism that could act as a check on this; on the contrary, the utopian and ideological elements with which he injected the new Jewish will to political action are only too likely to lead the Jews out of reality once more-and out of the sphere of political action. I do not know-nor do I even want to know-what would happen to Jews all over the world and to Jewish history in the future should we meet with a catastrophe in Palestine.”⁷⁷

Despite this shift towards suicide, as defined by the German philosopher, binationalism and coexistence were still advocated by a little but determined group within Zionists.

Former *Brit Shalom* members such as Buber, Szold and Bergmann, together with Judah Leon Magnes, president and founder with Weizmann of the Hebrew University, opposed to the growing influence of militarism and maximalism within Palestinian Jews.

This last figure, a Jewish American rabbi cofounder of the Hebrew University, became one of the leading pacifist figures in the *Yishuv* community, up to be considered the main representative of the supporters of a binational solution by Hanna Arendt⁷⁸.

For him, binationalism was essential for a long-term solution to the Palestine question, since a binational state

“must provide constitutionally for equal political rights and duties for both the Jewish and Arab nations, regardless of which is the majority and which the minority.”

Arendt herself, after an enduring scepticism towards the ideas of what she defined as “Magnes group” and its “suicidal proposals”⁷⁹, later adopted Magnes and Buber views, defining the American rabbi in 1952 “the Conscience of the Jewish people”⁸⁰.

⁷⁷ Ibid. pp.375-387.

⁷⁸ Ibid. and *Una terra e due popoli. Sulla questione ebraico-araba*, Martin Buber, La Giuntina Firenze 2008.

Rejecting the calls for a Jewish State of the Biltmore Program, and the ones for an essentially ⁸¹ Arab State of the White Paper as well, the binationalists of Palestine founded the League of Arab-Jewish Rapprochement and Cooperation in 1939 and elaborated a program for the establishment of a binational state in Palestine.

The program of the League, to which adhered Zionist parties such as *HaShomer HaTzair*, was expressed in 1942 as a statement of principles which, according to Ran Greenstein

“premised on the ‘construction of Palestine as a common homeland for the Jewish people returning to it and the Arab people residing therein’, based on ‘lasting mutual understanding and agreement between the two peoples.’”⁸²

The influence of *HaShomer HaTzair* was however evident in several features of the League program, such as the complete absence of referral to limitations to the acquisition of land and eviction of *fellahin*, or the firm stance against any long-term limitations to Jewish immigration in the country. Also, the structure of a proposed future binational state, as one in which Palestinian Jews and Arabs live alongside but with few policy matters in common, was similar to the classic *HaShomer HaTzair* proposal.

However, a group formed mainly from former *Brit Shalom* members, founded another independent political group, the *Ichud* (Unity) whose program was drafted from Buber, Weltsch and Magnes.

The program states as follows:

1. The Association Union (*Ichud*) adheres to:

- a. The Zionist movement insofar as this seeks the establishment of the Jewish National Home for the Jewish People in Palestine.
- b. The struggle throughout the world for a New Order in international relations and a Union of the peoples, large and small, for a life of freedom and justice without fear, oppression and want.

2. The Association Union therefore regards a Union between the Jewish and Arab peoples as essential for the upbuilding of Palestine and for cooperation between the Jewish world and the Arab world in all branches of life—social, economic, cultural, political—thus making for the revival of the whole Semitic World.

3. The main political aims of the Association Union are as follows:

- a. Government in Palestine based upon equal political rights for the two peoples.
- b. The agreement of the steadily growing *Yishuv* and of the whole Jewish people to a Federative Union of Palestine and neighbouring countries. This Federative Union is to guarantee the national rights of all the peoples within it.

⁷⁹ *The Jewish Writings*, Hannah Arendt, edited by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp.332-334.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p.451

⁸¹ *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p.28

⁸² *Ivi*, p.24.

c. A Covenant between this Federative Union and an Anglo-American Union which is to be part of the future Union of the free peoples. This Union of the free peoples is to bear the ultimate responsibility for the establishment and stability of the international relations in the New World after the war.

4. The Association Union is to cooperate with the league for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement, containing, as it does, representatives of organizations with varying points of view. It is also prepared to cooperate with other organizations and groups in specific projects⁸³.

The Ichud movement, therefore, offered a kind of solution to the majority/minority question in the country, based on the Magnes one, that resided in the creation, following the Allies victory in Second World War, of a Federative Union in the whole Middle East area, into which the Palestinian Arabs

“would have been relieved of their present fear of being swamped and dominated by a majority of Jews.”⁸⁴

Such a Federation would have been part in turn of a broader post-war Anglo-American Union of Free peoples.⁸⁵

The British government, however, was on its side getting more and more impatient to get rid of Palestine, which was requiring the presence of more soldiers than India in order to maintain public order. After the end of the world war, in 1946, the British foreign minister, Bevin, in agreement with US president Truman, established a commission, the Anglo-American Committee.

Its goal was to look for political alternatives to the Mandate itself for Palestine, in order to let the region on its own, and to refer if there were possibilities for allowing the immigration of Jewish survivors from Europe.

The final recommendations of the Committee, with British surprise, called for the establishment of a binational democratic state:

“[...] it is therefore neither just nor practicable that Palestine should become either an Arab State, in which an Arab majority would control the destiny of a Jewish minority, or a Jewish State, in which a Jewish majority would control that of an Arab minority. In neither case would minority guarantees afford adequate protection for the subordinated group. A Palestinian [Jew] put the matter thus: "In the hearts of us Jews there has always been a fear that someday this country would be turned into an Arab State and the Arabs would rule over us. This fear has at times reached the proportions of terror [...]. Now this same feeling of fear has started up in the hearts of Arabs [...] fear lest the Jews acquire the ascendancy and rule over them. "Palestine, then, must be established as a country in which the legitimate national aspirations of both Jews and Arabs can be reconciled, without either side fearing the ascendancy of the other.

⁸³ *Una terra e due popoli. Sulla questione ebraico-araba*, Martin Buber, La Giuntina Firenze 2008, p.192 and *The one-state solution a breakthrough for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock*, Virginia Tilley, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 2005, Appendix A

⁸⁴ *Towards Peace in Palestine*, Judah L. Magnes, Foreign Affairs, January 1943, pp. 239-49.

⁸⁵ *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p.28.

In our view this cannot be done under any form of constitution in which a mere numerical majority is decisive, since it is precisely the struggle for a numerical majority which bedevils Arab-Jewish relations. To ensure genuine self-government for both the Arab and the Jewish communities, this struggle must be made purposeless by the constitution itself.”⁸⁶

This Committee’s statements were the greatest political success that Zionist binationalists ever obtained. The declarations made by the *Ichud* representatives, Magnes, Buber and Smilansky, a first *Aliyah* veteran advocate of Jewish-Arab dialogue, were indeed fundamental to convince the Anglo-American delegates not only of the possibility, but of the necessity of a binational unitary state in the future Palestine⁸⁷.

However, despite this remarkable achievement, the events that immediately followed the Committee work led to results opposite to the ones hoped and proposed by Buber, Magnes and Arendt during the Mandate, confirming their worst expectations and predictions.

⁸⁶ Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 1946, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-anglo-american-committee>.

⁸⁷ *Una terra e due popoli. Sulla questione ebraico-araba*, Martin Buber, La Giuntina Firenze 2008, pp.228-232 and *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, pp.34-38.

2. From *Nakba* to Oslo: Shift and debate within PLO

The whole idea of a single binational state entity between Jews and Palestinian Arabs found a political end, at least surely within Zionism, with the occurrence of two key events: the UNSCOP Partition Plan approval by UN with the civil war deriving from it, and the Proclamation of the State of Israel the 14th of May 1948, occurred immediately after the British withdrawal with the subsequent military invasion of the neighbouring Arab states. The British government, in fact, given the extreme economic difficulties deriving from the just concluded world conflict, and the serious difficulties in maintaining the order in Palestine, announced in February 1947⁸⁸ its desire to withdraw from the Mandate.

As a result, the UN established a special committee, the UNSCOP, to decide the political future of Palestine. The eleven members, which had no previous experience of the Palestinian question, were representative of Uruguay, Canada, Australia, India, Yugoslavia, Iran, Peru, the Netherlands, Guatemala, Sweden and Czechoslovakia.

The evaluations of the international committee faced the influence of two main factors; the first, of more contingent nature, being the ignoring or even the hostile attitude towards the UNSCOP work of evaluation in the Mandate assumed by the Palestinian *a'ayan* notables.

On the opposite, the Zionist attitude reflected the policy, and its eventual success, of the *Yishuv* leadership, and of Ben-Gurion in particular, during the whole history of the Mandate since

“The mainstream leadership under Ben-Gurion was pragmatic. It agreed to be part of any agreement that would grant it more than it already had acquired. [...] As conditions changed and more favourable offers were made, it took advantage of these in the same way, and thus was able to move constantly forward. Palestinians adopted an opposite approach.

An approach that led them to prove themselves able to commit an ulterior fatal political mistake in their fight against the establishment of a Jewish State, orienting the committee towards the partition plan.

The second factor which influenced the UNSCOP work consisted in the intuitive link between the monstrous tragedy of the Holocaust in Europe, and the resulting impressive mass of “displaced persons” (DPs).

This tragic aspect, the necessity to manage the issue of the Jewish European refugees, proved to be particularly important to set the general attitude towards the international approval to the establishment of a Jewish state, and in the consequent partition of Palestine. Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, in particular, affirmed that especially the US and Western European attitude towards this problem proved to be key in this respect.

In fact, interviewed jointly on the correlation between the Holocaust refugees and the eventual establishment of the State of Israel, the two scholars stated:

⁸⁸ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi, Torino 2005, p.153

“NC: [...] ‘How many of them [the refugees] came to the United States? Virtually none. If you had asked to them where they wanted to go, I think that you can make a sane guess that they would have wanted to come to the United States. Half of Europe wanted to come, especially Holocaust survivors. They did not. The American government did not want them, the American Jewish community did not want them. Zionist emissaries took over the [refugee] camps. They had a principle that able-bodied men and women between seventeen and thirty-five had to be shipped off to Palestine’.

[...]

IP: ‘What Noam said about DPs (displaced persons) is very interesting because when both the Anglo-American Commission in 1946 [...] and both UNSCOPs afterward in 1947, when they tried to be sort of neutral [...] many members of both committees claimed that visiting the DPs, of course with good Zionist propaganda, made them associate the fate of the Jews of Europe – demographically, arithmetically- with the fate of the Jews in Palestine. Which put the Palestinian point of view in a very weak position.’”⁸⁹

Substantially, what Zionism, and in particular Herzl’s Zionism, affirmed since its very beginnings, that is that the Jews had no safe future in Europe, became true with the Holocaust *and* with the US and European lack of will to host and manage its survivors. Thus, the request of the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, acquired an international legitimation never obtained before by the Zionist movement.

Within this context, after nine months of evaluation, during which, again, they were supported and assisted by the Zionist community and opposed or ignored by the Palestinian Arab leadership, the UNSCOP members presented their recommendations to the UN General Assembly⁹⁰.

The majority report recommended the partition of Mandatory Palestine in a Jewish, corresponding to Negev, Eastern Galilee and most of the coast, and an Arab state, the rest of the Mandate territory. Three members of the Committee, India, Iran and Yugoslavia, produced a minority report in which the opposed solution, a unitary state based on the democratic principle, was recommended⁹¹. The minority report had no chance of being approved. Among Zionists, only Magnes welcomed it as a basis to negotiate with the Arab counterpart⁹². But the vast majority of Zionist movement, the Mainstream leadership, the US and the USSR were united in the acceptance of the principle of partition. In particular, the Soviet stance for a Jewish independent state was even stronger than the American one, and the consensus among the two superpowers on this question will lead to their last joint action after the Second World War.

The reason for this Soviet attitude has to be found, according to the Israeli diplomat Gideon Rafael, to the common interests of the two superpowers in a waning of the British Empire in the area. The Soviets in particular, thought that there was nothing better for this aim than weakening the newly born Arab League,

⁸⁹ *Palestina e Israele: che fare?*, Noam Chomsky e Ilan Pappé, a cura di Frank Barat, Fazi Editore, Roma, 2015, pp. 72-76.

⁹⁰ *Una terra e due popoli. Sulla questione ebraico-araba*, Martin Buber, La Giuntina Firenze 2008, p.253, *The one-state solution a breakthrough for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock*, Virginia Tilley, University of Michigan Press, Appendix B, Ann Arbor 2005 and *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp. 160-163

⁹¹ *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p. 45.

⁹² *Ibidem*, and *One State, Two States. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Benny Morris, Yale University Press, New Haven & London 2009, p.77

founded in March 1945 and seen as an agent of British interests in the area. Furthermore, the strong socialist tradition within Zionist movement, made rise hopes among Soviets about the future international alliances of the new Jewish entity.⁹³

In fact

“In its attempt to gain a foothold in the Middle East and the Mediterranean during the years 1945-53, the Soviet Union initially paid little attention to the Arab states.[...] In those years, Moscow thought little of the Arab potential as an instrument for the subversion of western power in the area, especially since Arab leaders, *prominently among them the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem*[the exiled ‘Amin al Husseini], had manifested pronounced sympathies for and collaboration with Nazi Germany. On the other hand, the Soviet Union was impressed with the resolve and spirit of the Jewish people fighting with the Allies against Hitler's armies in the Middle East and Europe and against the British administration in Palestine. [...] Whether the USSR's support for Israel's independence was planned in advance to keep the region in a state of constant turmoil is open to question. But *what can be assumed with certainty is that it backed Israel in 1947 in the belief that it would expedite the demise of British power in the Middle East.* [...] Be that as it may, the policies of the two superpowers, which pursued different and even contrary objectives in the Middle East, converged in their joint support of the United Nations' decision of 29 November 1947 to recognize Jewish and Arab rights to sovereign statehood in a partitioned Palestine. This Soviet- American consensus was their first and last joint post-war action on any major political issue in the Middle East.”⁹⁴

Consequently, thanks to the joint US and USSR pressures, the 29th of November 1947 the UN General Assembly approved the UNSCOP Partition Plan with the Resolution 181⁹⁵. Despite the Revisionist Zionist definition of the partition as a “caricature”⁹⁶ (since they never renounced to their irredentist claims), the Mainstream Zionist leadership immediately took the, probably unique, chance of establishing a Jewish state, no matter how small in terms of territory, causing an almost immediate wave of intercommunal violence in Palestine.

Way before the full withdrawal of the British Army from the Mandate's territory, the Mandate itself collapsed, finally falling into a state of civil war between the *Yishuv* and the rest of the Palestinian population.

A civil war which was initially caused and then fostered by the terrorist elements of both sides, the Zionist Irgun and Lehi and the Arab bands of *shabab*⁹⁷, both harassing the opponent's civilians with bomb attacks and assaults to public transport. Arab volunteers from neighbouring countries arrived in the country to

⁹³ *Ibid.*, *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p.160, and *Divergence and Convergence of American-Soviet Interests in the Middle East: An Israeli Viewpoint*, Gideon Rafael, Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 100, No. 4, 1985-1986.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 562-563

⁹⁵ UN/RES/181(II)29November1947, <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/7F0AF2BD897689B785256C330061D253>.

⁹⁶ *One State, Two States. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Benny Morris, Yale University Press, New Haven & London 2009, p.77.

⁹⁷ “Young”.

support the fight against Zionism, organized into an Arab Liberation Army (ALA), commanded by the Syrian veteran Fawzi al Qawuqji, and supported by the Arab League⁹⁸.

However, since the very beginning of violence, the disparity of forces, in sharp favour of the *Yishuv*, was clear. The Zionist paramilitary units, well-armed and experienced, were on barely anything superior to the bands of Arab irregulars. These last, also because of the recent British repression of the Revolt, were badly organized, undisciplined and poor equipped, while the ALA forces proved themselves to be more able to cause damage than to support the fight.⁹⁹

This appeared already clear to British and neighbouring Arabs also before the breakup of the hostilities, since already in October 1947 the Arab League Military Committee stated that:

A. The Zionists in Palestine – organisations and parties, political, military and administrative – are organisationally on a very high level. These institutions can immediately transform into a Zionist government possessing all the means necessary for governing.

B. The Jews today have large forces, in terms of manpower, armaments and equipment [...].

C. The Jews have enormous economic resources in the country and outside it [...].

D. The Jews have a great ability to bring reinforcements and equipment from overseas in great quantities.

[...]

A. Currently the Palestinian Arabs do not have enough forces (manpower, weapons and equipment), to withstand in any [acceptable] way the Zionist organisations.

B. In the areas where a Jewish majority is in control live today 350,000 Arabs – in isolated villages and blocks threatened with destruction, should the Zionists carry out wide-ranging operations.¹⁰⁰

The Arab disadvantage was accentuated by the contemporary exodus of vast part of the *elite* portion of its population, about 70.000. people, which fled because of the conflict and of the incapacity of the local Arab forces to provide an adequate protection to their communities¹⁰¹.

This depart, however, would have been nothing compared to the effects of the so called “Plan Dalet” elaborated by the *Haganah* the 10th of March 1948 and implemented during the Zionist offensives of April and early May of 1948. The Zionist leadership, in fact, had to face an ulterior problem together with the Arab refusal to accept the partition, since the Mandate’s portion assigned to a future Jewish State still hosted a population of 400.000 Palestinian Arabs, together with 500.000 Jews¹⁰².

⁹⁸ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.160-163.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Behind the Screen*, pp.66–67 (‘General Ismail Safwat’s First Report Composed by the Military Committee and Presented to the [Arab] League Council on 9 Oct. 1947’), from *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949*, Benny Morris, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004, p.33.

¹⁰¹ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p.163.

¹⁰² *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949*, Benny Morris, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004, p. 60.

This important presence of non-Jewish elements within the borders of the future state was particularly worrying for the Zionist leadership, especially in prevision of the expected invasion and confrontation with the Arab armies after the British withdrawal.

In order to adequately confront militarily this event, all the key strategic positions left by the British troops, that is to say barracks, radio stations and crossroads, so that the borders of the future state could have been secured together with continuity between Jewish communities. The Plan Dalet had precisely to provide an organizational framework to achieve these goals, especially in relationship with the threat posed by the strong Arab presence cited previously to these lasts, which are synthetically described by the Plan itself as a “fixed defensive system to preserve our settlements”¹⁰³.

