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*Editorial*

THE HOUSE OF ZION

SINCE THE TURN of the century, the Arab states have come to constitute a zone for Western military intervention without parallel in the post-Cold War world—US invasion of Iraq, NATO bombardment of Libya, US proxies in Syria, Washington-backed GCC assault on Yemen. What of their traditional enemy? At the time of the second Intifada, an essay in these pages surveyed the balance of forces between the two nationalisms, Zionist and Palestinian, reflected in the naked inequities of the Oslo Accords.<sup>1</sup> Since then, how much has changed? On the West Bank, very little. The first Intifada was the rebellion of a new generation of Palestinians, whose activists came from local universities that were themselves recent creations. Displacing the compliant notables on whom the occupiers had relied, they led a three-year wave of popular demonstrations, strikes, boycotts and punishment of collaborators. The exiled PLO in Tunis was caught by surprise, and played little part in it. Driven out of its bases in Lebanon, and defunded by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait after the Gulf War, the organization was rescued from its weakness by the Oslo accords, which returned it in pomp to bits of the homeland.

The Palestinian Authority established in 1994, presented as a milestone in the struggle for national liberation, was in design a co-production of the West and of Israel, whose primary function was not to embody but to contain resistance to Zionism. For the West, a pocket of residual Arab turbulence needed to be tidied up after the triumph of Operation Desert Storm, to round out the New World Order. For Israel, the Palestinian Authority would act as a cost-effective surrogate for the IDF in blocking the springs of the first Intifada, which had threatened to jeopardize

ongoing Jewish settlements in the West Bank, whose expansion required the more secure environment that an indigenous paramilitary apparatus could provide. From the outset, the Palestinian Authority lacked any autonomous means of subsistence, between 70 and 80 per cent of its revenue coming from Western subsidies and Israeli transfers. Erected was a parasitic miniature of a rentier state, detached from a population on which it did not materially depend and whose needs it could ignore. Far more important, inevitably, were the requirements of its paymasters.

The Arafat regime saw the leadership of the uprising as a potential threat and, once installed in the West Bank, disposed of it. The traditional notables were brought back into a power structure built around the Fatah apparatus, parachuted in from Tunis and expanded with the proceeds of collaboration.<sup>2</sup> In the last year before Oslo, when the IDF was still in full military control, the civil administration in the Occupied Territories numbered 27,000, nearly all Palestinian. By the new century the pay-roll of the Palestinian Authority had risen to over 140,000, of whom some 60,000 composed its security empire. Twelve competing repressive apparatuses—gendarmerie, secret police, presidential guard, military intelligence, special forces, coast guards and more—made the West Bank among the most highly policed populations on earth: one agent per sixteen persons.<sup>3</sup> Trained and equipped by the CIA and Jordan, this bloated security complex, in which torture is routine, absorbs a third of the budget, costing more than expenditures on education and health

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Scurrying towards Bethlehem’, NLR 10, July–August 2001.

<sup>2</sup> See Glenn Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1997, pp. 174–200; ‘The Palestinians’, in Mark Gasiorowski, ed., *The Governments and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, Boulder, CO 2013, pp. 362–3. A defence analyst at the Naval Postgraduate School, Robinson is the outstanding authority on his subject. Without apparently realizing how damaging the analogy would be, another study of the Palestinian Authority has compared the arrival of Arafat’s Tunisian entourage in the West Bank to the KMT’s installation in Taiwan after its defeat in the Chinese Civil War, famously followed by decades of ruthless repression of local society: see Jamil Hilal and Mushtaq Husain Khan, ‘State Formation under the PNA’, in Mushtaq Husain Khan, ed., *State Formation in Palestine: Visibility and Governance During a Social Transformation*, London 2004, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> For particulars: Gal Luft, ‘The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army’, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, June 1999, pp. 47–63; Rex Brynen, ‘Palestine: Building Neither Peace Nor State’, in Charles Call and Vanessa Wyeth, eds, *Building States to Build Peace*, Boulder, CO 2008, pp. 228–9; Yezid Sayigh, *Policing the People, Building the State: Authoritarian Transformation in the West Bank and Gaza*, Carnegie Middle East Centre, February 2011, p. 13.

combined. Its sights are trained not on the occupiers, for which it is no match, but on its compatriots.

