The One Palestine: Past, Present and Future Perspectives.

By Ilan Pappe

A clear sense of 'Palestine' as a coherent geo-political unit dates back, according to both the Palestinian and Zionist narratives, to 3000 BC. From that time onward, and for another 1500 years, it was the land of the Canaanites. In around 1500 BC the land of Canaan fell under Egyptian rule, not for the last time in history and then successfully under Philistine (1200-975), Israelite (1000-923), Phoenician (923-700), Asyrian (700-612), Babylonian (586-539), Persian (539-332), Macedonian (332-63), Roman (63BC-636CE), Arab (636-1200), Crusade (1099-1291), Ayubi (1187-1253), Mamluk (1253-1516) and Ottoman rules (1517-1917). Each rule divided the land in administrative way that reflected its political culture and time. But apart from the early Roman period and the early Arab period when vast population were moved out and in, the society remained – ethnically, culturally and religiously – the same. Within what we recognize today as Mandatory Palestine this society developed its own oneness and distinctive features.

In modern times, some of the above periods were manipulated and co-opted into a national, or colonialist, narrative to justify the takeover and conquest of the country. This historical chronology was used, or abused, by the Crusaders and later European colonialists and the Zionist movement. The Zionists were different from the others as they deemed, as did the powers that be when they emerged in 1882, the historical reference as crucial for justifying their colonization of Palestine. They did it as part of what they termed 'the Return' to or 'Redemption' of the land, which was once ruled by Israelites; as the historical checklist above indicate this is a reference to a mere century in a history of four millennia.

Apart from the national narrative, we should say that Palestine as a geo-political entity was a fluid concept since the rulers of the country quite often were the representatives of an empire, which disabled any local sovereignty from developing. The question of sovereignty began to be an issue – one that would inform the land's history and conflict until today – once the Empires disappeared. The natural progress from such disintegration, almost everywhere in the world, was that the indigenous population took over. Ever since the emergence of the concept

of Nationalism, the identity of this historical revolution is clearer and common. Where the vestiges of imperialism or colonialism refused to let go – such as in the case of while settlers' communities in North and South Africa – the national wars of liberation lingered on. In places, where the indigenous population was annihilated by the settlers' communities, they became the new nation (as happened in the Americas and Australia).

The takeover from the disintegrating empires succeeded a longer process, so many of the theoreticians of nationalism believe, of social and cultural cohesiveness. The liberated land varied in structure and composition: some having a heterogeneous ethnic, religious and culture societies, finding it difficult to become a nation state, others, were fortunate due to their relative homogeneity – although they had their share of the economic polarity, social differentiation and a constant struggle between modernity and tradition. A liberated Palestine would have belonged to the latter model – which developed in Egypt and Tunisia – and less similar to the more troubled cases of Iraq and Lebanon.

With the turn of the 21st century, the political map of the world consolidated in such a way that only in very few areas where the nation building of the state still continues or the issue of sovereignty is still open. A rare case, which distresses   the world at large and destabilizes it, is Palestine. Why did not this Arab land become another Arab nation state – as all the other states in the Middle East (including the smallest of the emirates in the Persian Gulf) - is a known story. What is quite often neglected is the fact that the present geo-political reality, while been depicted in the world as normal, is in fact a *sui generis* that runs contrary to the land's history and the wishes of its native population, who still constitute a vast majority of the people (the Palestinian refugee community and those living inside Palestine are double than that of the Jews inside the land). The gap between the external depiction of the reality, and the reality itself as perceived by the Palestinians, is the major source of the conflict and only attempts to tally the former with the latter have a chance of brining reconciliation and peace to the torn country of Palestine.

The purpose of this article is to stress the pattern of continuity in Palestine's modern history (beginning with the late Ottoman Period) as a geo-political entity with its own cultural cohesiveness and distinctiveness. The search is for both the political structures that existed and those offered as alternatives.

Even a cursory journey into the past reveals that Palestine was most of the time ruled as a unitary political unit; namely, the political structure fitted the ethnic, social, cultural and religious realities on the ground. Such a long span of time, lying on deeper layer of ancient existence, explain the emergence of unique features such as dialects, customs and local patriotism in what we recognize today as Palestine.