The means to establish this system consisted in:

Mounting operations against enemy population centres located inside or near our defensive system in order to prevent them from being used as bases by an active armed force. These operations can be divided into the following categories:

- Destruction of villages (setting fire to, blowing up, and planting mines in the debris), especially those population centres which are difficult to control continuously.
- Mounting combing and control operations according to the following guidelines: encirclement of the village and conducting a search inside it. In the event of resistance, the armed force must be wiped out and the population must be expelled outside the borders of the state.¹⁰⁴

It is difficult to affirm whether the Plan has to be considered as premeditated scheme for an ethnic cleansing of the future Jewish State, as affirmed by Walid Khalidi and Ilan Pappé¹⁰⁵, or simply as a pre-emptive countermeasure in prevision of the Arab invasion. The first hypothesis is supported by the historical presence of Zionist’s rhetoric regarding the eventual “transfer” of the non-Jewish population¹⁰⁶, together with the old issue of the soil ownership.

In fact, of about 8 million of *dunum* of cultivable land within the State assigned to the *Yishuv*, only 1 million and a half was of Jewish property¹⁰⁷. This last issue would have eventually been fixed by the forced absence of the Arab owners.

However, on the other hand, it appears evident that the destruction of villages, and the expulsion of their inhabitants, followed a geographical path coherent with military criteria, as affirmed by Benny Morris¹⁰⁸. It

¹⁰³ *Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine*, Walid Khalidi, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp.4-33, Autumn 1988.

¹⁰⁴ *Sefer Toldot Haganah [History of the Haganah]*, vol.3, Yehuda Slutsky (Tel-Aviv: Zionist Library 1972), Appendix 48, pp. 1955-60, from *Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine*, Walid Khalidi, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp.4-33, Autumn 1988.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem* and *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p. 163 and p. 172.

¹⁰⁶ *Nakba, l'espulsione dei palestinesi dalla loro terra*, Gruppo di Ricerca sul Medio-Oriente contemporaneo, Edizioni Ripostes, Salerno-Roma, 1988, pp. 13-18 and *Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine*, Walid Khalidi, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp.4-33, Autumn 1988.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*.

would have not been casual that the areas interested by the expulsions corresponded with the most strategic ones, such as the surroundings of the road from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem together with mixed cities such as Haifa and Jaffa and the Galilean border with Syria. On the contrary, Arab areas of little strategic interest such as the Galilee hills maintained their population, despite their history of all but peaceful relations with the *Yishuv*¹⁰⁹.

Nevertheless, whichever the intentions of the Plan authors, the final outcome of it resulted in the expulsion of the vast majority of the Palestinian Arabs residing in areas assigned or conquered by the Jewish forces until the British complete withdrawal.

In coincidence with this event, the 14th of May 1948, Ben-Gurion proclaimed in Tel-Aviv the establishment of the State of Israel.¹¹⁰ Immediately, the 15th of May, Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq jointly attacked and invaded the former Mandate's territory, and the First Arab-Israeli War began, and endured until January 1949¹¹¹.

In terms of numbers and means the two opposing forces were almost equivalent, given the fact that the Arab forces, with the sole exception of the Jordanian Arab Legion, even if combined together were had to face a heavy lack of experience and means in comparison with the Israeli forces. Furthermore, the Arab armies, and particularly the Egyptians and the Iraqis, had to fight relatively far away from their basis, and had therefore to rely on very long supply chains, in sharp contrast with the Israelis, which on the opposite were able to confront the opponents in a circumscribed area¹¹².

As a result, in the very first days of the conflict the only successes of the Arab forces consisted in the Jordanian conquest and occupation of the West Bank and of the Old City of Jerusalem, the 19th of May. However, the Arab Legion did not take any effort to advance deeply in the Israeli territory, respecting *de facto* the 1948 Partition. This attitude reflected the annexation plans of the Hashemite King 'Abd Allah towards the West Bank of Jordan, and the negotiations conducted before the war between him and the Jewish Agency in that respect.¹¹³

On the opposite, on the Northern and Southern fronts, the Egyptian, Syrian and Lebanese forces faced a fierce Israeli resistance failing their early attacks, losing Akko and, on the Egyptian side, getting stuck in the Negev. In the meanwhile, the expulsions and the destructions of Arab villages within the borders of what

¹⁰⁸ *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949*, Benny Morris, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004, p. 164.

¹⁰⁹ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p.174.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.167.

¹¹¹ *Ivi*, pp.166-172.

¹¹² *Ibidem*.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*.

was at that point the State of Israel continued, interesting the area of the coastal plain between Tel-Aviv and Haifa.¹¹⁴

In reaction, the United Nations nominated a mediator, the Count of Wisborg Folke Bernadotte, the 20th of May, who called for a ceasefire the 29th, which became effective the 11th of June¹¹⁵.

The country during the truce was divided in a southern part, Negev and Gaza, controlled by the Egyptians, the West Bank, including the important cities of Lydda and Ramle, and the Old City of Jerusalem by the Arab Legion, while the rest remained firmly under Israeli control.¹¹⁶

However, during the truce the Israeli forces proved to be able to acquire weapons and ammunitions from Eastern Bloc countries, despite the embargo established by the United Nations. On the opposite, the British adhered to it, to great disadvantage of the Egyptian, Jordanian and Iraqi army, which were equipped exclusively with British weaponry.¹¹⁷

This element changed the equilibria within the conflict and gave to the Israeli side a definitive advantage. The 8th of July the conflict started again and the Israeli forces triumphed for ten days on all the fronts, conquering to the Jordanians Lydda and Ramle, until the call for a second truce by Bernadotte. The opposition of this last to the Israeli annexation of the Negev found an end with his assassination the 17th of September by the Zionist terrorist group *Lehi*, which opened the road to the conquest of the Southern portion of Palestine. By October, with the conquest of Beersheba, Israel had secured the conquest of most of the former Mandate's territory, with the sole exception of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.¹¹⁸

Given the impossibility to continue to fight, the Arab states started to negotiate, separately, with Israel for an armistice. In the meanwhile, more than 700.000 people were expelled from the newly born State of Israel. This impressive mass of Palestinian Arab refugees would find refuge in the neighbouring Arab countries and in the parts of Palestine remained under foreign Arab control, mainly the West Bank, Gaza, Transjordan and Lebanon¹¹⁹.

This exodus would have eventually represented both one of the core issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the event that most of all made possible the effective Palestinian partition and the creation of a Jewish State.

¹¹⁴ Ivi, pp. 172-173.

¹¹⁵ Ivi, pp. 166-172.

¹¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹¹⁹ *Nakba, l'espulsione dei palestinesi dalla loro terra*, Gruppo di Ricerca sul Medio-Oriente contemporaneo, Edizioni Ripostes, Salerno-Roma, 1988, pp.211-212.

In fact, through the expulsions, the remaining Arab population within the Israeli borders was now reduced into a clear minority status, with a total of just 160.000 people. At the same time, the return of the refugees, would have been prevented with any means by the Zionist leadership and agencies.

The United Nations' position in relation with the right of the Palestinian refugees to go back to their homes was indeed immediately made clear with the approval by the UN General Assembly of the Resolution 194, the 11th of December 1948, which instituted a Conciliation Commission and stated at point 11 that:

“[...]the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible¹²⁰.”

The Israeli leadership took therefore any effort to prevent this return, and to encourage at the same time Jewish immigration within its borders.

The very idea among Zionists to block any attempt of return by the expelled Palestinian population was indeed prior to the Resolution, circulating at least since the very beginning of the Plan Dalet operations.

According to Benny Morris, in fact, already the 5th of June 1948 Weitz, official of the Jewish National Fund, Danin, head of the military intelligence, and the member of the Israeli UN delegation Sasson presented to Ben-Gurion a memorandum on the unexpected “transfer” of the Arab population outside Israel, welcoming it as a solution to the question of the Arab presence within the new borders, which made finally possible the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine¹²¹.

The document, in order to make permanent this key result, recommended:

“(1) Preventing the Arabs from returning to their places.

(2) [Extending] help to the Arabs to be absorbed in other places¹²².”

With regards with the first objective, had to be implemented the

“(1) Destruction of villages as much as possible during military operations.

(2) Prevention of any cultivation of land by them [i.e., the Arabs], including reaping, collection [of crops], picking [olives] and so on [...]

(3) Settlement of Jews in a number of villages and towns so that no “vacuum” is created.

¹²⁰ UNGA Res. 194, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/un-general-assembly-resolution-181> .

¹²¹ *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949*, Benny Morris, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004, pp. 311-313., and *Nakba, l'espulsione dei palestinesi dalla loro terra*, Gruppo di Ricerca sul Medio-Oriente contemporaneo, Edizioni Ripostes, Salerno-Roma, 1988, pp. 60-66.

¹²² *'Retroactive Transfer, A Scheme for the Solution of the Arab Question in the State of Israel'*, Weitz, Sasson, Danin, undated but from early June, ISA FM 2564\19, from *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949*, Benny Morris, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004, p. 313.

(4) Enacting legislation [geared to barring a return].

(5) [Making] propaganda [aimed at non-return].¹²³

The very idea of settling an interethnic conflict with an exchange of populations, moreover, proved to be “effective” in several other cases in the years previous to the 1948 war, with the Greek-Turkish example of the 20s cited quite often by Zionist officials and Ben-Gurion itself¹²⁴.

The total ignoring therefore of the Resolution 194 by Israel in the period immediately after this last’s approval by the United Nations General Assembly is hardly surprising. On the opposite, the expulsions continued also within Israel, creating a new category of “internal” Palestinian Arab refugees, while the properties of the refugees were destroyed or seized. This policy of acquisition continued until 1954¹²⁵.

The new parliament of the State of Israel, the *Knesset*, provided a legal framework for the whole course of action, approving the 14th of March 1950 the “Absentee’s Property Law”, through which Israel seized all the properties of the “absentees”, through the nomination by the state of Custodians, such as the Jewish National Fund and the *Haganah*.¹²⁶

Ironically, the *HaShomer HaTzair* movement of *kibbutzim*, one of the promoters of binationalism and coexistence, was one of the first beneficiaries of this general seizure of land and properties¹²⁷.

Furthermore, it has to be taken into account that, together with the seizure or the destruction of the refugees’ properties, another instrument used to prevent these last’s return consisted in the encouragement of a massive Jewish immigration in the new state.

The scheme appears clearly since just after the approval by the *Knesset* of the Absentee Property Law on March 1950, a new law, defined as the “Return Law”, was approved the 5th of July of the same year, according to which any Jew has the right to Israeli citizenship¹²⁸. The resulting enhanced Jewish immigration from Europe and Middle East gave an additional legitimacy, a demographic one, to the new population asset of Israel. In addition, the very toponymy of the Israeli areas was purposely changed, with Lydda and Ramle becoming Lod and Ramla, or Bir Saba’ changed with Beersheba.

The United Nations, given the Israeli disregard of the calls to allow the refugees to go back to their properties, could only establish, in December 1949, an institution, the United Nations Relief and Works

¹²³ Ibidem

¹²⁴ Ivi, pp.318.319.

¹²⁵ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.183-185.

¹²⁶ Absentees Property Law, 5710-1950, <https://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/Public/files/Discriminatory-Laws-Database/English/04-Absentees-Property-Law-1950.pdf>.

¹²⁷ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p.185.

¹²⁸ The Law of Return 5710 (1950), <https://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/return.htm>.

Agency (UNRWA) responsible to provide basic services to the expelled Palestinians amassed in camps, which would have been soon transformed in permanent slums.¹²⁹

The conclusion of these policies, and of the First Arab-Israeli War of 1948-49, consisted of the final partition of Mandatory Palestine. A false partition nevertheless, since while the *Yishuv* had finally obtained a Jewish State, and as we have seen immediately took every effort to maintain it, the Palestinian Arabs did not obtain a state for their own.

What was left of the Mandate on Arab hands was in fact annexed by the now named Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Jerusalem and the West Bank), and Egypt (the Gaza strip). The Palestinians had to face the occupation by these two neighbours or the exile, as happened to the 750.000 Arab inhabitants of the part of Palestine assigned to or annexed by Israel. This event would have been remembered as the *Nakba*, the catastrophe, by the Palestinian Arabs. On the opposite, for the Israeli these crucial events would have been remembered as a War of Independence/Liberation, *Milkhemet Ha'Atzma'ut*.

The complete separation of the former Palestinian Mandate's communities, also in terms of historic memory, was completed and the worst predictions of Zionist pacifists became real and will endure until the Six Days War of 1967. Already in October 1948, Magnes noticed the cruel irony of Israel, a state built by refugees, creating new refugees:

“It is unfortunate that the very men who could point to the tragedy of Jewish DP's [displaced persons] as the chief argument for mass immigration into Palestine should now be ready, as far as the world knows, to help create an additional category of DP's in the Holy Land.”¹³⁰

In 1950 Arendt also expressed her deep disillusion affirming that the Arab refugees flight

“prepared by Zionist plans of large-scale population transfers during the war and followed by the Israeli refusal to readmit the refugees to their old home, made the old Arab claim against Zionism finally come true: the Jews simply aimed at expelling the Arabs from their homes. What had been the pride of the Jewish homeland, that it had not been based upon exploitation, turned into a curse when the final test came: the flight of the Arabs would not have been possible and not have been welcomed by the Jews if they had lived in a common economy. The reactionary Arabs of the Near East and their British protectors were finally proved right: they had always considered “*the Jews dangerous not because they exploit the fellaheen, but because they do not exploit them*” (Weizmann).¹³¹

The establishment of the State of Israel, the *de-facto* partition of Mandatory Palestine between this last and the neighbouring states of Jordan and Egypt and the dispersion of 750.000 Arab Palestinians from their homes settled the environment in which the conflict until nowadays endure, and of which nobody can foresee a conclusion.

¹²⁹ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p. 180.

¹³⁰ *The Jewish Writings*, Hannah Arendt, edited by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p.445.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

The partitionists, Ben-Gurion and his party above all, had triumphed. A Jewish State, where every Jew in the world could have found a safe haven and the right to citizenship in force of the 1950 Law of Return¹³², emptied of the 90% of its Arab inhabitants, was established.

The Mainstream Zionist leadership obtained the most of what the Biltmore Plan claimed, and found, thanks to military victory, a unanimous political legitimization, that will last until 1973, with the shock of the *Kippur* War. Since then, the binationalist faction within Zionist, already in minority, became obsolete. The Zionist ruling class remained, therefore, substantially the same after the conflict.

On the other side, happened the exact opposite. Because of this cataclysm, Palestinian traditional politics disappeared. The massive failure of the *a'ayan* as a ruling class was under the eyes of everyone. Under their leadership the Arab Palestinians rejected a plan of partition that assigned them 45% of Mandatory Palestine and fought a war, with the aim to obtain an Arab State on the whole of Palestine. They obtained, at best, an occupation by another Arab country.

The unluckiest had to find refuge in camps outside Palestine, where they faced hostility and suspect, especially in Lebanon. In fact, it has to be taken into account that the legal and material conditions of the Palestinian refugees varied considerably, depending on the social conditions present in the different host Arab countries. The case of Lebanon is particularly indicative of how much these conditions influenced the Palestinian refugees' treatment. Since the very beginning of these lasts' settlement in the country, the Lebanese governments took every effort to prevent any naturalization of the refugees as well as any normalization of their conditions.¹³³

Their presence, in fact, as Sunni Muslim Arabs, in a country constituted on a delicate interconfessional balance among at least four major communities, Christian, Sunni, Shia and Druse Arabs, would have constituted a serious issue that would have led to tragic consequences. However, given this attitude, to the refugees were denied several professions, as well as social and civil rights, and treated as foreigners also after decades since their arrival¹³⁴.

In the bordering Syria was also adopted a discriminatory attitude towards the refugees, but in a softer way, with the ban of Palestinians from few kinds of jobs, while in Egypt the necessity to integrate the refugees and the Palestinian inhabitants of the Gaza strip was not even took in consideration.¹³⁵

In fact, this piece of Palestinian territory which remained under Egyptian control was not integrated at all into proper Egypt and continued to be administered by a military governor, *hakim*, while obviously no

¹³² The Law of Return 5710 (1950), <https://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/return.htm>.

¹³³ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p.182-183.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

permits of work were released to find jobs in Egypt.¹³⁶ Only the Muslim Brotherhood, together with UNRWA, managed to provide social and economic help to Gaza refugees, concentrated in 8 camps.¹³⁷

In the Hashemite Kingdom, on the opposite, every effort was taken in order to naturalize not only the Palestinian refugees, but also the Palestinian Arabs who did not leave their homes during and after the *Nakba*, that is the West Bank inhabitants.

The newly enlarged Kingdom had all the interests to integrate the new subjects, and therefore conceded to Palestinians, refugees or not, full freedom in terms of jobs and movement. However, these rights were severely conditioned to a complete loyalty to the King and his government¹³⁸.

In fact, since Jordan found himself in awkwardly condition of considering that the majority of its population was now Palestinian rather than Jordanian, any attempt to revitalize Palestinian nationalism was considered by the Kingdom as treason¹³⁹.

Given the complete destruction of Palestinian Arab society, also the *a'ayan* political influence deriving from that society declined irreversibly. Their complete inability to enhance the material and social conditions of their community and to rise among this a sense of statehood other than the opposition to the Zionist settlement during the Mandate, make them unable to confront the *Yishuv* in the final strife.

As Musa al Alami, a prominent exponent of their class, affirmed:

“The fundamental source of our weakness was that we were unprepared even though not taken by surprise, while the Jews were fully prepared; that we proceed along the lines of previous revolutions, while the Jews proceeded along the lines of total war; that we worked on a local basis, without unity, without totality, without a general command, our defence disjointed and our affairs disordered, every town fighting on its own and only those areas adjacent to the Jews entering the battle at all, while the Jews conducted the war with a unified organization, a unified command, and total conscription¹⁴⁰.”

Of course, they still retained wealth and influence and they proved to be able to find new power positions, especially within the newly enlarged Kingdom of Jordan.¹⁴¹ But the struggle against Zionism and Israel was no more in their hands.

Because of the political repression among Israeli Arabs and the Jordanian West Bank inhabitants, the prominence within the political debate on the armed opposition to Israel, together with the political legitimization deriving from it, would have fall into the hands of a completely new generation, mostly

¹³⁶ *Gaza, a History*, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Hurst & Company, London, 2014, p. 77.

¹³⁷ Ivi, p.78 and p.82.

¹³⁸ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p.182.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁰ *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p. 115.

¹⁴¹ *One State, Two States. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Benny Morris, Yale University Press, New Haven & London 2009 and *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.186-202.

emerged from the refugees' community, the "Children of the *Nakba*", especially in Lebanon, Gaza and Egypt.