Repression is lacquered with cooption. As in all rentier states, patronage—disbursed or denied—is critical to the system, not least within the security empire itself.<sup>4</sup> About a fifth of all households depend for their livelihood on jobs or favours distributed by the regime. Corruption permeates all rungs of the administration, from mega-embezzlement at presidential and ministerial levels to petty shake-downs on the street. According to IMF estimates, between 1995 and 2000 close to \$1 billion ended up in the pockets of Arafat and his circle, with direct Israeli collusion.<sup>5</sup> Monopoly contracts and trading privileges were handed out to expatriates, officials taking their cut. Floating on foreign funds, NGOs became self-service ATMs for their managers. Protection rackets and extortion by Fatah gangs are commonplace.<sup>6</sup> The reputation of the judiciary is lower even than that of the police. In villas around Ramallah a layer of bureaucrats and businessmen, enriched by theft or contraband (cement even smuggled from Egypt to help build the Separation Wall for Israel), prospers above a landscape of penniless labourers and unemployed, after Oslo shut out of migrant jobs across the border. By the time of the second Intifada, average incomes in the Occupied Territories had dropped by two-fifths, and the number of the poor had trebled.<sup>7</sup> The rising of 2001, this time with suicide bombings, was an explosion of frustration and despair at what had become of the pretence of an emancipation.

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In 2002 Operation Defensive Shield, the Israeli invasion of the Occupied Territories, rooted out resistance in camps and townships, destroyed local infrastructure, and interned Arafat in his bunker for the duration. The security forces of the Palestinian Authority scarcely budged

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<sup>4</sup> For the logic of political rent, and particulars of its operation, summed up in the bitter epigram in Gaza: 'We had Funding Fathers, not Founding Fathers', see Nubar Hovsepiyan, *Palestinian State Formation: Education and the Construction of National Identity*, Newcastle 2008, pp. 49–50, 64–83, 189.

<sup>5</sup> IMF, *West Bank and Gaza: Economic Performance and Reform under Conflict Conditions*, 2003, p. 91.

<sup>6</sup> See Khan, ed., *State Formation in Palestine*, pp. 98–108, 180–3, 201, 230–2, whose contributors gallantly seek silver linings for economic development in this morass.

<sup>7</sup> Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*, Berkeley–Los Angeles 2008, p. 220.

as the IDF smashed its way through Judea and Samaria. Arafat, incapable of either filling or fighting the role cast for him by Israel, expired two years later. Like many an instrument of alien rule before him, who too had thought to use their users, he ended discarded by them.<sup>8</sup> The first act of his successor was to declare the second Intifada officially over. Having secured the West Bank, in 2005 Sharon turned Gaza into an open-air prison by evacuating its miniscule group of Jewish settlers and redeploying the IDF around it—a move designed, as his aide Dov Weisglass explained, to ‘supply the amount of formaldehyde needed to ensure there will be no political process with the Palestinians’ as laid out by the Road Map, the latest US iteration of the Oslo Accords.<sup>9</sup> So it would be. To Western dismay, when elections were finally—after a decade—held for a Palestinian legislature in 2006, the stench of Fatah’s corruption and submission proved too much for voters. Hamas won a majority of seats, in part as a more principled opponent of Israel, but mainly as a cleaner party, with a better record of social care for the population. Western sanctions were imposed on the ensuing government, and with Western encouragement Abbas readied a coup to restore Fatah to power. Alert to what was impending, Hamas struck first, expelling Fatah from Gaza in the summer of 2007, leaving Abbas in control of the West Bank. To entrench him there, a Donors’ Conference was held in Paris, and an unprecedented flow of Euro-American money cascaded into Ramallah. *Pro forma* the charade of the peace process could then continue, if only—in the absence of any Palestinian authority with an effective writ across both territories—for purposes of ideological propriety in Washington and Brussels.

Abbas has since extended his presidency indefinitely. His police continue to work hand-in-glove with Shin Bet to hold down popular unrest on the West Bank, in a more extreme version even than Arafat’s of the ‘Scurrier’ system crafted at Oslo.<sup>10</sup> In shape and in substance, his

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<sup>8</sup> Ghada Karmi, by no means a hostile witness, concluded sadly: ‘He displayed an unseemly eagerness to accept every crumb that fell from Israel’s high table’, believing that ‘the only way to achieve Palestinian aims was to hoodwink it into entering a process which, despite itself, would end in a Palestinian state’, and ‘paid the ultimate price for his naivety’: *Married to Another Man: Israel’s Dilemma in Palestine*, London 2007, p. 144.

<sup>9</sup> *Haaretz*, 8 October 2004.