The rise of ideologies such as nationalism, the intervention of European colonialism and the decline of Ottomanism contributed to a clearer conceptualization of what Palestine meant and stood for, both to its inhabitants and those coveting it from the outside.

Palestine in the late Ottoman Rule

The above sub-title is a title of a book published in my own university in 1986. More than 25 historians, most of them Israeli Jews, reconstructed life in Palestine: a geo-political unit that was predominantly Arab in ethnicity (more than 95% out of half a million of Arabs) The old Jewish community considered itself to be Arab and only few thousands Jewish settlers who arrived for the first time in 1882 regarded their ethnicity, and not only religion, as Jewish.

Palestinian historians would have no problem with defining the land in 1882-1917 as Palestine in the late Ottoman period. However, they would find it bizarre to learn from the book's introduction that in that period there were two communities, Jewish and Arab, 'which began aspiring toward national liberation' and therefore, both groups were anti-Ottoman. It was 'only natural that much of their protest and grievances be directed against their Ottoman masters'. Historical fabrication at its best, one should say. The naive reader would think Palestine in late Ottoman period, and centuries, if not millennia, before was the land of Jews and Arabs, equal in number, presence and claim, who disliked each other and the Ottomans. In this typical Zionist narrative of the mid 1980s, Palestine is already partly Israel. Partition was already in the air.

We need Palestinian scholarship to remind us that even in 1917, the vast majority of people in Palestine were Palestinians – 600,000 – with few thousand foreign settlers hoping to colonize the land on behalf of European Jewish nationalism or Christian millenniarism. A year later Palestine was clearly defined as such with the name Palestine given to it officially for the

first time as a political unit, and through dramatic dispossession, colonization and aggressive British imperialism became a historical case study lying somewhere between the annihilated indigenous populations and the liberated colonies of the European empires. It is still there today.

As long as the demographic, social and cultural realities on the ground fitted the political structure for the land, conflict was spares and very localized. For most of the Ottoman period, Palestine was only divided administratively, but maintained as mentioned cohesion distinguished by dialect, customs and the people itself [give reference from my book, khalidi and doumani]. The country was composed of three principal Ottoman subdistricts, Acre, Nablus and Jerusalem, which were connected by history and tradition. These similarities had all along been recognized by the people themselves, which is why the people of Jabal Nablus had made every possible effort to remain connected to Jerusalem. When Nablus was officially annexed in 1858 to the villayet of Beirut, a protest movement arose, so massive that it turned into a bloodbath in which, according to the British consul in Jerusalem, 3,000 people were killed. (He was, however, known to have exaggerated in the past, so the number could well have been much lower).[1]

In the very last years of their rule, the Ottoman allowed the Arab elite to take a more intensive part in the politics of the land – turning its cities such as Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa and Nablus – into epicenters of social, and later even national, unity [butrus abu manneh]. Like all the Arab lands around Palestine, under the spell of nationalism, Palestine progressed into becoming a Wattaniya – a geo-political locality – within a Qawmiyya – the pan-Arabist sphere of belonging.

The new rules of Palestine, the British Empire, did not stop this process, nor did it create a political structure that collided with the cohesiveness of the society and its uniqueness. But, it did lay the foundations, through the various political solutions it offered, for the construction of a new Palestine - that deprived the Palestinians of their land – and making it into Israel.

One Palestine Complete.

Yet again, a title by a Zionist historian, this time Tom Segev. Here too Palestinian historiography would not object to the title, but Segev's English title is misleading. The book was originally written in Hebrew and titled *Eretz Israel in the Mandatory Period*; a typical

Zionist parlance. The One Palestine, is thus an aberration, almost a foreign occupation by a very civilized culture, according to Segev, which enabled the native population – which here include too the Zionist settlers and colonialists, to live in relative peace and prosperity.

Palestine became more complete, in this Segev is right, because the British continued where the Ottoman reformers left the work of unison, before they collapsed. The British combined the three Ottoman sub-districts into one geo-political unit (a smooth operation that went with great local satisfaction compared to the uneasiness that accompanied similar unifications in Iraq, where Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis were to become the Iraqi nation state under British rule). The making of a unitary mandatory state was a calm historical process that corresponded to the harmonious ethnic and religious fabric on the ground. It lasted until 1923 and the final stages were devoted for negotiating over the land's final border, creating a better defined space for the national movement to identify with, but also for colonialism and Zionism to fight for.