A particular group of people among the refugees, the youth able to pursue their studies at the universities in Beirut and Cairo, would have in fact formed the leadership of the future Palestinian resistance movements. On the base of the host Arab country internal politics, these groups would have founded their ideological basis and key thoughts, which would have had great influence on the following events.

In general, we can affirm that in the late 40s and the 50s the Arab world was interested by the rise of revolutionary ideologies, adverse to the traditional liberal nationalism that dominated the political scene of the first half of the 20th century. Two prominent political flows were representative of this period, that is to say political Islam, represented mainly by the originally Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, which descended politically from the thought of Afghani, 'Abdu and Kawakibi, and the secular Pan-Arab nationalism, which saw its main representatives in ideologues, as the Syrians Constantine Zureiq and Michel Aflaq, and among young military officers, as Muhammad Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt¹⁴².

With the Free Officers coup of July 1952, this last in particular would have brought himself and Pan-Arabism to dominate the political debate in the Arab Middle East until 1967¹⁴³.

Precisely in the newly Nasser dominated Egypt, groups of refugees *fidā'īyyūn*, the fighters for the cause of Palestine, became in Gaza Strip the new bulk of the Palestinian political leadership, finding a political legitimacy, truly felt this time by the Palestinian masses, in their staunch opposition to Israel¹⁴⁴.

Since the very first years which followed the 1948 war, in fact, the Gaza Strip refugees' community and the American University of Cairo would have in fact provided figures, students as Yasser Arafat, Salah Khalaf and Khalil al Wazir, that would have been key in the organization of early operations of guerrilla and disturbance actions, initially targeting the new occupiers of former Arab properties in the newly established Israel, which would have constituted the birthplace of the *fidā'īyyūn*.¹⁴⁵

In the very same period, another group of refugee's students, at the American University of Cairo, founded in 1951 a political movement aiming at revenging the *Nakba*, the Arab Nationalist Movement (*al Qawmiyyun al Arab*), led by figures such as the refugees George Habash and Wadie Haddad, whose role would have been key to the future development of the Palestinian resistance's history. This last movement, however, was, in sharp contrast with the Gaza's *fidā'īyyūn* (whose founding members were Muslim

¹⁴² *Storia del Medio Oriente, 1798-2005*, Massimo Campanini, il Mulino, Bologna, 2006, pp.103-107.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ *Gaza, a History*, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Hurst & Company, London, 2014, pp. 82-94.

Brotherhood's sympathisers), clearly ideologically oriented, towards Pan-Arabism and in clear support of Nasser¹⁴⁶.

This attitude finds its origins in the proximity and influence of the Syrian political debate and of the Syrian thinkers cited previously, especially if we consider the fact that Zureiq himself was a professor and then acting president of the American University of Beirut¹⁴⁷. The early focus of the Movement exclusively on Arab unity is evident, intended as the only possible mean to continue the strife against the newly born state of Israel. In fact, according to Wadie Haddad:

“The way to Tel-Aviv is through Damascus, Baghdad, Amman and Cairo¹⁴⁸.”

The conflict with Israel was then exclusively regarded as one between the Arab world as a whole against the Zionist entity, without any space for a Palestinian nationalism as a cause in itself.

Very representative of this period was the thought of the Druze thinker and politician Ali Nasir al Din, which central element was

“his concept of revenge (*tha'r*). In writing about the Arab- Israeli conflict, he borrowed the language and outlook of the Jahiliyya poets: the defeat of the Arabs was, for him, a shame (*'ar*) that had to be erased in order to restore dignity to the nation. Revenge was one of three elements that formed MAN 's [Arab Nationalist Movement] motto: *wihda, taharrur, tha'r* (unity, liberation, and revenge); the movement's first mouthpiece (first published in 1952) was named *al-Tha'r*¹⁴⁹.”

Within this context, the Gaza's *fidā'īyyūn* were able to adopt a political structure mainly after 1956 and the Suez War. Previously to this crucial event, in fact, their incursions and military activities were clearly subordinated to Nasser's own confrontation with Israel, making impossible any political autonomy for the Palestinian resistance movements.

In fact, despite several Nasser's denials regarding an Egyptian involvement in these raids,

“Colonel Mustafa Hafez's *Mukhabarat* [the Egyptian military intelligence] were in fact training and leading the Palestinian commandos, and the Arab press often celebrated the heroism of these *fidā'īyyūn* [...]”¹⁵⁰.

These constant raiding actions, to which Israel responded raiding Khan Yunis in August 1955¹⁵¹, together with the support provided by Nasser to the Algerian independentists, led to an increased tension between

¹⁴⁶ *George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation*, As'ad Abu Khalil, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 91-103, 1999 and *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, pp. 121-123.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *The Arab Nationalists Movement 1951-1971: From Pressure Group to Socialist Party*, Basil al Kubaisi, unpublished PhD. Dissertation, American University, 1971, from *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p. 122.

¹⁴⁹ *George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation*, As'ad Abu Khalil, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, p. 94.

¹⁵⁰ *Gaza, a History*, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Hurst & Company, London, 2014, p. 89.

Nasser and the former colonial powers, France and the United Kingdom, which deflagrated with the announcement by the *rais*, the 26th of July 1956, of the nationalization of the Suez Canal¹⁵².

The resulting War of 1956, which saw Egypt confronting Israel, France and the United Kingdom, represented a turning point for several reasons, the most important being the rise of the Nasser's prestige within the Arab world, together therefore with the Pan-Arab ideology. The defiance demonstrated with Israel and the former colonial oppressors' forces, which despite a military overcome were forced to withdraw by US and Soviet pressures, led to the an almost complete political and ideological dominance of the Egyptian *rais* within the Arab world¹⁵³.

The Nasser's success, however, represented, awkwardly enough, an occasion on the long run for the Palestinian *fidā'īyyūn* to make themselves, and Palestinian nationalism, independent by the cumbersome *rais*' protective wing.

The Israeli occupation of Gaza, which endured from November 1956 to March 1957, led obviously to the virtual elimination of the *fidā'īyyūn* activities in the Strip and to the fled of the major leaders, mainly in Gulf countries as Qatar and Kuwait¹⁵⁴. Moreover, the resistance activities were not allowed to constitute themselves again after the following Egyptian retaking of the Strip. In fact, according to Jean-Pierre Filiu:

“The Egyptian leadership's overwhelming priority was in fact to avert any provocation of Israel so that nothing would stand in the way of Nasser's retention of his post-Suez gains.”¹⁵⁵

These new conditions, the fled from the Gaza Strip and the now denied Egyptian support, instead of leading to a predictable end of the Palestinian *fidā'īyyūn* groups, led on the opposite to the final adoption of a stable and, most importantly, unitarian, political form.

This unexpected evolution was due and has to be read within the broader context of the Arab “Cold War”, a fierce confrontation, that endured from 1958 to 1964, for political leadership in the whole Arab world between the Egyptian president Nasser and the Pan-Arab, vaguely socialist, ideology on one side and the more conservative Arab monarchies, as Saudi Arabia and Hashemite Jordan, on the other.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Ivi, p. 90.

¹⁵² *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp. 202-206.

¹⁵³ *Gaza, a History*, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Hurst & Company, London, 2014, pp. 107-109.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Ivi., p.108.

¹⁵⁶ *George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation*, As'ad Abu Khalil, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 91-103, 1999, *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.206-209 and *Gaza, a History*, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Hurst & Company, London, 2014 pp.109-112.

These last regimes were beginning to feel indeed threatened by Nasser, whose growing influence made him able even to unify Egypt and Syria in February 1958, which formed the United Arab Republic, a Pan-Arab political project which lived only until 1961¹⁵⁷.

This perceived threat became real to the monarchic eyes especially when, the 14th of July 1958, a bloody coup led by the general Abd al Karim Qassem, inspired by the Nasser coup of 1952, led to the overthrowing of the Hashemite dynasty of Iraq. However, far than becoming a faithful ally of Nasser and Egypt, Qassem formed a third political front within this Middle Eastern Cold War, reclaiming for himself and Iraq the leadership of the “progressive” Arab forces¹⁵⁸.

The Palestinian movement which would have dominated the Palestinian resistance and politics for roughly all the period since this period onward, the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, or Fatah from the reverse acronym of its Arabic name, *Harakat al Tahrir al watani al Filastini*, was founded within this context in Kuwait in October 1959 by no others than the previous raiding leaders from Gaza, such as Yasser Arafat (Abu Ammar), Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) and Khalil al Wazir (Abu Jihad). Ideologically, the movement was nationalist and secular, vaguely leftist, and conceptualizing the strife against Israel in terms of a mass struggle. Most importantly, it was representative of a Palestinian nationalism rather than a Pan-Arab one¹⁵⁹.

It was therefore part of the “progressive” Arab political wing, but at the opposition to Nasser and allied with his rival, Qassem. In fact, in direct competition with Nasser with regards with the Palestinian question, the Iraqi leader embraced and supported the Palestinian cause in itself, disjoining it from a broader Arab nationalism, being the first to call for a Palestinian entity in West Bank and Gaza.¹⁶⁰

The older Arab Nationalist Movement, remained clearly oriented toward Pan-Arab nationalism, supporting Nasser and the United Arab Republic experiment. Its main intent was still represented by a social and national revolution within the overall Arab world rather than the liberation of Palestine in itself, despite the Habash diffidence over the Egyptian leader¹⁶¹.

Only after 1967, when it splats in two distinct formations, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DPFLP), led respectively by George Habash and Nayef Hawatmeh, this once united political group shifted from a Pan-Arab rhetoric to a

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ivi, pp. 112-115.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., *George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation*, As'ad Abu Khalil, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 91-103, 1999 and *Palestinian Nationalism: An Overview*, As'ad Ghanem, Israel Studies, Vol. 18, No. 2, Shared Narratives—A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue, Guest Editors: Paul Scham, Benjamin Pogrund, and As'ad Ghanem, pp. 11-29, 2013.

¹⁶⁰ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p. 206.

¹⁶¹ *George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation*, As'ad Abu Khalil, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 91-103.

Marxist one, and from a Pan-Arab nationalism to a Palestinian one. In terms of popular support, however, Fatah always dwarfed these two rival movements, at the point that the Arafat movement itself became identified with the Palestinian national struggle¹⁶².

An unexpected final role would have had the old ruling class of the *a'ayan*, which proved to be able to provide a fundamental instrument for the struggle for Palestine within the Arab League, founding in Jerusalem the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) the 28th of May 1964. The newly born institution expressed a legislative body, the Palestinian National Council (PNC), and a founding and programmatic charter, the Palestinian National Covenant. The organization, aimed to be politically representative of all Palestinians, in Palestine and abroad, however, did not obtain great success under its first leader Ahmed Shuqayri.

The Fatah's *fidā'īyyūn*, however, did not adhere to it, since they correctly recognized it as led by foreign Arab countries, particularly by Nasser.¹⁶³

This last's aim was indeed mainly in weakening the young Hashemite King of Jordan, Hussein, and nothing was better than to incite and support Palestinian nationalism within his kingdom, where, as cited previously, the vast majority of the population was Palestinian. Only after the disastrous Six Days War, that led to the decline of Nasser and to the resignation of Shuqayri, the movements felt sure to enter and take the control of the Organization, in 1969.

This last conflict, which would be remembered as the *Naksa*¹⁶⁴, would demonstrate to be an even more decisive event in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, reunifying Israeli Arabs with West Bank and Gaza Palestinians, creating a *de facto* Greater Israel and conducting, on the long-run, to a new reconsideration of the one-state solution to it.

The hostilities between Israel and the neighbour Arab countries of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq broke out because of Egyptian military manoeuvres, which were in turn be initiated because of Syrian requests of help due to supposed parallel Israeli manoeuvres on the Syrian border. The Israeli preventive interventions against the Arab neighbours' threat endured since the 5th of June 1967, during which was destroyed most of the Egyptian aircraft, up to the 10th of the same month. With a six days blitzkrieg, the Jewish State proved to be able to expand his borders on the whole of the former British Mandate of Palestine, plus the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights on the Syrian border¹⁶⁵.

Such a military catastrophe undermined for ever the prestige both of Nasser, Egypt, and in general of the whole Arab countries in their struggle against Israel. Since the key event represented by the War of 1967, the

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ The setback.

¹⁶⁵ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp. 233-236.

strife against Zionism would see again as main protagonists the Palestinian Arabs themselves, and especially the *fidā'īyyūn*, rather than the Arab countries, humiliated together with the Pan-Arab ideology.

Once explained how and why the resistance movements, and Fatah in particular, obtained and maintained a fundamental role in Palestinian politics and struggle with Israel, we must ask ourselves if the one-state idea was present in their ideologies. In sharp contrast with the contemporary disappearance within Zionism of this idea, we have to notice that, initially, the one-state solution was *the* idea of all *fidā'īyyūn* movements, although with differences, with the old Zionists binationalists and within themselves.

Differences, these lasts, that ironically resemble the differences among Zionists before 1948. The first source on this subject is the Palestinian National Covenant of 1964, drafted before the entrance of the resistance movements within PLO.

The Covenant showed a clear Pan-Arab orientation, reflecting the Nasserist influence on the Shuqayri led PLO.

It states that

“Palestine is an Arab homeland bound by strong national ties to the rest of the Arab Countries and which together form the large Arab homeland” (Art.1).¹⁶⁶

Consequentially, the UNSCOP Partition Plan of 1947, the Resolution 181 and the establishment of Israel are considered void, while the liberation of the whole former Mandate and the fight against “fascist” and “racist” Zionism is a “national duty” of all Arab people¹⁶⁷. Remarkably, there is no reference at all to the establishment of a Palestinian state, coherently with the Pan-Arab hostility to single Arab nationalisms. The commitment to the liberation is to be assumed by all the Arab leaders and so, ultimately, by Nasser.

The 1964 Covenant reflects so the historical period of its drafting, a period of ideological enthusiasm and trust towards the Egyptian leader and the future Great Arab Homeland. The Palestinian issue assumes in this discourse a fundamental role, but not the Palestinian people, which is *object* and not *subject* of its liberation. In any case, the Covenant took also a clear stance for Palestine as a single unity within Mandatory borders.

This entity, however, was not intended to be shared with Zionists. The Covenant indeed affirmed, at Art. 7, that only

“Jews of Palestinian origin are considered Palestinians if they are willing to live peacefully and loyally in Palestine.”¹⁶⁸

This statement reflected what has ever been the political position of Palestinian *a'ayan* before 1948, and was, as it has been, the same and the opposite version of the irredentist Revisionist Zionists: an Arab Palestine in which Jews, not Zionist, are allowed to stay as a minority.

¹⁶⁶ Palestinian National Covenant 1964, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-original-palestine-national-charter-1964>.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

It denied to Jewish people any right of self-determination, since Judaism is

“[...] a divine religion [and] is not a nationality with independent existence” (Art.18)¹⁶⁹.

The destiny of the Jews of not Palestinian origin is even not taken in consideration. It would have been considered, probably, a destiny of expulsion, on the base of the Algerian expulsionist example with the French *Pieds-Noirs*. This statement in the 7th article reflects also the common identification at that time in Arab politics between Zionists and Jews. An identification which is coherent with the Nasserist and Pan-Arab narrative of the Arab people, intended as a whole, fighting against foreign imperialism, whose first agents in Middle East were the Jews.

The predicted identification between Zionism and Jewish people as *longa manus* of Western powers made by Arendt and Buber revealed to be true. This explains also the initial antisemitism within Arab, especially Pan-Arab, political circles. A clear example is offered by the previously cited Movement of Arab Nationalists, defined as “fascistic” by the Lebanese-American professor As’ad Abu Khalil, whose leader George Habash, later founder of PFLP, was noted for his anti-Jewish sentiment, as his attacks to Jews, from the bombing of the Beirut synagogue in August 1949 to his declaration to *Life* in 1970 (so following the Marxist shift), in which still states that the PFLP intended to kill as many Jews, not Israelis, as possible, included those not living in Israel.¹⁷⁰

The political climate, however, changed completely with the shock constituted by the *Naksa* of 1967.

The Syrian philosopher Sadik Jalal al Azm’s critic of the whole cultural framework and the bombastic rhetoric of the Arab world during the Nasser era is particularly representative of the deep disillusion and of the need to find a cultural way to fight Zionism and Israel other than triumphalist speeches and self-victimization.

What was needed was an Arab cultural revolution, and the underlying reasons of the defeat were entrenched in the still pre-modern features of Arab culture and society which

“[...] still essentially employs tradition and costume rather than dynamics, mobility and ingenuity.”

A response would have had to

“entails not only equipment, machines, experts, and aircraft, but also a particular kind of mentality, psychology, cultural background, and physical reactions that the industrial revolution implanted in modern man and the scientific revolution confirmed in him so that they become part of his nature.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ *George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation*, As'ad Abu Khalil, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 91-103, 1999, *Internal Contradictions in the PFLP: Decision Making and Policy Orientation*, As'ad Abu Khalil, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 361-378, summer 1987 and *Life* magazine, June 12, 1970.

¹⁷¹ *Self-Criticism after the Defeat*, Sadik Jalal al Azm, Saqi 2011, p.85, from *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, pp. 130-131.

Substantially, al Azm was requiring covering not the gap with the Jewish State not only militarily but culturally, with the abandonment of the previous attitude assumed during Nasserism, vividly described by the poet Nizar Qabbani:

“Stirred

By Oriental bombast,

By Antarctic swaggering that never killed a fly,

By the fiddle and the drum,

We went to war

And lost. [...]”¹⁷²

The PLO Covenant had therefore to be object of several amendments and modifications, in order to reflect the mutation of the political climate and to provide a new proposal for the future of the Palestinian cause. The first occurred just after the entrance of Fatah within PLO in 1968¹⁷³. The reasons that will lead to the modifications of the Covenant have to be found in the different approach among Fatah’s *fidā’īyyūn* to the Jewish entity and presence within historical Palestine. The idea of a single state of Palestine, secular and democratic, within Fatah date back in fact to the draft of its Constitution, again in 1964.

The Fatah Constitution, in sharp contrast with the contemporary PLO Covenant, never even mentioned the Jewish people, but only Zionism, as the obvious enemy, and stated that the final goal of the movement was

“Establishing an independent democratic state with complete sovereignty on all Palestinian lands, and Jerusalem is its capital city, and protecting the citizens’ legal and equal rights without any racial or religious discrimination.”¹⁷⁴

The Constitution was modified only in 2009 and testifies the initial clear ideologic stand of Fatah for the democratic solution and a single state within the former Mandate, and its rejection of the UN General Assembly Resolution 181. However, it also rejects any form of Zionism, not recognizing any right of self-determination to the Jewish people (and to the Arab people as well). It cannot therefore be compared with the binationalism proposed by the old pacifist Zionist groups as *Brit Shalom* and *Ichud*, besides their common stand for a one-state solution.