<sup>10</sup> For the origin and currency of the coinage ‘scurrier’, see Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, New York, 2014 edition, p. 600.

government has done its utmost to comply with American wishes. Under US supervision, the Palestinian Authority instituted a first-past-the-post electoral system designed to warp representation in favour of Fatah, before it boomeranged in 2006. At US insistence, the office of Prime Minister was created for Abbas—not trusting Arafat, Washington wanted a check on him—and, when he stepped into Arafat’s shoes, was filled by a nominee from the IMF, Salam Fayyad. At US request, Abbas collaborated in blocking a UN report critical of Israeli actions in Gaza. When Olmert, responsible for the onslaught, was temporarily cleared of charges of corruption, Abbas rushed to congratulate him.<sup>11</sup>

## 3

Fayyad, illegally installed as Prime Minister and touted in the US as ‘the most exciting new idea in Arab governance ever’ (Thomas Friedman *dixit*), supplied a veneer of technocratic development for stepped-up repression and ever more brazen collaboration with Israel: over 1,200 joint operations in 2009 alone.<sup>12</sup> ‘To all Palestinians other than the tiny clique who benefit from this arrangement’, writes Saree Makdisi, ‘the sight of Abbas’s US-trained and Israeli-armed PA militiamen cooperating with Israeli forces, raiding West Bank refugee camps, looking for potential sources of resistance to the occupation—if not taking direct orders from the Israelis—is nothing short of grotesque.’<sup>13</sup> Conducted under the carapace of the special US Security Coordinator, headed by a three-star American general, the clamp-down helped release IDF forces to assail Gaza. While cronies of Arafat and Abbas like billionaire Munib al-Masri—the Carlos Slim of the West Bank, fortune estimated at a third of Palestinian GDP—flourish, the lot of the people of the West Bank under the Occupation, where movement is controlled by over five hundred road-blocks and daily life subject to thousands of military regulations, is

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<sup>11</sup> Moved perhaps by personal as well as political fellow-feeling: rumour puts the fortunes of his own family in nine figures.

<sup>12</sup> For particulars, see Nathan Thrall, ‘Our Man in Palestine’, *New York Review of Books*, 14 October 2010: ‘The head of the Palestinian National Security Forces told the Israelis, “We have a common enemy”, and the chief of Palestinian military intelligence said, “We are taking care of every Hamas institution in accordance with your instructions”.’

<sup>13</sup> Saree Makdisi, *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*, New York 2010, p. 311.

as wretched as ever. After a dozen years, income per capita had only just regained its level of 1999.<sup>14</sup>

In Gaza, meanwhile, ostracized as a terrorist organization by the US and EU for refusing to reject armed resistance and recognize Israel, Hamas rules a coastal strip whose population, blockaded and battered by repeated invasion, has been reduced to an abyss of misery. In the short-run, massive retaliation by the IDF for futile rocket attacks on Israel—not all its own—have each time left Hamas still erect, raising its patriotic stock. But in degrading its ability to sustain life for the population at bearable levels, each invasion has required a harder political hand to compensate for weaker popular support, driving Hamas towards practices closer to those of Fatah.<sup>15</sup> Over the enclave as a whole, invigilating it from air, sea and land, and controlling its supply of water, fuel and electricity, Israel retains dominion without occupation. Once the Sisi dictatorship closed the tunnels to Sinai that were its only outlet to the world, Hamas was cornered. By then too its external leadership, relocating from Syria to Qatar, was signalling adjustment to Western parameters for Palestine, hitherto always rejected. With this, the way was clear for a nominal reunification of the national movement in a pact that allowed Fatah to form a government theoretically in charge of both territories, in exchange for the release of funds to pay the salaries of 40,000 Hamas officials in Gaza and the promise of common elections for a new legislature.<sup>16</sup> To date neither has materialized, Hamas remaining under Western embargo.

## 4

Meanwhile, the reach of Zion has steadily expanded. On the eve of the Oslo Accords in 1991, there were about 95,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank. Twenty years later, there were 350,000. Five years after Israel

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<sup>14</sup> 'In large part the result of a recycling of aid rather than the development of real productive capacity': Economist Intelligence Unit Report, *Palestinian Territories*, 25 April 2015, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> For a sober assessment, see Yezid Sayigh, *'We Serve the People': Hamas Policing in Gaza*, Brandeis University, Crown Centre for Middle East Studies, Paper No. 5, April 2011, pp. 106–17.

<sup>16</sup> A PA-loyal analysis of the background and upshot of the pact can be found in Hussein Ibish, 'Indispensable but Elusive: Palestinian National Reunification', *Middle East Policy*, Fall 2014, pp. 31–46; for a corrective see Nathan Thrall, 'Hamas's Chances', *London Review of Books*, 21 August 2014.

conquered East Jerusalem, its Jewish population was still only 9,000. Today it is above 150,000, perhaps 200,000.<sup>17</sup> All told, over half a million Jews now live in the Occupied Territories. Their implantation has been a deliberate and sustained enterprise of the state, which has organized, funded and shielded the flow of settlements to the tune of some \$28 billion.<sup>18</sup> Since Oslo, their growth rate has been more than double that of the population of Israel proper. Contrary to widespread belief, nothing in the Oslo Accords prohibited them; they are perfectly legal aspects of the peace process, of whose nature, from the start, they form the best illustration.