This was Palestine's tragedy that in the same period when it crystallized as a typical Arab nation state, it enabled the Zionist movement to define clearly what meant geographically by the concept of Eretz Israel, or the land of Israel; with Zionism came also the idea of partitioning Palestine.

The political elite of the native Palestinians conceived its homeland as a unitary state. In fact, in the very early years of British occupation and nascent Zionist presence it imagined the future more in pan-Arabist than Palestinian terms. But the balance of forces on the ground undermined the dream of a pan-Arabist entity stretching from Morocco to Iran and crashed even less ambitious plans such as creating a Greater Syria out of the eastern Mediterranean countries. By 1922, the majority of the Palestinian leaders, and one guesses the population at large, conceptualized Palestine as the national homeland of the Palestinians lying between the river Jordan and the Mediterranean. When this was the trend, and given the vast majority they enjoyed in the country, the Palestinians, through their elected leaders, became aware of their need to make a claim to a land that was theirs, until a foreign movement challenged them. Their entry into the game of diplomacy in the post 1918 global arena was hesitant, and ineffective, compared to the European based Zionist movement, with its growing power base in America.

On the face it, being such a vast majority, they should have succeeded, despite their leaders' lack of experience. The new nation states in the Middle East were promised independence, under the guidance of the League of Nations, based on principles of democracy and self-determination. Had Palestine been treated by these measures, it would have been today in a similar position to any other Arab nation state.

But, unlike any other Arab state, the international verdict about Palestine's future, in the form of the mandatory charter, included clauses that defeated the right of the Palestinians to their homeland. The Balfour declaration and with it the ambiguous British promise to make Palestine a homeland for the Jews was incorporated in the charter. Few bursts of violent waves and more reflective British strategic thought led London to rethink its previous concepts. This is probably why until 1937, the British were still visualizing the future within a one state paradigm. In 1928, these fresh insights turned into the first significant peace initiative. In a country that by then had a majority of Palestinians (85% of the population), the British must have felt triumphant when they succeeded in persuading the Executive Committee of the national Palestine congress – the de facto government of the Palestinians - to share the land with the Jewish settlers. The idea was to build a state on the basis of parity – in the executive, legislative and judiciary system. It was a concept of a unitary state that was accepted by a Palestinian leadership – in a rare moment of unity in a polity that hitherto and after was divided by clannish cleavages of prestige and ancestry.[2]

It was also an opportune moment for allowing the two communities to try and coexist within an acceptable political structure. But the Zionist leadership refused to partake in such a solution. Interestingly, as long as its leaders had been aware of a total rejection of the idea on the Palestinian part, the official Zionist position was that this kind of a solution is acceptable. Once the intelligence unit of the Jewish Agency reported a change of wind on the Palestinian side, the Jewish leadership reversed its policy and rejected the idea of parity.[3] The Zionist leaders preferred the idea of partition, with the hope of annexing more of Palestine when favorable conditions for such expansion would develop.

When the future of Palestine was discussed once more in the wake of the British decision to leave Palestine in February 1947, the Zionist leadership, although representing the minority group of settlers, determined the peace agenda. A very inexperienced inquiry

commission was appointed by the UN – the international body took responsibility for Palestine after the British withdrawal. The new commission acted within a vacuum which was easily filled by the Zionist ideas. The Jewish Agency provided in May 1947 the inquiry commission, UNSCOP, a map that included a creation of a Jewish state over 80% of Palestine – more or less Israel of today without the occupied territories. The commission in November 1947 reduced the Jewish State into 55% of Palestine and formulated the plan as a UN General Assembly resolution 181. The Palestinian rejection of the plan, which did not surprise anyone as they had been opposed to partition ever since 1918 and the Zionist endorsement of it, which was foretold since partition was after all a Zionist solution to the problem, were in the eyes of the international policeman a solid enough base for peace in the Holy Land. Imposing the will of one side on the other was hardly a productive move towards reconciliation and indeed rather than bringing peace and quiet to the torn land, the resolution triggered violence on an unprecedented scale in the history of modern Palestine.[4]