The Covenant of 1968 differed so in various ways with the 1964 one, especially in the enhanced role attributed to the Palestinian people and nationalism rather than the Pan-Arab one. However, there was also a slight but important change regarding precisely the Art.7, demonstrating the influence of the Fatah’s Constitution. The article (now the 6th) now stated:

¹⁷² In <http://thenewliberator.wordpress.com/2011/02/04/footnotes-to-the-book-of-the-setback-by-nizar-qkabbani/>, from *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p. 129.

¹⁷³ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.242-245.

¹⁷⁴ Fatah Constitution 1964, <http://www.ipcri.org/index.php/publications/historical-documents/168-fatah-constitution>.

“The Jews who had normally resided in Palestine until the beginning of the Zionist invasion are considered Palestinians.”¹⁷⁵

The slightly different formulation of the article can be considered uninfluential and the content equal to the previous version. But, if it is so, there was also no reason to change the previous version of it. What can instead be affirmed is that the article testifies the new consideration of Zionism and Judaism, no more regarded as synonyms.

Still, the beginning of the “Zionist invasion” is not specified (1917 or 1882?) and, again, the destiny of the “invaders” is also left to ambiguity. But, at least, it is part of a process of rejection within the Palestinian resistance movements, and primarily Fatah, of the initial diffused antisemitism. The gradual acceptance of the reality of a Jewish presence in former Palestine, was diffused even within the Movement of Arab Nationalist of Habash. Several figures within the movement, especially from the leftist current of it, started to develop a less uncompromising position towards the Jewish presence, such as Nayef Hawatmeh. Since 1964, the same year of the drafting of the first Covenant and of Fatah Constitution, according to As’ad Abu Khalil, a prominent figure within the Arab Nationalist Movement Muhsin Ibrahim

“came to consider the movement’s approach to the Jewish question unethical. He called for a total revision and abandonment of anti-Semitism manifested on the pages of al Hurriyya, whose new line showed the influence of French leftist writings on the subject. After MAN’s [Arab Nationalist Movement] split, Ibrahim pushed the DFLP toward a unique view of the Jewish question, which prompted it to engage in dialogue with Jewish and Israeli leftists at a time when other PLO organizations considered such contacts treasonous.”¹⁷⁶

It is difficult to determine if the splits following 1967 within the Movement were due to ideological reasons, such as a different attitude towards Zionism (always considered as an enemy of course), divergences about the tactic to be used against it, or simple enmity and rivalry between leaders, or a mix of all these factors. What is clear is that, with the rise of the *fidā’iyyūn* movements at the end of the 60s, their position on the future shape of Palestine, as a single democratic state, became the dominant narrative within Palestinian politics. However, these positions had to change and shift again because of the events occurring in the region after 1967.

The high popularity of the new *fidā’iyyūn* led PLO within Palestinian people, which grew incredibly after the victory over Israel in the Battle of Karamah in 1968, was not seen with favour by many traditional Arab rulers, firstly the King of Jordan, Hussein. His fears of the Organization have to be found in the influence of this last among his subjects, for a good half Palestinians, and in the presence of the *fidā’iyyūn* headquarters in Amman, where they started to act as a state within the state.

¹⁷⁵ Palestinian National Covenant 1968, : http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/Palestinian_national_charter.pdf.

¹⁷⁶ *George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation*, As’ad Abu Khalil, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 91-103, 1999.

Furthermore, the movements, especially the PFLP, were not only of anti-Zionist nature, but also of revolutionary one, aiming to overthrow the Arab “reactionaries”. The tensions between Hussein and the *fidā'īyyūn*, exploded after a series of hijacking conducted precisely by the PFLP in Jordan at Dawson’s Field, after which the king decided to fight and expel the movements and the PLO from Jordan in September. This key event, the Black September, will determine the flight of the PLO in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and a progressive estrangement between the Organization and the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories¹⁷⁷.

The inevitable loss of power of action that this expulsion implied, stimulated an internal debate in the PLO on which plan of action adopt, besides the armed struggle with Israel. The idea of establishing an entity within at least a part of historical Palestine, alongside with a Jewish state, started to spread among resistance leaders. This shift towards a two-states solution, however, must be considered carefully. Still in 1971, the PNC, in its 8th session, adopted as its official position a democratic unitary state in the whole of Palestine, pushed by the Palestinian Research Center of Anis Sayigh and Nabil Shaath, another fundamental institution in the endorsement of a non-expulsionist attitude and of a one-state solution within Palestinian politics¹⁷⁸.

The firsts to endorse it were the members of DFLP and Hawatmeh, for several reasons, the most important of them being the Soviet influence. The Marxists of Palestine had, indeed, a strong historical commitment to the division of Palestine, dating back to 1948, when Soviet Union, as cited previously, endorsed it, for international politics reasons. But, after the Black September and the deterioration of the relationships between the majority of the Arab governments and the Palestinian leadership, the influence and the support of the USSR became fundamental not just for DFLP and PFLP but also for the PLO as a whole¹⁷⁹.

On their side, the Soviets had all the intentions to recover influence in a Middle East dominated by the US, especially after the death of Nasser and the advent of Anwar Sadat as Egyptian *ra'īs*. Furthermore, Israel reliance on the US after 1967 definitely frustrated any Soviet ambition of influence on the Jewish state. The PLO and the Palestinians were left, and therefore the USSR started to instrumentally endorse and finance the *fidā'īyyūn*, and especially Arafat’s Fatah, because of the weakness, in the case of DFLP, and the autonomous behaviour, in the case of PFLP, of the Marxist formations¹⁸⁰. This instrumental alliance, however, did not

¹⁷⁷ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.244-245.

¹⁷⁸ *Palestinian Nationalism: An Overview*, As'ad Ghanem, Israel Studies, Vol. 18, No. 2, Shared Narratives—A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue, Guest Editors: Paul Scham, Benjamin Pogrund, and As'ad Ghanem, pp. 11-29, 2013 and *Between Two “One-State” Solutions: The Dialectics of Liberation and Defeat in the Palestinian National Enterprise*, Honaida Ghanim, Constellations Volume 23, No 3, 2016.

¹⁷⁹ *The Soviet Union and the PLO since the War in Lebanon*, Galia Golan, Middle East Journal, Vol. 40, No. 2, Spring, 1986, pp. 285-305, *Palestinian Nationalism: An Overview*, As'ad Ghanem, Israel Studies, Vol. 18, No. 2, Shared Narratives—A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue, Guest Editors: Paul Scham, Benjamin Pogrund, and As'ad Ghanem, pp. 11-29, 2013 and , *Internal Contradictions in the PFLP: Decision Making and Policy Orientation*, As'ad Abu Khalil, Middle East Journal, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 361-378, Summer 1987.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20principles.aspx>.

imply a complete adherence of PLO and Fatah to Soviet line and the very acceptance of a Palestinian entity by them has to be seen as tactical and instrumental in turn.

The PLO position towards the acceptance of a part of Palestine was considered only as a stage, towards the complete unification of the country in a single democratic state. It ironically resembled the acceptance by Mainstream Zionist leadership of Churchill separation of Palestine and Transjordan in 1921. This pragmatic attitude will be adopted by Fatah after the Algiers Arab summit in November 1973, just a month after the last Arab-Israeli open conflict, the Yom Kippur, or October, War.

In fact, the peace conference at Geneva that followed this event, in December 1973, demonstrated to the eyes of Palestinian leaders the substantial indifference of the two powers, US and USSR, to the Palestinian question in itself¹⁸¹. The Soviet pressures for pragmatism, in exchange for support, became the only suitable path for PLO in the new international political framework.

As a result, in June 1974, the phased plan called the Ten Point Program, was finally drafted and approved by the PNC in its 12th session in Cairo. According to it, the PLO

“will employ all means, and first and foremost armed struggle, to liberate Palestinian territory and to establish the independent combatant national authority for the people over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated. This will require further changes being effected in the balance of power in favour of our people and their struggle.” (Point 2)

At the same time, Point 4 states that

“Any step taken towards liberation is a step towards the realization of the Liberation Organization’s strategy of establishing the democratic Palestinian State specified in the resolutions of the previous Palestinian National Councils.”¹⁸²

The Program, therefore, did not constitute a retreat from any previous statements. It only promoted a new tactic in order to achieve the traditional goal of a secular democratic state; a tactic that now included the acceptance of a Palestinian authority in just a part of the former Mandate. The Program found nevertheless rejection both by Israel and the US, since it was still far from a recognition of Israel, and by several *fidā’īyyūn* groups. Led by George Habash and the PFLP, little groups backed by Syria (As-Saiqa) and Iraq (Arab Liberation Front), abandoned the PLO Executive Committee and formed the Rejection Front, which remained committed to the maximalist position of a single unitary state in the whole of Palestine¹⁸³. It is worth of noting the ironical resemblance of the different positions within PLO with the Zionist ones during the Mandate. In fact, as Al-Azm noticed:

¹⁸¹ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.259-263 and *The Palestinian Entity*, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 147-150, 1974.

¹⁸² Ten Point Program, Cairo 1974, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/ten-point-plan-of-the-plo-june-1974>.

¹⁸³ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.272-276, Documents and Source Material: Arab Documents on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Autumn, 1974), pp. 189-205 and *Realities of Resistance: Hizballah, the Palestinian Rejectionists, and al-Qa’ida Compared*, Anders Strindberg and Mats Wärn, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 23-41, 2005.

"[...] the proposed territorial solution to the problem affected the PLO in ways analogous to the impact of the proposed partition of Palestine in the thirties on the Zionist Organization. When the British authorities adopted the idea of establishing a Jewish state on a part of Palestine the Zionist Organization split into a large moderate majority supported by international opinion and allies, and a small extremist "Rejectionist Front" led by V. Jabotinsky. [...] After the October War of 1973, and the international and local floating of the idea of a Palestinian state on a portion of Palestine, the PLO [also] split into a moderate majority supported by international opinion and allies, and a small extremist fraction led by George Habash. This minority deserted the internationally recognized PLO in favour of a more militant and uncompromising Rejectionist Front which, at one point, contemplated seriously forming an alternative and more militant PLO of its own."¹⁸⁴

The fracture, again, between a pragmatic PLO and a Rejectionist Front must not be intended as a divergence on the final goal, but on the best tactic to achieve it. The liberation of whole Palestine and the establishment of a secular state remained, initially, the objective for PLO "moderates" as well.

The Shafiq al Hout speech of 1977 at the Association of Arab-Americans University Graduates reflected the unchanged commitment of the PLO to the old goal. In fact, this key figure within PLO since its foundation affirmed:

"If there is any hope at all that two separate states could be established in the same country, this will have to be preceded by the establishment of a progressive regime in Israel. Such a regime does not necessarily have to be Communist or socialist; but it will have to be, at the minimum, non-Zionist. If such a transformation does occur, Israel's Jews and Palestine's Arabs will discover that partition will be nothing more than a transitional step toward the establishment of a unitary democratic state. A truly democratic state is the only effective guarantee for political and economic independence."¹⁸⁵

The commitment, however, waned with the growing PLO difficulties, caused by this last's disastrous involvement in the Lebanese Civil War. The eruption of the conflict itself, in 1975, derived essentially from the tensions caused by the PLO's presence in the South of Lebanon, where the 1948 refugee camps were concentrated, which was used as a base to attack Israel, particularly Galilee, exactly as *fidā'īyyūn* did since their very beginnings in Gaza Strip and later in Jordan. The presence of Palestinian resistance movements revealed itself to be catastrophic within the very delicate social and political equilibrium of Lebanon.

The small coastal country, in fact, which was built on a constitutional system thought and elaborated to manage the coexistence of 18 recognised religious groups, faced a dangerous political polarization within its population due to the *fidā'īyyūn*'s presence.

According to Michael C. Hudson:

"The resistance movement had widespread popular support among Lebanese in the coastal cities, especially among the poor and middle classes conscious of their Arab identity. This support was probably strongest among the Sunnis but also evident among Shias and Greek Orthodox. It was very popular among students and the intelligentsia. But this very strength must have made it appear as potentially a dangerous and destabilizing factor to many other Lebanese, particularly the Maronites of Mt. Lebanon who

¹⁸⁴ *Palestinian Zionism*, Sadik J. Al-Azm, Die Welt des Islams, New Series, Bd. 28, No. 1/4, pp. 90-98, 1988.

¹⁸⁵ *Toward a Unitary Democratic State*, Shafiq Al-Hout, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 9-11, 1977.

placed higher priority on their Maronite national identity than on Arabism. [...] The resurgence of the Maronite parties in the spring 1968 elections, just after the Palestinians' psychological victory over the Israelis at Karama, is perhaps one sign of this apprehension¹⁸⁶.”

The tensions between *fidā'īyyūn* and Christian militias led to an open interconfessional conflict, into which Arafat fatally decided to get involved, with the firm belief the PLO's presence in Lebanon was subordinated to a Muslim final overcome in the civil war¹⁸⁷.

However, with the Israeli intervention and invasion of Lebanon in 1982, or Operation Peace in Galilee (*Mivtsa Shalom HaGalil*), all what the PLO obtained was another fled, the third. A fled that would have had this time to bring the organization not even in a neighbouring country with former Palestine, but in the far away North Africa, in Tunis¹⁸⁸.

The substantial defeat and the forced moving away from the theatre of the conflict made appear the institution of a Palestinian entity within 1967 borders not only as a stage, but as the only practical solution to the Palestinian question.

By the end of the 80s, during which the PFLP abandoned the Rejection front and returned in the PLO Executive Committee (even if still claiming the liberation of all Palestine), the Palestinian resistance movements were resigned to the acceptance of a partial liberation of Palestine.

This political attitude, plus the *intifada* of 1987, allowed the Oslo peace process between Israel and the PLO to start, based on the principle of partition and on the Israeli retirement from the Occupied territories¹⁸⁹. The one-state solution will nevertheless find, precisely because of the failure of this last peace process, new relevance.

¹⁸⁶ *The Palestinian Factor in the Lebanese Civil War*, Michael C. Hudson, Middle East Journal, Vol.32, No.3, pp. 261-278, 1978.

¹⁸⁷ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp. 275-276.

¹⁸⁸ Ivi, pp.276-277.

¹⁸⁹ *Between Two “One-State” Solutions: The Dialectics of Liberation and Defeat in the Palestinian National Enterprise*, Honaida Ghanim, Constellations Volume 23, No 3, 2016.

3. The failure of Oslo and the revival of binational paradigm

The reasons for the, almost, complete acceptance of a Palestinian entity within 1967 borders by PLO are not only to be found in the continuous defeats suffered in Lebanon, but also in the contemporary political reappearance of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. The *intifada* of 1987 against the occupation and the contemporary political rise of the Islamists, external to PLO, within Palestinian politics demonstrated the marginality of the Tunis based *fidā'īyyūn* leadership.

This generalised revolt, the first within the border of the former British Mandate since 1936, took its origin from the extremely unstable social and political environment that characterised the Gaza Strip in the 80s. Together with the Israeli occupation enduring since 1967, a resurgence of political Islam indeed took place, which in truth represented since the 40s a considerable portion of Gaza's political environment (as demonstrated by the Islamist membership or inspiration of the early *fidā'īyyūn*), together with the beginning of a decline of the traditional PLO's nationalist forces, especially *Fatah*.

This phenomenon finds its origins not only in the disillusion created by the progressive failures of Arafat's movement, but also in a broader context of weakening of traditional nationalist and secular ideologies and regimes in the region against the increasing influence and spread of political Islam in the Middle East, a trend whose main example is surely represented by the Iranian Revolution of 1978, which led to the formation of an Islamic Republic in the former *shah's* kingdom.

In fact, according to Massimo Campanini:

“Despite its affirmation within Shias, the Islamic Revolution had a deep symbolic impact and of mobilization for the Sunni world as well. It demonstrated that it was indeed possible a radical transformation of the political status quo in the name of Islam, and that the instauration of an Islamic state was possible.”¹⁹⁰

Indeed, in Gaza Strip, after the years of Nasserist repression, a religious leader and Muslim Brotherhood's member, *sheikh* Ahmed Yassin, founded, already in 1973, an Islamist organization linked to the Brotherhood, the *Mujamma Islamiyya*, Islamic Collective, whose main goal at that time consisted of a progressive Islamization of Palestinian society¹⁹¹.

This organization, focused on charity and social activities, was initially openly supported precisely by the Israeli occupying authorities, sawing in it a mean to mine PLO's influence in the Strip and to weaken its appeal within Gazan population.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ *Storia del Medio Oriente 1798-2005*, Massimo Campanini, il Mulino, Bologna, 2006, pp.164-165.

¹⁹¹ *Gaza, a History*, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Hurst & Company, London, 2014, p.159-160.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

On the long term this strategy helped only to increase if possible the social instability of the Strip, since the mounting tensions between Islamists of the *Mujamma* with the concurrent radical Islamist front of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which put before Palestinian national liberation to social Islamization¹⁹³, and with PLO's nationalists mounted uncontrolled, arriving at an open fire exchange between Islamists and *fidā'īyyūn* in May 1986.¹⁹⁴

The event led the *sheikh* to form an armed branch of the *Mujamma*, the *Majd* ("Glory", from the acronym of *Munazzamat al Jihad wa al Dawa*, Organisation for Jihad and Preaching), whose aim consisted more in the opposition to Palestinian political rivals rather than the Israeli occupiers.¹⁹⁵

This constant political agitation and violence within the Strip, however, was failed to be managed by these lasts, and led to a series of attacks to the Israeli settlers, concentrated mostly in Khan Yunis' area, which in turn led to consequent bloody reprisals. This vicious circle started around May 1987 and reached a no return point in November-December 1987, when the schoolgirl Intissar al Attar at Deir al Balah and Hatem Sissi, a teenager, were shoot dead within a month, respectively by an IDF soldier and a settler.¹⁹⁶

This last killing took furthermore occasion within the context of a funeral, the 9th of December, taking place in the refugee camp of Jabalya, of three Palestinian victims of an incident, caused by an Israeli truck, which turned into a popular unrest against the Israeli occupation.¹⁹⁷

The revolt started among Gaza's refugees, which population was for the most composed of youth who have never known anything different than the Israeli occupation, but then spread also in the whole of the Strip and the West Bank as well, enduring for 6 years. For the first time since the 1936, the "internal" Palestinians, rather than the Diaspora community's members, took in their hands the initiative of the struggle against Israel, with the active collaboration of the Israeli Arabs.