In design, East Jerusalem and the West Bank constitute two distinct schemes of settlement. Israel annexed the former in 1967, declaring the undivided city henceforward its capital. Higher priority meant higher density. Palestinians in East Jerusalem are now encircled by a fretwork of Jewish neighbourhoods cutting them off from the West Bank. Since 2014, a Basic Law requires two-thirds of the Knesset to approve any cession of land by Israel, or a referendum to be held should there be a majority of less than two-thirds, double-bolting the annexation of East Jerusalem. In the West Bank, where ratios are less favourable, the priority is strategic control rather than territorial extent. There, settlements covering not more than 5 per cent of 'Judea and Samaria' exercise municipal authority over two-fifths of it. Linked by a grid of highways connecting them to Israeli cities, and slicing apart the Palestinian population, they enjoy special tax breaks and housing subsidies, as well as preferential allocation of water.<sup>19</sup> Military protection is supplied by the IDF, which continues to administer 60 per cent of the West Bank directly, while a Separation Barrier seals off much of the rest from Israel.<sup>20</sup> Since its construction, the number of suicidal incursions from the West Bank has plummeted. As the fiftieth anniversary of occupation approaches, a stretch of time more than twice as long as the prior existence of the Jewish state, over the word 'settlement' looms another meaning.

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<sup>17</sup> Colin Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel*, Cambridge 2013, p. 393.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Rivlin, *The Israeli Economy from the Foundation of the State through the 21st Century*, Cambridge 2011, p. 149.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard Wasserstein, *Israelis and Palestinians: Why Do They Fight? Can They Stop?*, New Haven 2008, p. 92.

<sup>20</sup> For an analysis of the Barrier, and of the 'Security Perimeter' locking down the Jordan Valley, see Jan de Jong's contribution to Mahdi Abdul Hadi, ed., *Palestinian-Israeli Impasse: Exploring Alternative Solutions to the Palestine-Israel Conflict*, Jerusalem 2005, pp. 329–33.

In the new century, Israel has prospered. The injection of a million immigrants from the former Soviet Union, with average levels of education and skills far above that of the post-war Ashkenazi arrivals—half of them professionals: teachers, doctors, scientists, musicians, journalists<sup>21</sup>—has revitalized the economy. Since the crushing of the second Intifada, it has posted growth rates consistently higher than comparators in the OECD. After the longest sustained expansion in the country's history, from 2003 to 2007, Israel weathered the financial crisis of 2008 better than any of the economies of Western Europe and North America, and has continued to outperform them since. With the world's highest proportion of scientists and engineers, double that of the US or Japan,<sup>22</sup> Israel is now the fourth largest hi-tech arms exporter, at the cutting edge of drones and surveillance. Its ICT sector has led an export drive, arms and pharmaceuticals not far behind, which—together with flourishing tourism—has helped keep the current account in the black. The country has no external debt, for over a decade enjoying a net surplus of foreign assets. Along with a domestic boom in real estate, construction and retail commerce has come a swelling tide of investment from abroad, principally American, bringing in among much else the first R&D operations to be set up overseas by Intel and Microsoft.<sup>23</sup> Venture capital, private equity and hedge funds abound. Raising the animal spirits of business yet further, an energy bonanza lies in store from off-shore gas extraction. Though environmental resistance has so far blocked drilling for shale oil, the country has abundant reserves that could make it a petroleum exporter too. Statistically, with a per capita income of \$37,000 in 2014, Israel is now wealthier than Italy or Spain.

Socially, such success is more skewed than ever, as the neo-liberal turn of the eighties—when the stabilization plan of 1985 was a landmark—has been given a further radical thrust. In the policy package of 2003, the Likud–Labour coalition cut corporate taxes, fired government employees, slashed social benefits and public-sector wages, privatized state holdings and deregulated financial markets. Two years later the Bank of Israel was put under Stanley Fischer—American adviser to the

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<sup>21</sup> Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, New York 2007, p. 1081.

<sup>22</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile 2008: Israel*, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> For figures, see Rivlin, *The Israeli Economy*, pp. 88–93.



shock therapy of 1985, deputy director of the IMF, and currently vice-chairman of the Federal Reserve—becoming an international byword for economic discipline. Between 1984 and 2008, public expenditure as a proportion of GDP fell 40 per cent, while average wages stagnated in the bottom range of OECD performance.<sup>24</sup> Stock prices soared and housing costs shot up, while spending on health declined and a fifth of the population fell below the poverty line. Nor, beneath the sheen of hi-tech start-ups and record exports, is all well in more traditional sectors of the economy, where over half of all jobs are to be found, and productivity remains low. Here, after the second Intifada, cheap labour from the Occupied Territories has been replaced by immigrant workers, legal and illegal, from Thailand, Romania, China, the Philippines and elsewhere, typically super-exploited in a shadow economy about twice the size of that in other advanced countries, while among the second-class Arab citizens of Israel—around 20 per cent of the population—unemployment is endemically high.<sup>25</sup> At the other pole of this growth model, wealth is fabulously concentrated among a handful of *nouveaux-riche* tycoons, the ten largest Israeli conglomerates controlling a third of the stock market, a pattern no Western bourse can match.