The Partitioning of Palestine, 1947-1967

The Jewish leadership returned to its May 1947 map; if the Palestinians rejected the Zionist idea of partition, it was time for unilateral action. The map showed clearly which parts of Palestine were coveted as the future Jewish state. The problem was that within the desired 80% the Jews were a minority of 40% (660,000 Jews and one million Palestinians). But this was also a passable hurdle. The leaders of the Yishuv had been prepared ever since the beginning of the Zionist project in Palestine for such an eventuality. They advocated in such a case the enforced transfer of the indigenous population so that a pure Jewish state could be established. Therefore, on March 10, 1948, the Zionist leadership adopted the by now infamous Plan Dalet which ordered the Jewish forces to ethnically cleanse the areas regarded as the future Jewish State in Palestine.

The international community realized that the partition plan was more an incentive for bloodshed than a peace program and five days after the 1948 war erupted attempted once more a reconciliation effort. The mission was entrusted in the hands of the UN first mediator in the history of the post-mandatory conflict, Count Folke Bernadotte. Bernatotte offered two proposals

to end the conflict by partitioning the land into two states. The difference between them was that in the second proposal he suggested the annexation of Arab Palestine to Transjordan. But in both proposals he stipulated the unconditional repatriation of Palestinian refugees as a precondition for peace. He was ambivalent about Jerusalem wishing it to be the Arab capital in the first proposal but preferring it international in the second. In any case, he seemed to place the refugees and Jerusalem at the center of the conflict and perceive these two dilemmas as undivisible problems, for which only a comprehensive and just solution would do.[5]

Even after Bernadotte's assassination by Jewish extremists in 1948, the Palestine Conciliation Commission appointed to replace him, pursued the same policy. The three members of this commission wished to build the future solution on three tiers: the partition of the land into two states – but not according to the map of the partition resolution but in correspondence to the demographic distribution of Jews and Palestinians, the internationalization of Jerusalem and the unconditional return of the refugee to their homes. The new mediators offered the three principles as a basis for negotiations and while the Arab confrontational countries and the Palestinian leadership accepted this offer, during the UN peace conference in Lausanne Switzerland in May 1949, as had done before them the UN General Assembly in resolution 194 of December 1948, it was nonetheless buried by the intransigent David Ben Gurion and his government in summer of that year. At first, the US administration rebuked Israel for its policy and exerted economic pressure on it, but later on, the Jewish lobby succeeded in re-orientating US policy onto pro-Israeli tracks, where it remained until today.[6]

Palestine was not divided. It was destroyed and most of its people expelled. The expulsion and the destruction kindled the conflict ever since. The PLO emerged in the late 1950s as an embodiment of the Palestinian struggle for return, reconstruction and restitution. But it was not a particular successful struggle. The refugees were totally ignored by the international community and the regional Arab powers. Only Gamal abd al-Nasser seemed to adopt their cause, forcing the Arab League to show at least concern for their case. As the Arab ill-fated maneuvers of June 1967 showed, this was not enough or efficient.

In those days when the PLO phoenix hatched (1948-67), a more systematic conceptualization of the idea of one state emerged. In the paper *Filastinuna* several writers envisaged a secular democratic state as the only viable solution for the Palestine problem. But a

thorough reading shows that the concern was an unidentified 'Palestinian entity' that would trigger the rebirth of the movement, rather than focusing on actual political models or structures.[7] The debate was mainly between a pan-Arabist point, wishing to oppose what they called separatism from the *qawmi* (the pan-Arabist version of nationalism) future in the name of a Palestinian *watniyya* (nation-state territorialism).

Neither was the nature of a future Palestinian entity seriously discussed in the regional or international arenas. There was a lull in the peace efforts in the 1950s and 1960s, although into the air schema such the Anglo-American Alpha program and the Johnston Plan were thrown.[8] These and more esoteric initiative, almost all of them American, wished to adopt a business like approach to the conflict. This meant a great belief in partition according to security interests of Israel and its Arab neighbors, while totally sidelining the Palestinians as partners for peace. The Palestinians were cancelled as a political partner in the business like approach. They existed only as refugees whose fate was treated within the economic aspect of the American Cold War against the Soviet Union. Their problem was to be solved within a new Marshal plan for the Middle East. This plan promised American aid to the area in order to improve the standard of living as the best means of containing Soviet encroachment. For that the refugees had to be resettled in Arab lands and serve as cheap labour for their development (and by that also distancing them from Israel's borders and consciousness). Although the PLO showed enough resistance to encourage Arab regimes to leave the refugees in their transitional camps, despite their perception as a destabilizing factor, the association of the PLO with the Soviet Union, on the other hand, pushed the Palestinians, wherever they were, from any prospective pax Americana.