They nevertheless organized themselves with reference with the *fidā'īyyūn* parties of *Fatah*, PFLP and the DFLP plus the Communists, collaborating under the organizational umbrella of a Unified National Command for the Uprising, which was alleged to Tunis PLO and subordinated to Khalil Wazir's authority¹⁹⁸. In direct retaliation, Israel committed the murder of this last in Tunis the 16th of April 1988, leading to an increased wave of protests and violence¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p.183.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.189-190.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., pp.194-196.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 200-202.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Furthermore, by the end of July, the King of Jordan Hussein renounced to his Palestinian claims officially disengaging from the West Bank and *de facto* recognising PLO's claims in the same area and therefore also the Palestinians, the ones not residing in the Kingdom obviously, right to self-determination²⁰⁰.

Within this new context created by the *intifada*, the Islamists of sheikh Yassin proved to be clever enough to create, on the base of the previous *Mujamma*, a new political and militant movement, *Hamas*, the acronym for *Harakat al Muqawwama al Islamiyya* (Movement of the Islamic Resistance).

This movement arrived to promulgate, in direct opposition to PLO's Charter, an own Charter the 14th of August 1988, a "Covenant", in which are described the means and the goals, the destruction of Israel and an Islamic Palestine, of the organization.²⁰¹

The threat posed against *Fatah* and the PLO by *Hamas* was indeed particularly serious, given the very peculiar nature of this newly born Islamic movement also with respect with political Islam in general. In fact, while keeping its old commitment to an Islamization of Palestinian society, it nevertheless shifted to national liberation goals, in direct concurrence with PLO and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.²⁰²

This peculiar interpretation of political Islam thought, in which the nation is considered more and not less than the *Ummah*, appears actually very clearly in the Covenant of the Islamic movement of 1988 itself, in which two articles contradict each other in that sense. In fact, art.7, the one from which the influence of classical political Islam and Muslim Brotherhood appears more clearly, states:

"Muslims throughout the world adopt the system of the Islamic Resistance Movement; they work towards aiding it, accepting its stands, and amplifying its *Jihad*. Therefore, it is an international movement [and] a link in chain of the *Jihad* against the Zionist occupation, which is connected and tied with the initiation [of the *Jihad*] of the Martyr 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam and his *Mujahid* brothers in 1936.

And the chain continues on to connect and tie another episode to add to the *Jihad* of the Palestinians and the *Jihad* of the Muslim Brotherhood in the war of 1948 and the *Jihad* operation of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1968 and thereafter²⁰³."

It is impressive that Hamas is called an international movement, recalling a Pan Islamic narrative, while few articles later, ar.12 states:

"Nationalism, from the point of view of the Islamic Resistance Movement, is part and parcel of religious ideology. There is not a higher peak in nationalism or depth in devotion than *Jihad* when an enemy lands on the Muslim territories. Fighting the enemy becomes the individual obligation of every Muslim man and woman [...]

²⁰⁰ *Hussein surrenders claims on West Bank to the P.L.O.; U.S. Peace Plan in jeopardy*; Internal Tensions, John Knifer, 1st of August 1988, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/08/01/world/hussein-surrenders-claims-west-bank-plo-us-peace-plan-jeopardy-internal-tensions.html> .

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.204.

²⁰² *Hamas: Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement*, The Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hamas-covenant-full-text>

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

If other nationalisms have material, humanistic, and geographical ties, then the Islamic Resistance Movement's nationalism has all of that, and, more important, divine reasons providing it with life and spirit where it is connected with the originator of the spirit and life giver, raising in the heavens the divine Banner to connect earth and heavens with a strong bond²⁰⁴.”

The interpretation of these two articles put together is that the Pan Islamic aspect of the “international” movement is reduced to that to an “obligation of every Muslim man and woman” to fight for the cause of Palestinian nationalism, without therefore denying it.

This because the land of Palestine, with its Mandate borders, is considered as *Waqf*, as stated by article 11 of the Chart, an entrusted land to Islam²⁰⁵.

This allows the Muslim inhabitants of Palestine to consider themselves the only legitimate rulers of Mandate Palestine, ironically resembling, with regards of its ethno-religious ideological basis and motivations, with some forms of religious Zionism, as the *Gush Emunim* settlers’ movement. The role of the *Ummah*, the whole of the Muslim believers, or better its duty, is to defend and to restore the *Waqf* of Palestine.

The consequent risk of marginalization (and the weakening of its first patron, the USSR) posed by this new and ideologically strong rival led the PLO’s in exile leadership to draft a document which would have represented a key step in the history of the conflict and in the promotion of the two-state paradigm within it, that is the Declaration of Independence, signed by all PLO members the 15th of November 1988²⁰⁶.

The Declaration, for the first time, referred to the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 and to the UN Resolution 181 of 1948 as the legitimacy basis for the establishment of a Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital, accepting the partition principle but, awkwardly, defining it at the same time as an “historical injustice” against Palestinian people²⁰⁷.

In fact

“[...] the international community, in Article 22 of the covenant of the League of Nations of 1919, and in the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, had recognized that the Palestinian Arab people, like the other Arab peoples that had broken away from the Ottoman Empire, was a free and independent people.

Despite the historical injustice done to the Palestinian Arab people in its displacement and in being deprived of the right to self-determination following the adoption of the General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, which partitioned Palestine into an Arab and Jewish state, that resolution *nevertheless* continues to attach conditions to international legitimacy that guarantee the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty and national independence.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ PNC Declaration of Independence 1988, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/palestinian-national-council-declaration-of-independence-november-1988> and *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.301-303.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., and *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p. 144.

This remarkably reluctant, and contradictory, acceptance of the Resolution 181 and of the two-state paradigm by PLO must therefore be intended as a consequence of its decline within Palestinians at home, which were now demonstrating to be able to take on themselves the initiative of the struggle.

Nevertheless, this attitude, strongly enhanced by Arafat, who since the beginning of the revolt expressed the PLO's commitment to not resort to an armed action strategy in support of the *intifada*, favoured the conditions for an initial dialogue with the Israeli government, which however was severely limited by the composition and the political orientation of this last, headed by the *Likud* leader Yitzhak Shamir, politically successor of Begin and of the Mandate times' old Revisionist Zionists.

The following Gulf War of 1991 resulted initially in an embitterment of the relations between the two fronts, given the unconditional PLO and Palestinian support to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, but unexpectedly resulted in a first evolution of the deadlock created by the Israeli hawks' intransigence towards the *intifada*.

In fact, despite its lack of actual results in that sense, the Madrid Conference promoted by the U.S. Bush government, which followed the Gulf War and took place the 30th and the 31st of October 1991, saw the discussion also of the Palestinian question together with the participation of a Palestinian delegation headed by Dr. Haidar Abdul Shafi²⁰⁹.

Since that event, the Palestinian political scene would have been dominated by two opposite approaches to the possibility of an agreement with Israel, with the Arafat's PLO investing all its efforts in it and *Hamas* banking on its failure and spoil.

This cleavage appeared clearly since the very beginning:

"*Fatah* activists came out in force to silence all opposition to the negotiations. On the eve of the peace conference, members of *Fatah* demonstrated in Gaza with olive branches which they pointedly offered to the Israeli soldiers. On 30 October 1991, thousands turned out on the streets of Gaza and Khan Yunis in support, defying *Hamas*' call for a strike in protest against Madrid."²¹⁰

The negotiating principle and the hope of an enduring peace aroused by the Madrid Conference among Palestinians and Israelis alike endured despite the vicious cycle of kidnapping of Israeli soldiers by *Hamas* paramilitary wing, the Izz al Din al Qassam Brigades, which actions aimed at spoiling PLO's agreement goals, and the consequent harsh IDF reprisals.

The Labour victory at the Israeli elections of June 1992, with the consequent acquisition of the role of Prime Minister by Yitzhak Rabin, represented a turning point and a key occasion for Arafat and the PLO's leadership to attempt an initial dialogue with their counterpart. Following secret negotiations meetings in

²⁰⁹ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p.303, and *Gaza, a History*, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Hurst & Company, London, 2014, pp. 212-213.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Oslo, Rabin and Arafat exchanged letters between them, which content represented a radical change of the PLO-Israeli relations.

In fact, through the good office of Norway's government, Yasser Arafat affirmed that:

“The PLO recognizes the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security.”²¹¹

In response, Prime Minister Rabin declared:

“[...]in light of the PLO commitments included in your letter, the Government of Israel has decided to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and commence negotiations with the PLO within the Middle East peace process.”²¹²

In the days immediately following these statements, Israel and the PLO signed, the 13th of September in Washington DC at the presence of the U.S. President Bill Clinton, within the framework of what would have been called the Oslo Accords, a Declaration of Principles.²¹³

With this Declaration the Israeli government and the PLO agreed to start negotiations in order to achieve a withdrawal, through transitional phases, of IDF from the West Bank and Gaza, with the declared goal to establish a future state of Palestine in these two territories, thus consecrating the two-states paradigm as the one which would have finally solved the never ending conflict.

In fact, as stated at Article 1:

“The aim of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations within the current Middle East peace process is, among other things, to establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, the elected Council (the "Council"), for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. [...]”²¹⁴

The PLO in the same year renounced to the armed struggle as well. The two-states paradigm seemed to have triumphed.

The transitional phase of the peace process, however, never ended and the Palestinian struggle for the statehood remains in a limbus.

The Oslo approach, emphasizing negotiations through a long and based on phases process, failed for a series of reasons, which rely both on the nature of the process itself and on the action of spoiling forces.

The process attitude, for example, to ignore or bypass core issues, such as the Palestinian 1948 refugees right of return and the question of Jerusalem, prevented the parties to reach a full agreement.

²¹¹ Israel-PLO Mutual Recognition Letters, 10/09/1993, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/mfadocuments/yearbook9/pages/107%20israel-plo%20mutual%20recognition-%20letters%20and%20spe.aspx> .

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Declaration of Principles 1993, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20principles.aspx>.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

These two questions represented, and represent nowadays, two core elements of the conflict that revealed themselves to be unable to be fixed through a bilateral process of negotiations between the two parties, in particular the 1948 refugees' one.

The right of return of this lasts, which since the PLO flee from Lebanon in 1983 lost their previous central role within the Palestinian cause, proved itself to be a deadlock capable to actually prevent any form of final agreement between the two parties, being a political taboo for Israel and at the same time the main original reason for the birth of PLO itself, which find its origins, as explained in the previous chapter, precisely in Gaza's refugee camps, Arafat himself being a refugee.

At the same time, the question on the Israeli side is particularly delicate since it attempts to the legitimacy of Israel existence itself, as appears evident in the Israeli historiographic insistence until the 90s on the voluntary character of the Palestinians 1948 exodus²¹⁵, and at the same time it would undermine to the Jewish character of the state.²¹⁶

On the two sides, in conclusion, on several questions as the refugee's one, the maximum that one was able to offer to the counterpart was this last's minimum acceptable.

The main beneficiaries of the exhausting delaying caused by the virtual impossibility of solving such a combination of conundrums, would have therefore to consist in the "Revisionists" on both sides, that is to say the Israeli right-wing party *Likud* and the Palestinian Islamists of *Hamas*.

The Israeli right, political descendants of Jabotinsky's movement, opposed since the beginning the very idea of a Palestinian independent state at the borders of Israel, considering it as an existential threat since way before the Oslo process.

In fact, the Sharon Plan of Disengagement of 1977²¹⁷, consisting in the establishment of two separated Palestinian cantons (defined as Bantustans by some observers²¹⁸) in the West Bank, surrounded by a Greater Israel, represented already the dominant Israeli right's perspective of solution of the Occupied Territories. There is no evidence that the now Netanyahu dominated *Likud* has changed or modified its views in that sense, On the contrary, they seem even more devoted to this scope up to nowadays, as will be explained at the end of this chapter.

At the same time, on the Palestinian side, *Hamas* could not have found better allies than *Likud's* governments in order to undermine the peace process and the PLO's prestige to the eyes of Palestinians. In

²¹⁵ *Origins of the Palestinian refugee problem: Changes in the historical memory of Israelis/Jews 1949–2004*, Rafi Nets-Zenghut, *Journal of Peace Research*, No.48, pp.225-248, 2011.

²¹⁶ *The Palestinian Refugee Issue: A Palestinian Perspective*, Abbas Shiblak, Chatham House MENAP BP 09/01, February 2009.

²¹⁷ Sharon Plan 1977, <http://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/245>.

²¹⁸ Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, February/March 1994, Page 6 Special Report, *Rabin Holds Out for a Palestinian Bantustan* by Rachele Marshall.

fact, the old PLO and, mainly, *Fatah* leadership invested so much effort and resources in the process and in the establishment of the Palestinian Authority that they ended up being identified with it and the process.

The failure of the process and the missed creation of a fully independent Palestinian State was therefore considered as their, umpteenth, failure²¹⁹.

Hamas started furthermore a political campaign of denunciation, accusing the PLO, and consequently the Palestinian Authority, of nepotism and corruption, often rightly, opposing to it their reputation of honesty and incorruptibility.²²⁰

As a result, the unsurprisingly similar calls of *Hamas* and *Likud* for a single, ethnocentric, irredentist state, a Greater Israel and an Islamic Palestine, took advantage by spoiling of the Oslo peace process rather than being weakened by it.

The Barak Labour's government, in charge after 1999 Israeli elections, tried to re-establish a dialogue with Arafat and the PLO, changing the negotiation approach, from a long-run phased one to a single conference, in 2000 Summer at Camp David, in which all issues had to be discussed.

The summit resulted in another failure, again because of intractable core issues as Jerusalem (which Old City in the Barak's proposal would have remained under Israeli control)²²¹ and a second *intifada* followed to it because of a provocative Ariel Sharon's "walk" on the *Haram al-Sharif* in Jerusalem, occurred the 28th of September 2000, and repeated the following day.²²²

The consequent protests to this provocation that followed among Palestinians led to 6 deaths and to a general spread of agitations in West Bank, Gaza and among Israeli Arabs, signing the beginning of the *al Aqsa intifada*. Following the new spread of violence, any chance for peace talks faced a fatal blow with the election of Ariel Sharon himself to Israeli Prime Minister the 6th of February 2001, with the *Likud* gaining the 62% of the vote.

From that year onward, the Israeli right, and its unilateralist approach to the conflict, led the Israeli government and politics, with only a brief interlude represented by the centrist Olmert government between 2006 and 2009.²²³

In a specular way, also on the Palestinian side the most intransigent elements, above all *Hamas*, gained remarkably in terms of consensus, while the second *intifada* began to be characterised more and more by the

²¹⁹ *Political Parties in Palestine, Leadership and Thought*, Michael Bröning, Plagrave MacMillan, New York 2013.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ *A false dichotomy? The binationalism debate and the future of divided Jerusalem*, Mick Dumper, *International Affairs*, Vol.87, No.3, May 2011, pp.671-685.

²²² *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.351-356.

²²³ *Palestinian Nationalism: An Overview*, As'ad Ghanem, *Israel Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Shared Narratives—A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue, Guest Editors: Paul Scham, Benjamin Pogrud, and As'ad Ghanem, pp. 11-29, 2013

common usage, by Islamist and non Islamist armed groups, as the Izz al Din al Qassam Brigades or the al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (this last affiliated to *Fatah*), of suicide bombers attack against Israeli soldiers as well as civilians.²²⁴

One of the worst examples of this cycle of violence is represented by the Israeli reprisal on the Jenin refugee camp in April 2002, during which hundreds of Palestinians were killed, to a terroristic attack, claimed by *Hamas*, occurred in an hotel in Netanya, which killed 30 Israelis celebrating *Pesach*.²²⁵

Up to these events, the second *intifada* spread of violence had already caused the death of 441 Israelis and 1539 Palestinians, as reported by the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in August 2002.²²⁶

All this violence strengthen the position of Sharon's government, which easily took 23 seats out of 120 in the *Knesset* at the January 2003 elections, while on the Palestinian side Arafat and the PLO appeared more and more isolated, as they were scarcely able to control the West Bank "capital" of Ramallah, with the Gaza strip falling into a chaos of attacks to Israeli settlers mathematically followed by harsh IDF reprisals.

Encouraged in that sense by Israel and the U.S., Arafat decided in February to appoint Mahmoud Abbas, Abu Mazen, one of the early *Fatah* officials and Oslo negotiators, of the new role of Palestinian Prime Minister, who immediately called for a demilitarisation of the *intifada*, a call completely ignored by *Hamas*.²²⁷

In the same period, the successor of Bill Clinton to the U.S. Presidency, George W. Bush finally showed some interests towards the conflict, forced by the events which followed the 9/11 and the resulting major U.S. involvement in the broader Middle East, proposing a new phase plan called "Road Map".

This last proposal, a phased plan according to which a Palestinian state would have been created by 2005 through a freeze of settlements accompanied by an abandonment of the armed struggle by the Palestinians, was supported by the "Quartet", U.S., Russia, U.E. and U.n.²²⁸

It nevertheless resulted in another failure, given the unanimous opposition of the Palestinian armed groups to renounce to political violence to resist the Israeli Occupation and the concurrent Israeli inaction in stopping the settlements' expansion.²²⁹

In the meanwhile, the Israeli politics enhanced by Sharon and the *Likud* was clearly condemning any sort of chance for a future establishment of a Palestinian state bordering Israel, and at the same time opening the

²²⁴ *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, p. 347.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ UN Secretary General Report, SG2077, 1st of August 2002, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2002/SG2077.doc.htm>.

²²⁷ *Gaza, a History*, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Hurst & Company, London, 2014, pp. 267-268.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, and *Storia della Palestina moderna. Una terra, due popoli*, Ilan Pappé, Einaudi Torino 2005, pp.347.349.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

way to a Greater Israel which would have included autonomous Arab Bantustans. The way followed to achieve this goal, in nothing differing from the Sharon 1977 Plan, is exemplified by three course of actions.

The first is represented by the construction, began in the Spring of 2002, of a Separation Wall encircling the West Bank, on the base of previous wall built in the 90s which separates Israel from Gaza Strip, and forcing the Palestinians residents to submit to an exhausting system of checkpoints in order to move also within the areas which are formally under the Palestinian Authority's jurisdiction, which began to look like immense "prison camps", as happened to Gaza.²³⁰

The second key action of *Likud's* policy which led to the present situation and to the death of the Oslo process, regarded in fact Gaza and the policy of disengagement from it, which would be completed by Sharon's government by August 2005, aiming at dismantling the Israeli settlements from the Strip and isolate this last into a big open prison, as actually happened.