## 6

Politically, the revisionist wing of Zionism that first broke Labour's grip on power in the late seventies has consolidated its hegemony. While frontal opposition between the two camps, frequently allied in government, has been rare, a long-term shift in the balance of forces that each can deploy is clear. In the four decades since Begin took office, Likud has ruled for over eighteen years, coalitions of the two headed by

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<sup>24</sup> Rivlin, *The Israeli Economy*, p. 61; 'The Next Generation: A Special Report on Israel', *Economist*, 5 April 2008, p. 8; Taub Centre, *State of the Nation Report 2014: Society, Economy and Policy in Israel*, pp. 194–5.

<sup>25</sup> For the switch to migrant labour, see Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 323–9. For Adriana Kemp and Rebeca Raijman, 'Israel ranks among the individual countries who rely most heavily on foreign labour': see their 'Bringing in State Regulations, Private Brokers and Local Employers: A Meso-Level Analysis of Labour Trafficking in Israel', *International Migration Review*, Fall 2014, pp. 604–42. Since the 90s, the poverty rate of the Arab population has risen to about half of all families: Ilan Peleg and Dov Waxman, *Israel's Palestinians: The Conflict Within*, Cambridge 2011, p. 35.

Likud or transfuges from it for twelve, and Labour for six. In this period Netanyahu, the Likud incumbent, is the only politician to have won three successive elections, and if he completes his current term, will be within a year of Ben-Gurion for length of time as Prime Minister of Israel. His ascendancy is, however, more an effect of the crumbling of Labour than of his own standing. Personification of the neo-liberal turn as author of the package of 2003, and the most Americanized leader in the country's history, he can claim credit for its recent economic report-card. But since this has also provoked widespread social discontent, with middle-class demonstrations against the cost of housing and disparities of wealth, it is not an unambiguous asset. More important has been a tougher stance on security, product of the greater coherence of a revisionist outlook. In any electoral contest, this is typically the most sensitive arena, where political resolve can trump economic misgivings. There Labour, oscillating between imitation and evasion under a succession of ineffectual leaders, has regularly been worsted by Netanyahu's assurance of a strong hand. Last but not least, Likud has been consistently better at bringing the clerical parties into its cabinets—this too a logical function of its version of Zionism: with no ex-socialist relics in the attic, more *désinvolte* in the pragmatic handling of religion for political ends.

In Israel, the stability of the political system has always pivoted on the co-dependence of Zionism and Judaism. At an everyday level, the cultural consequence is the paradoxical symbiosis of a benighted clericalism and a breezy secularism—Orthodox privileges and taboos striating a civil society as uninhibited as any Nordic free-for-all, without any truly serious conflict between them. Historically, the conditions of that paradox have been two-fold: negatively, the lack of any Jewish critiques of Judaism comparable to radical Enlightenment demolitions of Christianity, once barriers around the ghetto fell, when emancipated Jewish minds typically joined secular debates in the still-Christian world, ignoring their own religion;<sup>26</sup> and positively, the need of secular Zionism for a religious appeal to unify a people lacking any common bonds of language or geography, and furnish a theological basis for its claims to the Promised Land. The ensuing clerico-secular hybrid—over-determined by general traits of any frontier-cum-melting-pot society, always liable to generate

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<sup>26</sup> Israel Shahak was a notable late exception: see *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years*, London 2008, passim.

a philistine machismo and lowest-common-denominator popular culture—may have been deadening for intellectual life, even if the vast critical reserves in the European Jewish past could never be completely neutralized. But it has been a stabilizing mechanism in political life, soldering it into seemingly fractious but substantially fixed forms.