The Partition Formula and Its Demise, 1967-2000

In June 1967, the whole of Palestine became Israel - a new geo-political reality that necessitated a renewed peace process. At first, it was the UN that took the initiative, but soon it was replaced by American peacemakers. The early architects of Pax Americana had some original ideas of their own which were flatly rejected by the Israelis and hence remained on paper. Then the mechanism of American brokering became a proxy for Israeli peace plans. At the center of the Israeli perception of a solution stood three presumptions: the first was that Israel

should be absolved from the 1948 ethnic cleanings by not mentioning any more the issue as part of a prospective peace agenda; secondly and consequently, negotiations for peace would only concern the future of the areas Israel had occupied in 1967; namely the West Bank and the Gaza strip and thirdly, the fate of the Palestinian minority in Israel was not to be part of a comprehensive settlement for the conflict. This meant that 80 percents of Palestine and more than 50 percents of the Palestinians were excluded from the efforts of making peace in the land of Palestine. This formula was accepted unconditionally by the US and sold as the best offer in town to the rest of the world.

At the heart of this formula stood an equation of territories for peace, produced by the Israeli peace camp and marketed by the Americans. It is a strange formula if you stop and think about it: on the one end of the equation you have a quantitative and measurable variable, on the other, an abstract term, not easily conceptualized or even illustrated. It was less bizarre as a working basis for bilateral peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors where indeed it operated quite well, for a while, in the case of Egypt and Jordan. And yet we should remember it produced 'cold peace' in the case of these two countries, as it did not offer a comprehensive solution to the Palestine question. And indeed what had this equation to offer to the ultimate victims of the 1948 war; whose demand for 'justice' is the main fuel kindling the conflict's fire?

The architects of the Oslo accord thought it could. They resold the merchandize of 'peace for territories'. Hallow concepts such as Israeli recognition in the PLO and 'autonomy' for the Palestinians was meant to strengthen the business like approach for a solution. The reality on the ground was one state, 20 percents of which was under indirect Israeli military occupation, while it was represented as the making of a two states solution with the display of a dramatic discourse of peace.[9]

I am not underestimating the progress made in Oslo, but one should never forget the circumstances of the accord's birth, they tell you why it was such a colossal failure. Dramatic changes in the global and regional balance of power, and an Israeli readiness to replace the Hashemites of Jordan with the PLO as a partner for peace, opened the way to an even more complicated formula of 'territories for peace'. Oslo was a celebration of the idea of partition: territories, and everything else which is visible and quantifiable could be divided between the two sides. Thus the only non Jewish parts of post-1948 Palestine - 22 percents of the land - could

be re-divided between Israel and a future Palestinian autonomous entity. Within these 22 percents of Palestine, the illegal Jewish settlements could be divided into 80 per cent under Israeli control and 20 percent under Palestinian authority. And so on, most of the water resources to Israel, most of Jerusalem in Israeli hands. Peace, the quid pro quo, meant a stateless Palestinian state robed of any say in its defense, foreign or economic policies. As for the Palestinian right of return, according to the Israeli interpretation of Oslo, which is the one that counts, it should be forgotten and erased. This Israeli conceptualization of a solution was presented to the world at large in the summer of 2000 at Camp David.

For Palestinians the summit in Camp David was meant to produce the final stages in the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza strip (according to resolutions 242 and 338 of the UN security council) and prepare the ground for new negotiations over a final settlement on the basis of UN resolution 194 – the return of the refugees, the internationalization of Jerusalem and a full sovereign Palestinian state. Even the US voted in favor of this resolution at the time and ever since.