According to Filiu:

"Far from relieving *Tsahal's* (IDF) pressure on the Gaza Strip, the prospect of disengagement seemed in the short term to prompt yet more military incursions, apparently with the objective of permanently crippling the Palestinian factions."²³¹

Rather than a move towards peace and a concession toward the Palestinian counterpart, such an action must therefore be intended as a strategic act aimed at better isolate and eliminate the most radical and dangerous elements of Palestinian resistance, without any territorial concession with regards with the West Bank and with an enhanced policy of targeted assassinations, which led to *sheikh* Yassin death the 22th of March 2004.²³²

The death of Yasser Arafat the 11th of November of the same year led furthermore to an intra-Palestinian escalation of violence which would have erupted into an open civil war between *Hamas* and the PLO²³³.

At the Palestinian legislative elections of January 2006, during which the Islamic movement presented a political platform called Change and Reform, the Islamists proved in fact to be able to win up to 74 seats in the Palestinian National Assembly, which has 132 seats in total²³⁴.

The *Fatah* ruling class however, supported by the international community, and especially the US and asking help even to the Israeli government, did not recognize pacifically the results. At the same time, *Hamas* refused to recognize the Jewish state and to renounce to the armed struggle against it.²³⁵

²³⁰ Ivi., p.349.

²³¹ *Gaza, a History*, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Hurst & Company, London, 2014, p. 272.

²³² Ivi, p.273.

²³³ Ivi, p. 276-277.

²³⁴ *Between religion and nationalism in the Palestinian Diaspora*, Michael Vicente Pèrez, Nations and Nationalism, n.20, 2014, pp. 801–820, *Political Parties in Palestine, Leadership and Thought*, Michael Bröning, Plagrave MacMillan, New York 2013.

²³⁵ Ibid.

The balance of the resulting Palestinian civil war was pitiless

“Between 2005 and the Summer of 2007, 668 Palestinians were killed by Israel in the Strip, including 359 civilians; but during the same period 357 Palestinians were killed by other Palestinians, of whom half were civilians caught up in incidents connected with Gaza.”²³⁶

The effects of this suicidal strife within the Palestinian society, which lasted until 2009, consisted, especially, in the *de facto* division of the Palestinian Territories into a West Bank ruled by the Palestinian Authority, and therefore by *Fatah*, and a Gaza Strip dominated by the Islamic movement. A division that, if possible, undermined even more the already vague hopes of building a Palestinian state and to an enhanced isolation of the Strip.²³⁷

Finally, the Israeli right’s policy towards the West Bank, instead encouraged, without obstacles posed by the Israeli Zionist Left, the spread of Israeli settlements in this last most strategic areas, around East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley, jeopardizing definitely any realistic perspective of a future creation of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as capital.

The question of the settlements is particularly important with regard with the undermining of the two-states solution and the consequent progressive inevitability of a long-term coexistence between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, unless of another “exchange” of populations as in 1948.

In fact, the spread and enlargement of this phenomenon has led to around half a million of Israeli Jews to settle in the West Bank, who live in “settlements” which are proper large cities, as Modi’in Illit or Betar Illit, respectively hosting 70.000 and 50.000 people.

The very perspective of a dismantling of such “settlements” in order to made actually possible the creation of a Palestinian state appears blatantly unrealistic.

Furthermore, the construction of these settlements took place, obviously given the interest of Israel in their establishment, strategically in the proximity of the West Bank water sources, which represent a good portion of the Israel itself water supply.

A factor which is often indeed not stressed enough when the two-states or one-state solution with regards with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is examined is indeed represented by the inextricable, and politically neutral, interdependence of Israel and the Occupied Territories when it comes to the fundamental resource of water.

A key strategical interest of Israel in maintain its control over the territories is in fact represented, as affirmed by Virginia Tilley:

²³⁶ *Gaza, a History*, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Hurst & Company, London, 2014, p. 306-307.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

“[...] the West Bank aquifers are indispensable to Israel. Much of Israel’s freshwater comes from the Sea of Galilee [...], which is fed largely by watersheds draining from southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights. A coastal aquifer has also been important. But a good third of Israel’s supply comes from the rain-fed West Bank aquifers [...]: the western Yarkon-Tanninim Aquifer provides some 340 million cubic meters annually to the Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Beer Sheba districts; the Nablus-Gilboa Aquifer in the northern West Bank supplies Israeli agriculture in the Galilee with some 115 million cubic meters annually.

The highland West Bank aquifers are even more essential to Israel because overuse has dangerously lowered the water tables elsewhere. [So] to sustain its water overuse, Israel must also rely on limiting Palestinian use. [Since] Israel uses some 93 percent of the West Bank aquifers’ annual rainwater recharge (Palestinians use the rest).”²³⁸

Given this evident conflict of interests

“[...]it is the scarcity of water that most objectively precludes full Palestinian sovereignty in the West Bank. Indeed, more than any other factor, water graphically demonstrates the indivisibility of this delicately balanced, ecologically sensitive territory. Neither side can rely on the other to sacrifice its basic needs for water [...] and no peace negotiation has made any progress on the topic. No “security fence” can provide water security for Israel either.

The most wildly gerrymandered partition cannot do that. Hence, water is also the silent factor driving Israel’s full annexation strategy [...] and, ultimately, the one-state solution.”²³⁹

In the meanwhile, the Israeli government first concern consisted, and continues to consist, in the maintaining of the status quo, in which the Occupation, despite the presence of the Authority, is far from being passed and the goal of a Palestinian state is day by day more unrealistic given the continuous Israeli policy of settlement.

This impasse and the resulting missed achievement of two states for two peoples has brought to a new revival, among Israeli and especially Palestinian thinkers, of the one-state solution, declined in various forms.

Already in 1999, the Palestinian intellectual Edward Said affirmed in an article on the NY Times that

“Oslo set the stage for separation, but real peace can come only with a binational Israeli-Palestinian state [...] This does not mean a diminishing of Jewish life as Jewish life or a surrendering of Palestinian Arab aspirations and political existence. On the contrary, it means self-determination for both peoples. But it does mean being willing to soften, lessen and finally give up special status for one people at the expense of the other.

The Law of Return for Jews and the right of return for Palestinian refugees have to be considered and trimmed together. Both the notions of Greater Israel as the land of the Jewish people given to them by God and of Palestine as an Arab land that cannot be alienated from the Arab homeland need to be reduced in scale and exclusivity.”²⁴⁰

²³⁸ *The One-State Solution: A Breakthrough for Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Deadlock*, Virginia Tilley, University of Michigan Press, 2005, pp. 63-64.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Edward Said, *The One-State Solution*, The New York Times, 10/01/1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/10/magazine/the-one-state-solution.html>.

The settlements expansion has naturally enforced this point of view, making appear clear the extremely unrealistic perspective of their dismantlement, as well expressed by the Palestinian philosopher Sari Nusaybeh:

“There is no East Jerusalem anymore. East Jerusalem has already become a misnomer. But a Palestinian state without East Jerusalem as its capital is a no-no . . . the pursuit of a two-state solution looks like the pursuit of something inside a fantasy bubble.”

All across the West Bank, he explains, there are Israeli settlers, and asks rhetorically: “Can you take away half a million people?” His answer is: “No, you cannot. Nothing is impossible, mathematically speaking. But we are talking about politics, and in politics not everything is always possible.”²⁴¹

Other Israeli and Palestinian academics as Ilan Pappé, Ghada Karmi and As’ad Ghanem, together with political personalities as Ahmad Qreie’ and Faruk Kaddumi, has also called for a new approach to the conflict, aiming necessarily to a single state and passing through a civic struggle for the obtaining of rights *within* Israel.

They affirm that, given the impossibility to separate, mainly because of settlements, the former Mandate in two ethnically homogenous states, and given the substantial rule of Israel over all historical Palestine, Israel itself has become an apartheid state, privileging its Jewish inhabitants.

In fact, as affirms Honaida Ghanim in her analysis of this re-emerging of the one-state discourse:

“The advocates of this approach tend to adopt the citizenship discourse and to focus on the law rather than on history, putting South Africa and its struggle against apartheid as their reference, whereby Israel is considered an apartheid state that practices discrimination against the residents and adopts a dual/two-tier ruling system towards the Palestinians, whether inside its borders or in between the river and the sea. According to this approach, then, the one-state solution is the only possible one.”²⁴²

Consequently, on the example of the often cited anti-apartheid African National Congress’ strife in South Africa, the struggle for the Palestinian cause would have to transform itself into a struggle for equal rights within a state, Israel, which is no more considered, as in the 60s and 70s PLO political discourse, as an entity to be destroyed and substituted, but to be reformed.

We find, then, an only apparently new approach, since it resembles more the old binationalism advocated by pacifist Zionists as Buber and Magnes than the previous PLO stance for a secular state, which did not recognize the Jewish people as a nation.

In that sense, a binational one-state solution would be able to acquire several forms to be actuated, since

²⁴¹Sari Nusseibeh, *A Palestinian Take on the Mideast Conflict: The Pursuit of a Two-state Solution is a Fantasy*, Der Spiegel Online, 21 February 2012, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/a-palestinian-take-onthe-mideast-conflict-the-pursuit-of-a-two-state-solution-is-afantasy-a-816491.html> from *Between Two “One-State” Solutions: The Dialectics of Liberation and Defeat in the Palestinian National Enterprise*, Honaida Ghanim, Constellations Volume 23, No 3, 2016.

²⁴² *Between Two “One-State” Solutions: The Dialectics of Liberation and Defeat in the Palestinian National Enterprise*, Honaida Ghanim, Constellations Volume 23, No 3, 2016.

“It covers a number of models which range from a confederal structure (two or more collectivities with a centralized body to implement policies relating to external relations such as defence, foreign policy and critical trading arrangements) to a federal structure (two or more collectivities, with greater powers than in the confederal structure relating to both external and internal affairs allocated to a central body) to a consociational structure (a unitary state structure or federal structure with powers allocated to the two or more component collectivities according to agreed criteria, such as size of population).”²⁴³

This almost forgotten approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would present several advantages, since, according to Karmi:

“The binational model preserves the structure of two religious/ethnic communities, while the secular democratic model emphasizes the individual rather than the community, in the style of Western liberal democracies. Thus, binationalism makes it possible for a form of Zionism to survive, while the secular democratic alternative does not.

This is why most binationalists have come to their position, not because they think it desirable, but because the reality on the ground precludes both sides from exercising their right to statehood in the whole of the territory.”²⁴⁴

The new support for binationalism is therefore based on the acceptance of reality and on the mere facts on the ground, that is: the continuous policy of settlement by Israel, the consequent impossibility to separate the two peoples and the deriving likely transformation of Israel into an apartheid state, as recently warned by the US Secretary of State John Kerry in 2014²⁴⁵.

In addition to it, it must be taken into account the awareness, on practical terms, of the necessity, in case of a two-states solution success, of the two entities into which would be divided the whole of the former Mandate of Palestine to collaborate in so many fields that the outcome would at the end constituted by a *de facto* confederative one-state:

“policy-makers and academics, working in off the record or what is known as Track 2 negotiations, have realized that in putting substance into various proposed frameworks for peace, and in spelling out the fine print of any agreement, an extraordinarily high degree of cooperation will be required between the two parties and the two states. [...]

Such comprehensive cooperation suggests a requirement for arrangements that are much more than a standard bilateral treaty between two states. It has already been accepted that the two-state model in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will consist of a range of agreements extending beyond intelligence and security cooperation to encompass many other areas such as the economy and trade, the environment, regional urban planning, tourism and immigration. Already there are agreements in place for a single economic zone for Israel and Palestine which point to a merging of the two states at some fundamental level.”²⁴⁶

Therefore, according to the British academic Mick Dumper, the ultimate irony would consist in the quite logic evidence that:

²⁴³ *A false dichotomy? The binationalism debate and the future of divided Jerusalem*, Mick Dumper, *International Affairs*, Vol.87, No.3, May 2011, pp.671-685.

²⁴⁴ *The One-State Solution: An Alternative Vision for Israeli-Palestinian Peace*, Ghada Karmi, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, Winter 2011, pp. 62-76.

²⁴⁵ Peter Beaumont, *Israel risks becoming apartheid state if peace talks fail, says John Kerry*, *The Guardian*, April 29 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/28/israel-apartheid-state-peace-talks-john-kerry>.

²⁴⁶ *A false dichotomy? The binationalism debate and the future of divided Jerusalem*, Mick Dumper, *International Affairs*, Vol.87, No.3, May 2011, pp.671-685.

“What is interesting about the continuum of options that comprise the binational idea is that the end of the continuum which stresses the cooperative and functional interconnectedness of any agreement is not so distant from the more idealized vision of the two-state model with its proposals for open borders, economic unions and security cooperation. Both require a degree of coordination which implies a dilution or sharing of sovereignty and of independent decision-making. It is this degree of interstate penetration which suggests that in essence what is being discussed is a sort of two-state plus, which on further analysis looks remarkably close to some confederal variants of the binational and unitary state model.”²⁴⁷

The inherent validity of a binational one-state solution would therefore derive from the fact that also an ideal two-states one would inevitably arrive to resemble it.

The response of Israeli politics to this approach consisted in a clear rejection, except for some left personalities as Meron Benvenisti, who affirmed that “our life situation *is* that of Bi-nationality”, and Chaim Hanegbi²⁴⁸.

Ironically, other fierce opponents among Israeli to a binational solution, or better in giving citizenship right to Palestinians, are precisely to be found among the Israeli right, which represents as we have seen the main indirect responsible, through its politics, of the growth of this idea among Palestinian intellectuals.

At the same time, a clear example of the contradictory attitude leading the two-states solution to wane in favour of its opposite is represented by the recent Netanyahu statements that, under his role, the establishment of a Palestinian entity is a remote chance.²⁴⁹

He affirmed in fact that

“Whoever moves to establish a Palestinian state or intends to withdraw from territory is simply yielding territory for radical Islamic terrorist attacks against Israel”²⁵⁰

Given the nature of the Israeli interlocutors, it is no wonder that the Palestinian political leadership has been pushed for years to recognize the impracticality of their statehood goal, which was in itself already consisting of a very suffered compromise. PLO key figures openly warned that they were still aiming for two-states solution, but that the Israeli right’s unilateralism was pushing for a single state one.²⁵¹

It is finally worth of noticing not that the most vibrant opponents of a one-state solution are represented also by key pacifist Israeli figures, who wisely, but by now too lately, forecasted the inevitable risks of a forced coexistence between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, still being keen to the Oslo two-states vision.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ *The Bi-National State Solution*, As’ad Ghanem, Israel Studies, Vol. 14, No. 2, Summer 2009.

²⁴⁹ Maayan Lubell, *Netanyahu says no Palestinian state as long as he's prime minister*, Reuters, March 15 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-election/netanyahu-says-no-palestinian-state-as-long-as-hes-prime-minister-idUSKBN0MC1I820150316>.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ *Between Two “One-State” Solutions: The Dialectics of Liberation and Defeat in the Palestinian National Enterprise*, Honaida Ghanim, Constellations Volume 23, No 3, 2016.

One of the most prominent among them was for sure the journalist and activist Uri Avnery, recently passed away the 20th of August, who did not see any viable way to make this hypothetical binational state works.

In an article of response of Summer 1999 to the Israeli Arab activist Azmi Bishara, an early advocate of a one-state solution, he in fact already analysed the question affirming that:

“There is no chance whatsoever, that the Israeli side would accept such a solution in the foreseeable future-and no other future is relevant. It contradicts the basic Zionist ethos of the State of Israel. [...] It is, officially, a "democratic Jewish state," meaning that it belongs to the Jews, but that non-Jews can live there with equal civil rights. [...]

These attitudes are not only official doctrine, they are deeply embedded in the mentality of almost all Israelis. The binational idea therefore negates the very essence of the Zionist idea, the "*raison d'etre*" of Israel as perceived by its Jewish citizen. [...]

However, let's assume for a moment that both people agree to a binational state. Could it really function? I am not aware of a single instance of two nations living peacefully in one common binational or multinational state. It is easy to point at the former Yugoslavia, particularly at Croatia and Bosnia, not to mention Kosovo. [...]

It is utopian to believe that Israelis and Palestinians, two extremely nationalistic peoples, could turn practically overnight from total enemies into loving compatriots, able to live and function in one common society.”

Finally

“In a binational state, Israeli superiority in nearly all practical fields-economic, social, military-would be such that the Palestinians would be turned into an exploited underclass devoid of real power. Such a situation exists now in Israel proper, with its Arab citizens, nearly 20 percent of the population, living in circumstances visibly below those of Jewish communities.

Many parts of the administration and the economy are closed to Arabs, officially or unofficially. In a binational state, the national struggle would by no means cease. It would make it much easier for Jews to buy Arab land on the West Bank, control immigration, and take other measures to safeguard their national superiority.”²⁵²

Without any prejudice to the validity of these affirmations, appears sadly clear how Avnery unwillingly depicted with its last argumentations a kind of society which is dangerously similar to contemporary Israel together with the Occupied Territories.

The seek by the Israeli right of the old Revisionist Zionist goal of a Greater Israel, achieved by the means of a hidden annexation mainly through the settlements, appears to have pushed the situation to a point in which a one-state solution appears, if not as a just and morally preferable solution (though not the easiest one), as an obliged one.

The situation of Israel/Palestine has sadly at this point become

“a *bi-national* situation, demographically and socially, but without a *bi-nationalist* solution practically. The reality on the ground has not been translated into corresponding political arrangements that recognize the need to accommodate members of both national communities equally within the territory as a whole or on any part of it.”²⁵³

²⁵² *A Binational State? God Forbid!*, Uri Avnery and Azmi Bishara, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer, 1999, pp. 55-60.

The point of no return in this sense, and in the general shrinking of the Oslo process, seemed to have come at the end of 2017, with the announcement, the 6th of December 2017, of the U.S. president, Donald J. Trump, of his will to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, legitimizing the Israeli claims to the city as its capital.²⁵⁴

The Palestinian reaction was obviously of rage and discomfort but, most importantly, has probably put to end an agonizing commitment to the two-states paradigm.

Sayeb Erakat, PLO Secretary General and *Fatah* member, not exactly a radical Islamist, declared on the Trump statement that:

“President Trump has delivered a message to the Palestinian people: the two-state solution is over. Now is the time to transform the struggle for one-state with equal rights for everyone living in historic Palestine, from the river to the sea.”²⁵⁵

Even the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, Abu Mazen, also underlined the fact that such an attitude would have for seriously undermined the two-state paradigm and the acceptance, enduring since the beginning of Oslo, by Palestinians of the role of the US as a mediator.²⁵⁶ In the meanwhile, after years of enmity, the Hamas movement and Fatah reached the conclusion a decade long reconciliation process, reuniting again the Palestinian political front.