Such stability has, of course, its deepest source in standing dispositions to *union sacrée* against external danger. Nothing binds the community tighter than fear of losing what it has made of what it has taken. The Arab world, however domesticated, has yet to underwrite the conquests of 1948 and 1967, and Palestinian anger, however impotent, yet to be snuffed out. Measured against potential retribution from this quarter, internal griefs have little weight. In such conditions, the pervasive corruption of public life, exceeding even the already high levels in the EU or US, occasions more indifference than indignation. Rife in the corporate world, whose billionaires are Israeli counterparts of Russian oligarchs, it extends across virtually the whole political spectrum. Successive financial or sexual scandals have engulfed virtually every prominent figure on the public stage, from Rabin, Peres, Sharon, Netanyahu, Ramon through to the latest cases of Olmert and Katsav: a Prime Minister convicted of bribery and a President of rape.<sup>27</sup> The widespread contempt felt for the current political class is not, however, any threat to it. The political system might seem to have lost so much popular respect that it must be ripe for change, but the imperatives of security ensure that no deviant outlook has any electoral space, so it is not at risk. Since virtually everyone agrees on the sufferings and rights of the Jews, voters can afford to despise the petty misdoings of their rulers, who all follow the same policies anyway. Arguably there is no other political culture that combines such dismissive cynicism with such reflex conformism.

## 7

Over the same period, alterations in international settings have been less favourable for Israel. In America there has been a decline in the taboo, still powerful at the turn of the century, on criticism of the Jewish

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<sup>27</sup> For an eloquent expression of disgust at the current political class, see Bernard Wasserstein, 'Israel in Winter', *The National Interest*, March–April 2015, pp. 48–56.

state or allusion to the power of the Zionist lobby in Washington.<sup>28</sup> The appearance in 2006 of the first full-dress critical study of the latter, by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, was a watershed. Within the Jewish community itself, divisions have opened up between liberals hankering for Labour in J-Street, and conservative admirers of Likud in AIPAC, still far the more powerful organization. In the younger generation of Jews in America, as among their contemporaries generally, religious beliefs have declined, though weakening of fervour for Israel seems to have induced growing indifference rather than anxiety or indignation at what has become of the Promised Land.<sup>29</sup> Such shifts in Jewish sentiment find reflection in twitches of unease in mainstream opinion, where sporadic questioning of particular actions by Tel Aviv, if invariably hedged, has become more acceptable in the media.

At a diplomatic level, the White House remains officially committed to the creation of some kind of Palestinian state, as since the Oslo Accords, remonstrating for the record at the expansion of settlements on the West Bank, while blocking any moves critical of its ally at the UN. The Obama Administration has seen no substantive change in this stance, as distinct from intermittent rhetorical adjustment. But for the first time since 1956, a serious policy clash has developed between the United States and Israel, not over Palestine, but Iran. Both powers are determined to prevent Teheran acquiring any capability that would end Israel's monopoly of nuclear weapons in the region. At US insistence, crippling UN sanctions were imposed on Iran in 2006 to force it to abandon any such ambition,

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<sup>28</sup> In 2006, a leading study could still argue it 'beggared belief' that American Jews, a mere six million, could determine the policy of a nation of two hundred and eighty million people, the special relationship between the two countries—hallmarks: 'transparency, informality, generality, reciprocity, exclusivity, reliability and durability'—being founded on the values of a common democratic political culture: Elizabeth Stephens, *US Policy Towards Israel*, Brighton 2006, pp. 7–8, 253, 255–6. The naiveté of such arithmetic would soon be dispelled, not least within the ranks of the local community itself. As the loyalist Peter Beinart has noted: 'In the last two decades Jews have served as Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, National Security Adviser, House Majority leader and White House Chief of Staff, and have held the presidencies of Harvard, Yale and Princeton. Of the last six editors of the *New York Times*, four have been Jews. On the Supreme Court, Jews currently outnumber Protestants three to zero', adding 'Privately, American Jews revel in Jewish power. But publicly, we avoid discussing it for fear of feeding anti-Semitic myths': *The Crisis of Zionism*, New York 2012, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> See Beinart's discussion and complaint in *The Crisis of Zionism*, pp. 169–72.

and under their pressure Teheran was by 2014 suing for terms to get them lifted. Over the outlines of a deal it reached with Washington, counter-signed by London, Berlin, Paris, Moscow and Beijing, the American and Israeli regimes fell out in the spring of 2015. Obama insisted that sanctions had done their work, bringing to power a government in Teheran willing to dismantle its putative deterrent, while Netanyahu questioned the extent of its surrender, demanding sanctions be allowed to finish off Iranian pretensions more unconditionally and irrevocably—a dispute inflamed by the intervention of each in the domestic politics of the other, Netanyahu urging a Republican-controlled Congress to defy a Democratic President, Obama making no secret of his wish to be rid of Netanyahu, and lamenting his re-election.