The Israeli Left, in power ever since 1999, regarded the Camp David summit as a stage for dictating to the Palestinian their concept of a solution: maximizing the divisibility of the visible (evicting 90 per cent of the occupied areas, 20 percent of the settlements, 50 percent of Jerusalem) while demanding the end of Palestinian reference to the invisible layers of the conflict: no right of return, no full sovereign Palestinian state and no solution for the Palestinian minority in Israel. After Camp David an acceptable solution for the Israelis, meant that as long as the Palestinian would not succumb to the Israeli dictate, the occupation, exile and discrimination would continue until the Palestinians would budge. With or without Ariel Sharon's violation of the sacredness of *Haram al-Sharif* in September 2000. the second uprising broke out in the territories and in Israel a month later, in October 2000, and is still going on while this article is written.

In first four years of the second Intifada, 'Territories for Peace' was absent from the peace table. The uprising spilled over into Israel itself leading the Palestinian minority there to call for the de-Zionization of the Jewish state, allowing West Bankers to demand the Palestiniazation of the Muslim and Christian Jerusalem, the inhabitants of Gaza to raise arms against the continued occupation and uniting refugees around the world in their call for the

implementation of their right of return. What this last intifada made abundantly clear was that in the eyes of the Palestinians, the end of occupation was a precondition for peace and can not be peace itself. The Israeli peace camp, so we are told by its 'gurus' was insulted in October 2000. The narrative provided by the Israeli prime minister at the time of the Camp David summit, Ehud Barak, was accepted widely by the peace camp. According to this version the Israeli leadership maximized the equation of 'territories for peace' by offering most of the territories Israeli occupied in 1967, and the Palestinians stupidly rejected this 'generous' offer.

This version was endorsed by the United States, although several European governments and personalities doubted its validity. This narrative delineated very clearly what was the final settlement in the eyes of the political camp led at the time by the Labour party and its leader Ehud Barak. Such a 'comprehensive' solution was an essence an Israeli demand of the Palestinians to recognize the Zionist narrative of the 1948 war as exclusively right and valid: Israel had no responsibility for the making of the refugee problem and the Palestinian minority in Israel – twenty per cents of the population – was not part of the solution to the conflict. It also included an Israeli demand of the Palestinians to acquiesce in the new reality Israel created in Greater Jerusalem and the West Bank. A final peace settlement was therefore one in which the world recognizes as for ever Jewish the settlement belt encircling Jerusalem and planted at the heart of the Palestinian cities such as Nablus and Halil (Hebron).

This dictate returned as a peace process in 2004 under the auspices of a new body, the Quartet – a committee composing of the most senior UN, American, European and Russian diplomats. The presented a 'Road Map' – which was an international endorsement for the Israeli ideas of how best to divide the occupied territories between the Jewish state a future Palestinian entity, that could be called, even according to the Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon (who won the elections of 2001 and 2003) a 'state'. When the two sides failed to move ahead toward the Map, for the same reasons they failed to reach an agreement in the previous 36 years of Israeli occupation, Sharon offered his own version of the Map. He suggested a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the north of the West Bank. The Quartet wished this disengagement to be part of the Map, Sharon did not care one way or another. He is motivated by an Israeli consensus that regards half of the West Bank (the big settlements blocs and Greater Jerusalem) as an integral part of future Israel in a solution that has no right of return

for the refugees. In a way, if Sharon, backed now by the political center in Israel, succeeds that a one state solution is being implemented which includes a Palestinian Bantustan (in fact two Bantustans: one in the Gaza Strip and one in the shrunk West Bank), which the world will probably hail as a two state solution.

The Failure of Partition

The historical perspective on the peace efforts, offered hitherto, indicate that the attempt to focus on the fate of the territories Israel had occupied in the June 1967 war – territories which are 22 per cents of Palestine – has been a total failure. Even, Israeli offers to withdraw from most the territories (from Oslo, through Camp David 2000, Ayalon Nusseibah initiative, the Road Map and the Geneva accord) could not illicit a meaningful Palestinian consent to end the conflict. These offers had one thing in common, they emptied the concept of statehood from its conventional and accepted notion in the second half of the twentieth century. These peace offers, without exception limited the future independence of the Palestinians in those 22 percents, accrediting Israel an exclusive say in security, foreign and economic matters in the future mini-state of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The mini-state structure failed to offer a solution to the refugee question; nor did it relate to the internationally recognized Right of Return. It is also a political structure that has no relevance to the fate of the 1.4 million Palestinians who live inside Israel, subjected to formal and informal apartheid policies. And finally, as the annexation of most of east Jerusalem has been tolerated by the international community for such a long time, it seems that a two states solution retains much of Jerusalem in Jewish hands and disables the Palestinians from having a proper capital there.