This inter-Palestinian process started immediately after the outbreak of violence in 2006, when the two parties agreed in Mecca the 8th of February 2007 to stop the internal violence and to form a united front against Israel²⁵⁷, and found its conclusion with the signing of a reconciliation agreement in Cairo in October 2017, according to which the economic blockade towards Gaza Strip by the Palestinian Authority itself is to be eased.²⁵⁸

It is not easy to affirm whether these statements represent only a threat to the Israeli government, or if they are symptoms of the spreading of the new binational, “anti-apartheid”, attitude among Palestinian political leadership, besides intellectuals and academics.

What appears evident, instead, is the continuous Israeli right’s commitment towards the construction of an apartheid based Greater Israel, and to the consequent strengthening of the anti-apartheid strategy among

²⁵³ *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, p. 203.

²⁵⁴ Statement by President Trump on Jerusalem, The White House, 06/12/2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-jerusalem/>

²⁵⁵ Landau N. and Khoury J., *Two state Solution is over’, Top Palestinian Diplomat says after Trump’s Jerusalem speech*, Haaretz, 07/12/2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/.premium-two-state-solution-is-over-top-palestinian-diplomat-says-1.5627973>.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Mecca Agreement 2007, Economic Cooperation Foundation, 1970-01-17, https://ecf.org.il/media_items/1197.

²⁵⁸ *The Fatah–Hamas Reconciliation Agreement of October 2017*, Muriel Asseburg, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik/German Institute for International and Security Affairs, November 2017, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2017C44_ass.pdf

Palestinians, as recently demonstrated by the approval of the extremely controversial “Nation State Law” by the *Knesset* the 19th of July 2018.

The content of this new legislative act represents a clear cut choice to the identity dilemma posed to the double Israeli identity as a Jewish and democratic state.

Emphasizing the Jewish character of the State, the law states in its first article that:

“1. Basic Principles

a) Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish people in which the State of Israel was established.

b) The state of Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people, in which it fulfils its natural, religious, and historic right to self-determination.

c) The fulfilment of the right of national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.”²⁵⁹

This new legislative act, therefore, defines definitely Israel as a State created by and for Jewish people, gives a fatal blow of half a century of Israel self-depiction as the only Middle Eastern democracy and as a secular state, since it clearly and openly differentiates between A and B categories of citizens, between Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants of Israel.

In fact, according to the Israeli journalist Gideon Levy:

“If the state is Jewish, it cannot be democratic, because of the lack of equality; if it’s democratic, it cannot be Jewish, because a democracy does not bestow privilege based on ethnicity. So now the Knesset has decided: Israel is Jewish. Israel is declaring that it is the nation-state of the Jewish people, not a state of its citizens, not a state of the two peoples that live within it, and has therefore ceased to be an egalitarian democracy, not just in practice but also in theory. [...]

Now there will be a law that tells the truth. Israel is for Jews only, on the books. The nation-state of the Jewish people, not of its residents. Its Arabs are second-class citizens and its Palestinian subjects are hollow, non-existent. Their fate is determined in Jerusalem, but they aren’t part of the state.”²⁶⁰

This move thus makes a further step in the removal of a clear distinction between Israeli Arabs and the rest of Palestinians indirectly governed by Israel, since the status of the firsts as Israeli citizens results in some ways diminished.

Mordechai Kremnitzer, law professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, affirms in fact that the reason to promote such a blatantly discriminating law resides precisely in the Israeli right’s annexationist course of action which led it to promote the settlements, the Jewish settlements, in West Bank.

A course that, ironically, it would represent an assimilation, in moral terms, of Israel by the Territories instead of the contrary. The law would indeed result in

²⁵⁹ Raoul Wootliff, *Final text of Jewish nation-state law, approved by the Knesset early on July 19*, The Times of Israel, 18/07/2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/final-text-of-jewish-nation-state-bill-set-to-become-law/>.

²⁶⁰ Gideon Levy, *A Law That Tells the Truth About Israel*, Haaretz, 21/07/2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-a-law-that-tells-the-truth-about-israel-1.6267705>

“another step in the direction of annexing the territories, but in the reverse direction; the territories have annexed the state. The principle of Jewish settlement, pursuant to which settlement in the territories is exclusively a Jewish affair, is now penetrating the state’s territory. Just as the Palestinian residents of the territories don’t count, the Arab citizens in the State of Israel don’t count either. There is no choice but to conclude that the policy in the territories, which would befit an apartheid regime (being based on ethnicity) is now walking tall in Israel itself, through what purports to be Israel’s new, strengthened constitution.”²⁶¹

The result is that even the more faithful of the Israeli minorities, the Arab Druze community, the only Israeli Arabs subjected to draft, manifested its rage towards such a blatant racist legislation, arriving to file a petition against the new law to the Israeli High Court of Justice, since it

“completely ignores the Druze minority in particular and the Arab minority in general [and] enshrines the collective rights of the Jewish majority. The Arab minority, which constitutes 20 percent of Israel’s citizens, receives no recognition at all of its collective rights, but beyond this, it does not even win recognition as a minority in Israel.”²⁶²

The results of this two-decades long attitude, now culminated with this new legislation, are represented by the more and more evident descent of Israel to a South-African like situation, which obviously presented important differences, but that nevertheless was founded on the separation between two categories of citizens.

In terms of consensus, the outcomes of the sum of all the events which followed the Oslo process’ failure, the lasts being the Trump statement on Jerusalem and the Israeli Nation State Law, appear as well evident from the results of a joint poll realized by the Israeli Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research of August 2018.

As for the 13th of August of this year in fact,

“Only a minority of both Israeli Jews and Palestinians (43% each) supports the concept of a two-state solution, following the *trend* of incremental decline over the course of the decade among both populations. Support among Palestinians and Israeli Jews dropped three points each from December 2017 (in total, an eight point decline among Palestinians and nine points among Israeli Jews since June 2016). Among Israeli Arabs, support remains stable and very high at 82%.”²⁶³

The fact that the two-state solution has lost, for the first time, the majority’s support between Israelis and Palestinians alike, with the obvious exceptions of the Israeli Arabs who have no intention at all to be equated to the West Bank and Gaza Palestinians (despite the Nation State Law seems oriented in that sense), appears as the definitive proof of the awareness among all the inhabitants of the former Mandate of Palestine that the outcome of decades of Israeli irredentist politics, Greater Israel oriented, has definitively led the Israeli and Palestinian society almost exactly at the same point where they were before 1948.

²⁶¹ Mordechai Kremnitzer, *Jewish Nation-state Law Makes Discrimination in Israel Constitutional*, Haaretz, 20/07/2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-nation-state-law-makes-discrimination-in-israel-constitutional-1.6291906> .

²⁶² Jonathan Lis and Revital Hovel, *Druze Lawmakers File First Court Challenge to Israel's Nation-state Law*, Haaretz, 23/07/2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-druze-lawmakers-file-first-court-challenge-to-israeli-nation-state-law-1.6295604> .

²⁶³ *The Palestine/Israel Pulse: A Joint Poll*, The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Press release, 13th of August 2018.

Facing the dilemma between coexistence and nationalism, the one-state solution, whether of binational, federative or confederative or unitarian nature, appears as the only alternative to a second forced reassessment of the Mandate's population in ethnic terms, that is to say nothing else than a second *Nakba*.

Conclusions

The analysis of the historical period and of the different proposals that during the course of the events have been made to solve a conflict that appeared, and still appears, unsolvable, which has been made in these three chapters is, obviously, limited and synthetic but nevertheless tried to enlighten the key points and processes that led to the present situation together with the concurrent evolution of the one-state solution ideal through them.

As we have seen, the one-state solution has been firstly conceived *within* Zionism, and not in opposition to it, by figures which prefigured for the Zionist ideal a concrete application in the construction of a Jewish Homeland in a binational Palestine, which would have in turn been integrated within a broader Middle Eastern confederation of peoples, into which all different nationalisms would have been legitimately expressed.

Something awkwardly very similar to the previous “Ottomanist” idea of a democratized Turkish Empire.

This idealistic ambition, however, never found any concrete possibility to be applied given the opposition of the majority of the broader Zionist movement, the lack of any political response by the other half of this supposed binational entity, the Palestinian Arabs, and, maybe most importantly, the active policy of ambiguity and of *divide et impera* pursued by the power which ruled the area in the first half of the 20th century, that is to say the British Empire.

This last in fact had no need or interest in a united Palestinian Arab and Jewish front claiming for political autonomy in a region crucial, in strategic and of prestige terms, to it.

The result of this attitude consisted, when the British authorities withdrew from the Mandate, in an immediate civil war in historic Palestine which then became a regional one, whose first and most important result was the actual transformation of part of the Mandate into a Jewish state, with the consequent expulsion of the majority of its population.

The partition found therefore a practical application, through however a collective trauma for the Palestinian Arab population expelled, which from that moment would have constituted the bulk of the resistance against the newly born State of Israel.

It is precisely among these refugees’ movements of resistance, which will later form *Fatah*, and in their ideology that a new form of one-state solution proposal would find a political ground.

Differently from their binational Zionist precursors, their proposal for a future united Palestine, especially since the 70s, would have been constituted by a secular and democratic united state, without recognising to the Jewish people, regarded as a religious group, national rights, and so neither to Muslims and Christians.

The rise of this idea among the Palestinian resistance movements happened, not casually, with the occurrence of an event that *de facto* cancelled the partition occurred in 1948, that is to say the Six Days War, the *Naksa*, of 1967.

With the Israeli occupation of the still in majority populated Arab areas of the former Mandate of Palestine, the issues that would have characterized the conflict until nowadays are in fact settled.

Since that date, the Israeli governments, with their advancing projects of annexation through settlements and military occupation, would have progressively make road to a resurgent inevitability of a future coexistence of the Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs in a *de facto* binational polity.

It is not a case that Ben-Gurion, the man that most of all worked in order to achieve a Jewish State rather than a Jewish Homeland and to obtain a partition and a political separation between Jews and Palestinian Arabs, declared in a 1968 interview that it would have been far better for Israel to give back immediately all the territories acquired in 1967.

In this sense, Israel was condemned by its post-war euphoria for the astonishing victory obtained against the neighbour Arab countries. On the long-term, Israel as Jewish and democratic state is actually risking to be the final great defeated of its own victory.

Its reluctance to concede autonomy to the still predominantly Arab territories conquered together with the constant temptation, and then active pursuit, of annexation is, according to many, transforming since 1967 what actually was, despite its numerous defects (such as the military regime imposed on the Israeli Arabs until 1966), the only functioning democracy of the area, together with the Territories, into a single proper apartheid state, as the very recently Nation State Law approval seems to prove.

The comparison with the South African case would be, however, slightly incorrect according to Noam Chomsky, since the Israeli/Palestinian situation would be even worse, as he affirmed in the final part of his 2014 discourse at the UN General Assembly:

“There are analogies often made to South Africa, but they’re quite misleading. South Africa relied on its black population. That was 85 percent of the population. It was its workforce. And they had to sustain them, just like slaveowners have to maintain their capital. They tried to sustain the population. They even tried to gain international support for the Bantustans. Israel has no such attitude toward the Palestinians. They don’t want to have anything to do with them. If they leave, that’s fine. If they die, that’s fine.”²⁶⁴

Whether this statement appears true when we speak about the Israeli hawks’ perspective, when it is taken into account the Palestinian Arab point of view the anti-apartheid South African struggle is however acquiring growingly a role of reference model.

As affirmed by the Palestinian political scientist Leila Farsakh in fact:

²⁶⁴ *Palestina e Israele: che fare?*, Noam Chomsky e Ilan Pappé, a cura di Frank Barat, Fazi Editore, Roma, 2015, p.217.

“[...] there is much to learn from South Africa’s anti-apartheid struggle, in terms of discourse as much as in strategy. The South African struggle emphasized equal political rights, when the white government and many blacks were pushing for separate development and Bantustans that would be declared “sovereign states.” It emphasized working across the board, for a state for all of its citizens.

Above all, it showed that while reconciliation and collaboration with the previous oppressor does not entail loving your partner, it does necessitate respecting the equal rights of the other. These lessons must be internalized by the advocates of a one-state solution if they are to have any hope of overcoming Israeli occupation and colonization. Developing the ability to address the difficult issues of identity, equal rights, civic responsibility, and political power is also a prerequisite for building a one-state movement that can surmount the serious domestic, regional, and international challenges it faces.”²⁶⁵

The South African example is considered as a model even among radical, and minoritarian, Israeli Jews circles as testified by the Givat Olga Document.

This last consists of a Declaration which, already when it was drafted in June 2004, stated: “The State of Israel was supposed to grant security to Jews; it has created a death-trap whose inhabitants live in constant danger, the likes of which is not experienced by any other Jewish community;

The State of Israel was supposed to tear down the walls of the ghetto; it is now constructing the biggest ghetto in the entire history of the Jews;

The State of Israel was supposed to be a democracy; it has set up a colonial structure, combining unmistakable elements of apartheid with the arbitrariness of brutal military occupation. [...]

We are united in the recognition that this country belongs to all its sons and daughters—citizens and residents, both present and absentees (the uprooted Palestinian citizens of Israel in 48’)—with no discrimination on personal or communal grounds, irrespective of citizenship or nationality, religion, culture, ethnicity or gender.”²⁶⁶

As pointed out by Ran Greenstein, a South African scholar, this last statement in particular appears remarkably similar to the African National Congress’ Freedom Charter of 1955, where South Africa was declared as a land belonging to all its inhabitants, regardless of the colour.

In conclusion, it appears from the events described, especially the ones happened following the Six Days War, that the reality on the ground in Israel/Palestine is already *de facto* a binational one, with a viable two-states solution made increasingly difficult to be implemented due to:

- A policy of tolerance, with long-term annexationist goals, by Israel of the activity of settlement of the Territories occupied in 1967.
- The resulting presence now both in Israel and in the Arab Territories of a consistent minority respectively of Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews.

²⁶⁵ *The One State Solution and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Palestinian Challenges and Prospects*, Leila Farsakh, UMASS, Boston, Winter 2011, p.71.

²⁶⁶ *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, pp.192-194.

- The inherent interdependency of both Israel and of the Territories due to the shared natural resources, as the water sources.

In addition to these key factors on the ground, at a political level, especially since this very last year, with the Trump's statement on Jerusalem and the Nation State Law, the Palestinian political and intellectual leadership is becoming increasingly aware of the necessity to change its strategy, from claiming statehood to claiming civil and political rights, if for no other reason than the failure demonstrated in the continuous trials to apply a viable two-states solution in 20 years and so in the obtaining of a Palestinian sovereign state.

At the same time, however, positive forms of political collaboration between the two communities are every day exemplified by the activities of recently born Israeli/Palestinian associations, as Breaking the Silence and Combatants for Peace, respectively founded in 2004 and 2005, towards the end of the second *intifada*.

The activities of these mixed groups, which existence alone represents a true innovation in the Israeli-Palestinian relationships, organizing joint manifestations of protest or solidarity among both Israeli and Palestinians, mainly against the worst Israeli occupation policies, as house demolitions and evictions, are the best demonstration that political actions and civil coexistence unmarked by ethnic and religious connotations is not only possible but represents the only long-term hope of a future just settlement between the two counterparts.

It is finally important to stress that this work does not consider any of the two paradigms, the two-states and the one-state one, as morally preferable to the other. Its aim consisted simply in stressing the growing unlikelihood, because of historical, geographical, practical and on ground reality reasons, of a future creation of two sovereign states in the same land for Israeli and Palestinians alike, and therefore to show the necessity of an improved academic and political consideration of an only apparently new approach to solve a conflict which, for its repercussions and for its longevity, is undoubtedly one of the most significant in contemporary history.

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Riassunto

Il conflitto Israelo-Palestinese viene spesso descritto, a ragione, come il massimo esempio di questione irrisolvibile. La sua impressionante longevità, quasi 90 anni se consideriamo come punto di inizio i moti di violenza del 1929 e quasi 100 se invece vogliamo farlo partire con i Moti di Giaffa del 1921, rappresenta un fattore di per sé estremamente scoraggiante nell'approcciarsi ad un'analisi storica di questo conflitto.

Ciò che appare è che molto poco sia cambiato, se non in peggio, durante un secolo di incessante violenza fra i due gruppi, israeliani e arabi palestinesi, che abitano le terre bibliche e che sono, loro malgrado, forzati al confronto e a relazionarsi reciprocamente, violentemente o meno.

Inoltre, malgrado le estremamente ridotte dimensioni reali del conflitto, circa 6 milioni di Israeliani e 6 milioni di Palestinesi (senza tenere conto dei rifugiati) che si contendono poco più di 20.000 chilometri quadrati di terra, questa lotta interetnica ha trascinato con sé almeno una volta nella storia recente tutti i paesi vicini, causando rivoluzioni politiche e cadute improvvise, come l'ascesa del 1952 e la caduta del 1967 di Nasser, insieme a rivolgimenti demografici di massa, come la stessa *Nakba* del 1948, la quale a sua volta comportò dei cambiamenti demografici che condussero ad ulteriori conflitti interetnici, come in Libano fra 1975 e il 1990, e che in generale costituisce tuttora uno dei fattori chiave dell'instabilità del Medio Oriente.

Un accordo duraturo riguardante la questione di Israele/Palestina appare di conseguenza fondamentale non solo per il naturale diritto dei suoi abitanti ad un'esistenza pacifica e libera, ma anche per la funzione che esso rivestirebbe di passo fondamentale verso un generale miglioramento delle relazioni interstatali in Medio Oriente, e dunque verso un più ampio equilibrio politico nell'area.

Data la natura di questo conflitto, un confronto fra due opposti nazionalismi, quello arabo palestinese da un lato e quello ebraico sionista dall'altro, per lo stesso pezzo di terra compreso fra il fiume Giordano ad est ed il Mar Mediterraneo a ovest, le soluzioni proposte nel corso della sua storia per un accordo definitivo in merito possono essere descritte, molto sinteticamente, come di due tipi.

Questi due diversi tipi di proposte consistono essenzialmente del paradigma della soluzione a due stati, basata su di una divisione della terra in due distinte entità politiche per ciascuno dei due gruppi rivali, e della soluzione dello stato unico, che trova altresì il proprio fondamento nel principio opposto, ovverosia la coesistenza di chiunque viva in Israele/Palestina in un'unica entità statale, la quale può assumere natura unitaria, binazionale, federativa o confederativa.