In this conflict, short of a domestic upset overtaking its Iranian partner, American will is certain to prevail. Likud apprehensions are no match for the higher interests of reintegrating the Islamic Republic into the fold of the international community, as understood and led by the United States. Tel Aviv will adjust to the change, and the quarrel will pass. But the dispute has loosened the political connexion between the two states in ways that will probably persist, even as the economic and military bedrock of their special relationship remains. Not merely does the US supply Israel with an official \$3 billion a year—in reality, perhaps over \$4 billion—in different forms of aid, plus an array of further lucrative financial privileges reserved for it alone.<sup>30</sup> Since 2008 it must by law provide Israel with a ‘qualitative military edge’ over all other forces, actual or potential, in the Middle East. In the autumn of 2011, Obama’s Assistant Secretary of State for Political and Military Affairs spelt out the vital importance of QME, and the current regime’s pledge not just to maintain but to enhance it.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> For the full range of direct and indirect US assistance to Israel, as of 2007, see Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, New York 2007, pp. 26–32.

<sup>31</sup> ‘The cornerstone of America’s security commitment to Israel has been an assurance that the United States would help Israel uphold its qualitative military edge. This is Israel’s ability to counter and defeat credible military threats from any individual state, coalition of states, or non-state actor, while sustaining minimal damages or casualties’, the Assistant Secretary explained. ‘The Obama Administration is proud to carry on the legacy of robust US security assistance for Israel. Indeed, we are carrying this legacy to new heights at a time when Israel needs our support to address the multifaceted threats it faces.’ Remarks by Andrew Shapiro to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 4 November 2011.

The battlefield guarantee is automatic and untouchable. Israeli freedom to do what it likes on the West Bank is another matter. There, discomfort with the status quo has risen on both sides of the Atlantic, but not in equal measure. European capitals face a set of constraints that differ from those in Washington. For governments of the EU, general diplomatic solidarity with the US is a *sine qua non* of a responsible foreign policy, and European guilt at the Judeocide ensures ideological commitment to Israel. But the absence of any Jewish community in Europe with a political, cultural and economic power comparable to that in America, and the presence of far larger numbers of immigrants of Arab and Muslim origin, form a context for considerations of the Near East distinct from calculations in the United States.

In the European political class, an embrace of Israel can be found as ardent as any in America, to the point of treating the country as an honorary member of the EU, or indeed calling for it to be admitted outright to the Union. Javier Solana, High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, could tell *Haaretz*: ‘There is no other country outside the European continent that has the type of relationship that Israel has with the European Union. Israel, allow me to say, is a member of the European Union without being a member of its institutions.’ For the Foreign Affairs spokesman of the SPD, the *de facto* should become *de jure*: ‘I really wish Israel becomes a full member of the European Union.’ Such Spanish and German voices from the Centre Left find Italian amplification on the Centre Right, Berlusconi—then Prime Minister—urging the same cause: ‘Italy will support Israeli membership of the EU.’ For her part, contemplating progressive inclusion of her country in the European project, Tzipi Livni—then Foreign Minister—could exclaim: ‘The sky is the limit.’<sup>32</sup> Hopes of this kind are not in principle out of order. In its dealings with Turkey and Cyprus, Brussels has taken military occupation and ethnic cleansing in its stride: why quibble over the

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<sup>32</sup> For the above pronouncements, see David Cronin, *Europe’s Alliance with Israel: Aiding the Occupation*, London 2011, p. 2; Sharon Pardo and Joel Peters, *Uneasy Neighbours: Israel and the European Union*, Lanham 2010, pp. 75, 69. In May of this year, a self-described ‘European Eminent Persons Group’ [*sic*], composed of assorted worthies all now safely retired, expressed their indignation at the re-election of Netanyahu, calling for firm measures against Israel of which they had never breathed a word while in office. Predictably enough, Solana was among them.

West Bank or Gaza? Human rights are what the Union defends, not ancient grievances.

But though the EU would not cease to be true to itself were it to induct Israel into the Union, there is no chance that it will do so. Public opinion can be set aside where economic discipline is at stake: austerity brooks no ballot-box. Palestine is another matter, at once far less significant and more combustible. Not only does the political class have reason to be nervous of immigrant reaction to daily exactions by Israel, but native electorates and media have become increasingly critical of them. Operation Defensive Shield (West Bank 2002), Operation Cast Lead (Gaza 2008–09), Operation Protective Edge (Gaza 2014) have marked the stages of a change in popular feeling. By wide margins, apprehension and revulsion have come to predominate. Even before Protective Edge, BBC polls in 2012 showed that negative views of Israel were held by 65 per cent of the population in France, 68 per cent in Britain, 69 per cent in Germany and 74 per cent in Spain. After Protective Edge, two thirds of British respondents held Israel guilty of war crimes in Gaza. At establishment level, such attitudes have little echo. Not a single government in any major European country was willing to endorse the UN Report on Cast Lead. Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia voted with the United States to reject it; France, Britain, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Denmark and Finland abstained. Still, the gulf between officials and opinions may not be easy to sustain.