What unites these four unsolved problems is the extension of the peace effort both geographically and chronologically. Geographically, we are looking for a political structure that is different from the contemporary one in all the area of mandatory Palestine. Chronologically, we are looking for recognition in the significance of the 1948 Nakbah in determining the future chances of reconciliation.

The two are interconnected in a required recognition, globally and locally, of the imparity built into this conflict. More precisely, it means, that the whole process of reconciliation can be activated unless Israel acknowledges the ethnic cleansing it committed in 1948 and is willing to be accountable for it.

I have written elsewhere on the various possible mechanisms for such a process[10]; here I would like to associate the end of conflict and the question of the desirable political structure that should accompany such a process and eventually a solution. I use the term accompany, as I believe the process of mediation and reconciliation between Israel and its Palestinian victims is a first preconditioned stage that should commence even before the final construction of an appropriate political structure.

Both the outstanding problems and the mechanism of reconciliation have a better chance of being dealt once the idea of two states is abandoned, and with it the paradigm of parity is substituted with recognition of the imbalance between colonizer and colonized, expeller and expelled and occupier and occupied.

Buds of New Thought: Contemporary Support for the One State

Insert the quartet and so on and include the new buds in process no. 4….and change subtitle.

Reaching such noble objectives may rightly seem now is sheer utopia.

Such a way forward is vehemently rejected by most of the Jews in Israel and objected to by a considerable number of West Bankers. In the long run it may be, for good or for worse, the only game in town as recognized even by those who still are ardent supporters of the idea of two states, such as Mustafa Barghouti.[11]

In Israel two long time comrades of Barghouti struggle for two states, Haim Hanegbi and Meron Benvenisti have decided in the end of the summer of 2003 that the time has come to forsake the two-state solution.[12] The former sees it as a just solution to the question the latter laments it as unfortunately the only feasible one given the range of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, the unwillingness of any Israeli government to massively withdrew settlers and the growing demography of Palestinians inside Israel. However, both advocate the bi-national model, a kind of a federation between two national entities which share the executive, legislative and constitutional authorities between them on a parity and consensual basis.

The more veteran advocates of such a solution tend to prefer the idea of a secular democratic state for all its citizens. But also some of them regard the bi-national structure as a more feasible one, to begin with. As Tony Judt put it recently in the New York Review of books[13] article on the subject, it will be easier to win over those disappointed with the chances of a two-states solution to the notion of a bi-national state. A similar argument was made by two Israeli academics: a Palestinian and a Jew in 2004.[14]

The powers that be – be they in politics, the economy or the media – are still putting all their energies in consolidating in Palestine a two-state solution; each according to its own understanding. The political elite in Israel, wishes for a structure that would shrink Palestine into oblivion; the Quartet asserts that it could convince Israel to allow a mini-state over 15% of what used to be Palestine and this Bantustan seems to satisfy some of the Arab regimes which are within the American sphere of Influence.

Given such a local, regional and global balances of power, can there be a return to political structures that would reflect more fairly and usefully the history, geography, culture and demography of Palestine?

The time has not as yet arrived for detailing the nature of the political structure that would replace the two state solutions, and the two models of the secular state and the binational that would compete in the theoretical discussions on the subject.

Surely, one way forward is to continue the extrapolation of the concept of one state as the only sensible solution that can prevent a civil war in Israel, grant equal rights to the Palestinian minority in Israel and provide equitable solutions to the Right of Return and the status of Jerusalem. Much work is still to be done in this theoretical sphere beyond the stage of slogans and rhetoric. Moreover, there is a need to draw into the discussion other groups, such as feminists and ecologists, to widen the scope of the debate regarding how to structure the needed political entity.

This can begin with joint historiographical effort that seeks non-ethnocentric, polyphonic reconstruction of the past that can produce in its turn more reflective and humanistic attitudes towards the suffering of those victimized by structures of evil in the land. The historiographical endavour is not merely academic, as it looks for a de-nationalized, as well de-genderdized and

de-colonized history. This means that salvaging the deprived voices in the past means giving them a voice today and towards a different future.