Il presente lavoro si focalizza sull'analisi della storia della seconda soluzione proposta e si basa sul principio che la lotta fra arabi palestinesi e israeliani può trovare una conclusione in un accordo fra le parti senza necessariamente separare i due popoli, o meglio, che a cause degli eventi storici che hanno interessato il conflitto, l'alternativa a due stati risulta ormai impossibile da realizzare

Inoltre, è anche preso in considerazione il fatto che all'interno del più ampio concetto di soluzione dello stato unico, molte diverse formule politiche sono state proposte per detto stato durante il XX ed il XXI secolo.

La prima e più importante di questa suddivisione riguarda quella intercorrente fra coloro che supportano la soluzione dello stato unico e che intendono dividerlo con la controparte e coloro che non hanno intenzione di farlo. La componente irredentista di ambedue gli schieramenti viene rappresentata da quest'ultimo gruppo. I suoi principali rappresentanti furono, durante gli anni del Mandato (1917-1948), movimenti politici e sociali come i sionisti revisionisti di Jabotinsky e i loro rivali arabi, la classe notabile degli *a'ayan*.

In tempi più recenti, invece, i discendenti politici di questi ultimi sono rappresentati, sia fra israeliani che fra palestinesi, da due fronti politici apparentemente opposti. Ovverosia dall'ala destra del panorama politico israeliano, come il partito *Likud* di Netanyahu, che ha acquisito sempre più la narrativa nazionalista religiosa dei movimenti dei coloni israeliani in Cisgiordania (come i *Gush Emunim*), i quali considerano i Territori Occupati nel 1967 come la culla originaria dell'Antico Israele, *Yehuda VeShomron* (Giudea e Samaria) che debbono essere "ebraicizzati" attraverso un'opera di insediamento, e dal movimento islamista *Hamas*, che a sua volta reclama l'intero territorio dell'ex Mandato britannico come una proprietà islamica inalienabile, un *waqf*.

Questi gruppi, malgrado il loro retroterra diametralmente opposto, hanno tuttavia mostrato e mostrano una grande similarità di dinamiche e di vedute, reclamando entrambi, per il proprio gruppo di riferimento, la Palestina storica nella sua interezza, concedendo, nel migliore dei casi, diritti di minoranza, e non nazionali, al gruppo avverso.

All'interno invece di coloro che al contrario intendono condividere un eventuale stato unico con la controparte troviamo, al contrario, una grande varietà di formule politiche proposte per risolvere la questione

Uno spettro di dette proposte che va da un unico stato unitario, laico e democratico, centralizzante e che non riconoscerebbe entrambi i nazionalismi, quale era la proposta del movimento dei *fidā'īyyūn* di *Fatah* durante gli anni 60 e 70, ad uno stato binazionale, basato su di un modello di stato decentralizzato, una federazione o confederazione, proposto da una minoranza di pensatori ed attivisti sionisti di grande levatura morale ed intellettuale, come Martin Buber, Judah Leon Magnes e Hannah Arendt.

Le tradizionali critiche mosse alla scuola di pensiero che fa riferimento al paradigma della soluzione dello stato unico sono basate su di una sua supposta ingenuità e ingiustificato ottimismo, date le cruenti conclusioni di molti stati binazionali o multietnici, come la Jugoslavia, il Libano, Cipro o l'India britannica. Realismo e pragmatismo sono stati spesso invocati dai propugnatori della soluzione a due stati, in contrapposizione all'ingenuità politica della controparte.

Un pragmatismo che ha guidato le decisioni della dirigenza politica, israeliana prima e palestinese in seguito, per quasi tutta la durata del conflitto, relegando i partiti o i movimenti che supportavano una soluzione a uno stato ad uno stato permanente di minoranza.

Malgrado ciò, questi ultimi affermano, ed hanno sempre affermato, che al contrario vi sia un inerente pragmatismo nella costruzione di una singola entità politica in Israele/Palestina. Una partizione politica in una terra così poco estesa, inevitabilmente legata economicamente con le sue sub-regioni e con il resto del Medio Oriente, costituirebbe, a detta loro, una prospettiva miope e irrealistica nel lungo periodo.

I continui fallimenti del paradigma a due stati nell'intera storia del conflitto, come ad esempio l'agonizzante processo Oslo basato su di esso, sembrano aver infine riabilitato la concorrente proposta dello stato unico, portandolo ad una accresciuta considerazione fra accademici ed intellettuali, sia Israeliani che Palestinesi.

Analizzando cronologicamente la storia del pensiero politico legato al discorso della soluzione dello stato unico si possono riconoscere tre fasi distinte.

La prima è rappresentata dal periodo del Mandato britannico in Palestina, durante il quale la soluzione ad uno stato del conflitto fra ebrei e arabi in Palestina era concepita essenzialmente in chiave binazionale. Inoltre, la diffusione di detto pensiero era limitata esclusivamente ad una minoranza di pensatori sionisti pacifisti, quali appunto Martin Buber e Hannah Arendt, senza alcuna significativa corrispondenza politica araba palestinese ad essa.

Di conseguenza la soluzione da uno stato è stata inizialmente concepita all'interno del sionismo, e non in opposizione ad esso, da parte di figure intellettuali che preconizzavano per l'ideale sionista una concreta applicazione nella costruzione di una patria ebraica in una Palestina binazionale, la quale sarebbe stata a sua volta integrata in una più ampia confederazione dei popoli del Medio Oriente, in cui i diversi nazionalismi avrebbero potuto trovare legittima espressione.

Questa idealistica ambizione tuttavia non trovò mai alcuna concreta possibilità di applicazione, data l'opposizione della maggioranza del movimento sionista, la già citata mancanza di corrispondenza fra arabi palestinesi e, soprattutto, l'attiva politica di ambiguità e di *divide et impera* perseguita dalla potenza mandataria, ovvero l'Impero britannico.

Quest'ultimo infatti non aveva alcun interesse in un fronte Palestinese Arabo-Ebraico che congiuntamente premesse per un'autonomia politica in una regione cruciale per esso sia per interesse strategico che per prestigio.

The result of this attitude consisted, when the British authorities withdrew from the Mandate, in an immediate civil war in historic Palestine which then became a regional one.

Il risultato di queste politiche di divisione intercomunitaria consistette nell'immediato scoppio di una guerra civile nel Mandato non appena le ultime autorità britanniche annunciarono di voler abbandonare la Palestina nel 1947, guerra civile che si trasformò rapidamente in un conflitto regionale.

Con la conseguente prima guerra arabo-israeliana del 1948, insieme alla *Nakba*, l'esodo di circa 750.000 rifugiati palestinesi, la soluzione ad uno stato perse di rilevanza fra i sionisti, data l'effettiva partizione dell'ex Mandato. La prospettiva politica di detta soluzione passò di conseguenza nel campo avverso, in quanto fatta propria dai movimenti di resistenza palestinesi *fidā'īyyūn*, anche se declinata nella sua forma secolare ed unitaria, non più binazionale, la quale non riconosceva diritti nazionali agli ebrei, né a cristiani e musulmani.

I rovesci militari subiti e le difficoltà politiche cui però questi ultimi dovettero fronteggiare alla metà degli anni 80 li indussero a mutare le loro posizioni in merito, accettando il paradigma a due stati nella speranza di ottenere un'entità statale almeno nei Territori occupati da Israele a seguito della guerra dei Sei Giorni del 1967.

Il conseguente processo di pace di Oslo fra le due parti, basato dunque sulla creazione di un'entità palestinese in parte della Palestina storica, non ha tuttavia potuto trovare compimento in nessuno dei suoi obiettivi per una serie di ragioni.

Queste ultime vanno ricercate specialmente nelle politiche successive all'Occupazione israeliana di Cisgiordania e Striscia di Gaza nel 1967.

A partire da quell'anno, i governi israeliani, con i loro progetti di annessione attraverso opere di insediamento e di occupazione militare, avrebbero progressivamente fatto strada ad una nuova inevitabilità di una futura coesistenza fra ebrei israeliani e arabi palestinesi in una entità *de facto* binazionale.

Non è infatti un caso che Ben-Gurion, l'uomo che più di tutti aveva lavorato per l'ottenimento di uno stato ebraico e non meramente una patria ebraica insieme ad una partizione ed una separazione politica di ebrei e arabi palestinesi, abbia dichiarato in un'intervista del 1968 che sarebbe stato molto meglio per Israele restituire immediatamente tutti i territori occupati l'anno precedente.

In questo senso, Israele fu condannato, insieme alla prospettiva dei due stati, dalla sua stessa euforia post-bellica causata dall'inaspettata vittoria ottenuta contro i vicini paesi arabi. Sul lungo periodo, Israele inteso come stato ebraico e democratico ha rischiato e rischia tuttora, ormai inevitabilmente, di divenire il vero grande sconfitto della sua stessa vittoria.

La sua riluttanza nel concedere autonomia ai territori conquistati ancora prevalentemente arabi, insieme alla costante tentazione, e poi attivo perseguimento, di annessione di questi ultimi sta trasformando, o ha già trasformato, irrimediabilmente dal 1967 ciò che effettivamente era, malgrado i suoi numerosi difetti (come il regime militare imposto agli cittadini arabi israeliani fino al 1966), l'unica democrazia effettiva dell'intera area, in un solo stato di apartheid, insieme con i Territori, come dimostrato molto recentemente dall'approvazione della Legge sullo Stato Nazione.

Il confronto con il caso sudafricano sarebbe tuttavia parzialmente scorretto, secondo Noam Chomsky, dal momento che la situazione in Israele/Palestina sarebbe addirittura peggiore, come affermato da questi nella parte finale del suo discorso del 2014 all'Assemblea General dell'ONU:

“Spesso si paragona Israele al Sudafrica, ma è un paragone fuorviante. Il Sudafrica aveva bisogno dei neri, che rappresentavano l'85 per cento dell'intera popolazione, perché costituivano la sua manodopera. I sudafricani dovevano preservare la popolazione di colore, proprio come gli schiavisti devono salvaguardare il loro capitale; così fecero di tutto per non perderla, provando addirittura a far accettare i bantustan alla comunità internazionale. Gli israeliani non hanno in serbo simili progetti per i palestinesi, non vogliono avere niente a che fare con loro: se vanno via bene, e se muoiono va bene lo stesso.”²⁶⁷

Anche se tali affermazioni appaiono corrette in riferimento alla prospettiva dei “falchi” israeliani, lo sono meno quando viene preso in considerazione il punto di vista arabo palestinese sulla lotta antiapartheid sudafricana, la quale sta assumendo un crescente ruolo come modello di riferimento.

As affirmed by the Palestinian political scientist Leila Farsakh in fact:

Come affermato dalla scienziata politica palestinese Leila Farsakh infatti:

“[...] vi è molto da imparare dalla lotta antiapartheid sudafricana, in termini di narrativa e di strategia. La lotta sudafricana ha enfatizzato eguali diritti politici, mentre il governo bianco e molti neri spingevano per uno sviluppo separato e Bantustan che sarebbero stati dichiarati “stati sovrani”. Ha enfatizzato il lavoro attraverso i confini, per uno stato per tutti i suoi cittadini.

Soprattutto, ha dimostrato che se da un lato la riconciliazione e la collaborazione con il precedente oppressore non significa amare la controparte, dall'altro necessita del rispetto degli eguali diritti di questa. Queste lezioni devono essere fatte proprie dai propugnatori della soluzione ad uno stato se vogliono avere una qualche speranza di resistere l'occupazione e la colonizzazione israeliana. Lo sviluppo dell'abilità di rispondere alle difficili questioni dell'identità, degli eguali diritti, della responsabilità civica e del potere politico è anche un prerequisito per la costruzione di un movimento per lo stato unico che possa sormontare le sere sfide domestiche, regionali ed internazionali che sarà chiamato a fronteggiare.”²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ *Palestina e Israele: che fare?*, Noam Chomsky e Ilan Pappé, a cura di Frank Barat, Fazi Editore, Roma, 2015, p.217.

²⁶⁸ *The One State Solution and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Palestinian Challenges and Prospects*, Leila Farsakh, UMASS, Boston, Winter 2011, p.71.

L'esempio sudafricano è inoltre preso a modello persino fra radicali, e minoritari, circoli israeliani, come testimoniato dal Documento di Givat Olga.

Quest'ultimo consiste di una dichiarazione, la quale, già al momento della sua composizione nel Giugno 2004, affermava:

“Lo Stato di Israele avrebbe dovuto garantire la sicurezza degli ebrei; ha creato una trappola mortale i cui abitanti vivono in costante pericolo, il cui eguale non è vissuto da alcun'altra comunità ebraica;

Lo Stato di Israele avrebbe dovuto abbattere le mura del ghetto; sta ora costruendo il più grande ghetto dell'intera storia ebraica;

Lo Stato di Israele avrebbe dovuto essere una democrazia; ha costruito una struttura coloniale, combinando assieme inconfondibili elementi di apartheid e l'arbitrarietà di una brutale occupazione militare. [...]

Siamo uniti nel riconoscimento che questo paese appartenga a tutti i suoi figli e figlie – cittadini e residenti, presenti e assenti (gli sradicati cittadini palestinesi di Israele del 1948) – senza alcuna discriminazione sul piano personale o comunitario, senza riguardo verso cittadinanza o nazionalità, religione, cultura, etnicità o genere.”²⁶⁹

Come notato da Ran Greenstein, professore sudafricano, quest'ultima affermazione appare notevolmente simile alla Freedom Charter del 1955 dell'African National Congress, in cui il Sudafrica veniva dichiarato come una terra per tutti i suoi abitanti, senza riguardo per il colore.

In conclusione, appare dagli eventi descritti, specialmente quelli avvenuti in seguito alla guerra dei Sei Giorni, che la realtà in Israele/Palestina sia già *de facto* quella di un'entità binazionale, mentre una attuabile soluzione a due stati viene resa sempre più complessa da implementare a causa di:

- Una politica di tolleranza, con obiettivi annessionistici di lungo termine, da parte di Israele dell'attività di insediamento dei Territori occupati nel 1967.
- La risultante presenza sia in Israele che nei Territori di una consistenza minoranza rispettivamente di arabi palestinesi e di ebrei israeliani.
- L'inerente interdipendenza sia di Israele che dei Territori, causata dalla forzata condivisione di risorse naturali, come le fonti d'acqua.

In aggiunta questi fattori chiave, ad un livello politico, specialmente da quest'ultimo anno, nel quale sono occorsi sia il riconoscimento del Presidente statunitense Trump di Gerusalemme come capitale di Israele sia la Legge sullo Stato Nazione, la leadership politica ed intellettuale palestinese sta diventando sempre più cosciente della necessità di cambiare strategia, dal reclamare uno stato al reclamare diritti civili e politici, non fosse altro che per il fallimento dimostrato dai continui tentativi di applicare una soluzione a due stati in 20 anni di processo Oslo, e dunque nell'ottenere uno stato palestinese sovrano.

²⁶⁹ *Zionism and its discontents, a century of radical dissent in Israel/Palestine*, Ran Greenstein, Pluto Press, London, 2014, pp.192-194.

Allo stesso tempo, tuttavia, forme di collaborazione politica positive fra le due comunità sono ogni giorno rese possibili dalle attività di nuove associazioni israelo-palestinesi, come *Breaking the Silence* e *Combatants for Peace*, fondate rispettivamente nel 2004 e nel 2005, verso la fine della seconda *intifada*.

Le attività di queste associazioni miste, la cui sola esistenza rappresenta una vera novità nelle relazioni israelo-palestinesi, che consistono nell'organizzare manifestazioni congiunte di protesta o solidarietà sia fra israeliani che fra palestinesi, soprattutto contro le peggiori politiche dell'occupazione israeliana, quali demolizioni di abitazione e evacuazioni forzate, sono la migliore dimostrazione che azioni politiche e di coesistenza civile, non connotate etnicamente o religiosamente, non solo sono possibili, ma rappresentano l'unica speranza sul lungo periodo di un futuro equo accordo fra le due controparti.

Infine, è importante sottolineare che il presente lavoro non considera nessuno dei due paradigmi, soluzione a due stati o ad uno stato, come moralmente preferibile all'altro. Il suo scopo consiste semplicemente nel sottolineare la crescente improbabilità, per ragioni storiche, geografiche e pratiche, di una futura creazione di due stati sovrani nella stessa terra sia per gli israeliani che per i palestinesi, e di conseguenza di mostrare la necessità di una maggiore considerazione politica e accademica per un solo apparentemente nuovo approccio per apporre una soluzione ad un conflitto che, per le sue ripercussioni e la sua longevità, è indubbiamente uno dei più significativi della storia contemporanea.

Il lavoro di ricerca necessario per elaborare questa breve analisi storica e di filosofia politica è stato svolto per lo più sul campo, in Israele, durante un semestre di scambio che mi ha consentito di trovare dati, monografie e articoli accademici, di conoscere fonti di ambo le parti e di approfondire in generale la mia conoscenza di questo particolare conflitto attraverso corsi accademici, specialmente un Seminario di Ricerca condotto presso l'università ospite, l'IDC-Herzliya, sulle questioni chiave del conflitto, tenuto dalla professoressa Galia Gola, sul cui paper finale di ricerca questo lavoro è basato.

Lo scopo che ho tentato di perseguire è stato anche di mantenere un equilibrio nell'utilizzare fonti di ambo le parti e di presentare gli eventi storici nel modo più obiettivo possibile, conscio comunque della difficoltà che questo comporta e sapendo che è impossibile rappresentare e analizzare in un lavoro così limitato tutte le differenti posizioni e punti di vista prodotti e ispirati da un conflitto di natura così sensibile.

Le principali fonti utilizzate sono dunque sia israeliane che palestinesi, e sono rappresentate da monografie di storici come Ilan Pappé, Benny Morris e Jean-Pierre Filiu, insieme ad articoli accademici pubblicati su riviste specializzate dedicate al Medio Oriente in generale ed a Israele/Palestina in particolare, specialmente il *Journal of Palestine Studies*.

Ulteriori risorse non accademiche hanno altresì avuto un notevole ruolo, come le lettere e gli articoli di Arendt e Buber, i pochi articoli che sono riuscito a trovare dei giornali in lingua inglese dei movimenti

fidā'īyyūn, come il PFLP Bulletin, i sondaggi effettuati congiuntamente dal Palestinian Research Center e dal Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace and Research, e i papers di analisi di think tanks come il Mitvim Institute e la Chatham House.