However, how to move from the historical deconstruction to the future reconstruction is almost an impossible task. The comparative historical lessons, one has to admit, are not very encouraging in this respect. And thus with all due respect to an important and significant debate that continues today between the proponents of the various ideal types of one-state solutions in Palestine, one has to assess the chances arriving to the moment in which these theoretical broodings will become, inevitably reduced, real models on the ground.

More urgent, therefore is the deconstruction of the present political power willing the life of newcomers, indigenous and future inhabitants of Palestine. A power that suckles from an international system governed by ideals and motivations that seem to seek perpetuation of the present reality rather than changing it.

Four processes have to be closely looked at, if one wishes to assess the chances for a new reality to emerge in Palestine. These processes are intertwined in a dialectical relationship that as a whole is likely to impact the reality on the ground in contemporary Palestine.

The first is the Israeli policy – with the backing of global powers such as the American industrial-military complex, Christian Zionists and the pro-Zionist Jewish lobbies in the world. This policy if unabated and unhindered will continue to destroy Palestine, in the name of two states.

The second is the growing resentment in the Third, Muslim and Arab worlds with this reality. So far, this anger is only reflected in extremist fanaticism, which feeds and benefits the first trend, but it can grow into a far more lethal, effective, and even acceptable force countering Israel and its policies.

The third is a fundamental change in the Western public opinion and in what can be called, for lack of a better term, the civil society. In July 2005, a survey showed that only 14% of Europeans and 42% of American showed sympathy and understanding of the Israeli position; and the trend is towards reducing these percentages even more. Against these statistics, one can appreciate the mushrooming of boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign against Israel; reminiscent of the way the anti-Apartheid movement grew in the 1960s.

The fourth is a cautious emanation of desegregated spaces of coexistence, on a parity basis, inside areas in Israel where Palestinian and Jews live in proximity, such as the Galilee. It is reflected mainly in the opening of joint kindergartens and schools, but it also beginning to pervade the business, judicial and municipal fields. These are too early days to assess the significance of the phenomenon, a drop in a sea of segregation from above. But if the three processes mentioned above would have their impact, this may develop both as a refuge for people who wish to live differently than the reality around them, or even as a model for a future Palestine.

Notes

[1] See more details in Ilan Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine; One Land, Two peoples*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 14-26.

[2] Eliakim Rubenstein, 'The Treatment of the Arab question in Palestine in the Immediate period after the 1929 events and the Establishment of the Political Bureau – Political Aspect' in Ilan Pappe (ed.), *Jewish-Arab Relations in Mandatory Palestine; A New Approach in the Historical Research*, (Institute of Peace Research, Givat Haviva 1995), pp. 65-102 (Hebrew).

[3] Ibid.

[4] This is detailed in Ilan Pappe, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-51*, I. B. Tauris, New York and London, pp. 16-46.

[5] Ilan Amitzur, *Bernadotte in Palestine 1948: A Study in Contemporary Humanitarian Knight-errantry*. Macmillan London 1989.

[6] See Pappe, *The Making*, pp. 203-243.

[7] Helena Cobban, The PLO, The Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1984, 28-29.

[8] Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall; Israel and the Arab World*, W. W. Norton and Company, New York and London 2000, pp. 109-110.

[9] See Ilan Pappe, 'Breaking the Mirror – Oslo and After' in Haim Gordon (ed.), *Looking Back at June 1967 War*, Prager, Westport Connecticut and London, 1999, pp. 95-112.

[10] Ilan Pappe, 'Fear, Victimhood, Self and Other', *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*, May 2001.

[11] Mustafa Barghouti, 'Sharon's Nightmare', *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 690 (13-19 May 2004).

[12] Haim Hanegbi and Meron Benvenisti cited in Ari Shavit's "Cry, the Beloved Two-State Solution" *Haaretz*, 8 August 2003.

[13] Tony Judt "Israel: The Alternative" *The New York Review of Books* 50(16), 2003. n.p.

[14] See for instance, As'ad Ghanem and Sarah Ozacky-Lazar, 'The Status of the Palestinians in Israel in an Era of Peace: Part of the Problem But not Part of the Solution', *Israel Affairs*, 9/1-2 (Autumn/Winter 2003), pp.263-289.