## 9

To be politically effective, however, opinion needs to be organized. There a second gap opens up. The one campaign against the status quo with a real edge is the Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement launched in Palestine in 2005. Inspired by South African example, its aim has been to oblige corporations, universities and other institutions to put Israel under economic quarantine, so long as it continues to hold down the Occupied Territories and deny its citizens equal rights. After a decade of actions, its practical impact has been close to zero. This is partly because, for obvious reasons—culture notionally more sensitive to ethical appeals than capital—its most favourable targets are universities, but only in the United States do these have large investments in the Israeli economy; in Europe, they are typically funded by the state. Among the American

young, disenchantment with Israel has grown, too—over half of under-30-year-olds reproved the latest blitz on Gaza—and BDS campaigners in the States have fought valiantly for disinvestment on their campuses. So far only one tiny New England college has made any gesture towards them. In Europe, boycott—principally academic—has been more significant a demand, but has not got much beyond a few resolutions of purely symbolic moment.

But though it has so far been materially ineffectual, the outlook behind BDS is feared by Israel and its European protectors. Brussels has sought to cover its back with requirements—naturally, ‘non-binding’—that products from the Occupied Territories be labelled as such. Germany has opposed these, and they have yet to be laid down. Strasburg and various national parliaments have voted ‘in principle’ to recognize Abbas’s spectral authority as a Palestinian state; only Sweden has actually done so. As defence of Israel come-what-may looks increasingly tricky, the EU has urged Tel Aviv more strongly than the US to proceed with the Road Map, to relieve it of domestic embarrassment. Though such departures from tradition have so far been mild and reluctant, the dangers of an emergent mood in Europe less hospitable to Zionism are not underestimated in Israel. BDS may have few victories to its credit in the Anglosphere. But in Israel fear of it has struck home. In 2011 the Knesset passed a law punishing anyone calling for a boycott with liability to suit for a tort and withdrawal of state benefits. The majority for the bill was narrow, but the anxiety behind it is wider. In the idiom of alarm now current in the nation’s establishment, could Israel be losing its legitimacy abroad? Against that risk, safeguards need to be redoubled. The title of a leading think-tank study is telling: *Building a Political Firewall against Israel’s Delegitimation*.<sup>33</sup>

## IO

Diplomatically, the potential for further discord is clear. So long as Likud is in charge, Israel is less welcome than in the past. Offsetting this decline in Western—particularly European, in lesser measure American—support, however, has been a rise in the strength of Israel’s position in the

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<sup>33</sup> See Noura Erakat, ‘BDS in the USA, 2001–2010’, in Audrea Lim, ed., *The Case for Sanctions*, London–New York 2012, pp. 95–7.



Middle East. Two changes have shaped this. On the one hand, rapid economic growth means the Israeli state is now much more self-sufficient than in the past. Since 2007 non-military aid from Washington has been phased out. Even with defence expenditure running at some 7 per cent of GDP, well above the level in the US, Israel has a current-account surplus Washington could only envy. Along with this increased capacity to resist economic pressures has come a decrease in the strategic pressures around it. The balance-sheet of the American occupation of Iraq and the aftermath of the Arab Spring has left it in a stronger position than at any time since the Six Day War. In Egypt the Sisi dictatorship is a closer ally even than was the Mubarak regime, shutting down Gaza more completely as an extension of its repression of the Muslim Brotherhood at home. Jordan remains a staunch partner, untouched by domestic unrest. South Lebanon is patrolled by UN troops—commanders: French, Italian, Spanish—providing a *glacis* against attacks by Hezbollah. In Syria the Assad regime, Israel's most irreconcilable adversary, is a shadow of its former self, shattered by uprisings armed and funded by proxies for the US. Further out, the undeclared Kurdish state in Northern Iraq is a cordial ally, welcoming Israeli intelligence agents, military advisers and business operatives. Across the region the conflict raging between Shi'a and Sunni forces, which allows America to play off one against the other as with the Sino-Soviet split during the Cold War, divides and distracts the faithful, eliminating any possibility of a concerted front against what was once commonly stigmatized as a new Crusader state. Iran remains the distant bogey. But faced with this common foe, Saudi Arabia and Israel increasingly see eye to eye, the far enemy offering Zionism another nearby friend. The Middle Eastern scene could, of course, shift in unexpected ways. But for the time being, Israel has rarely been safer.

## II

From the beginning, no-one saw more clearly the nature of the Oslo Accords than Edward Said. Before his death he started to speak of a bi-national state, not as a programme but as a regulative idea—the only long-term prospect for peace in Palestine, however utopian it might seem in the short-run. In the decade and a half since, the number of voices making the same proposal, at greater length and with much greater specification, has multiplied. What in the inter-war period was a minority line of thinking in the Yishuv, extinguished in 1948, has become a

significant strand in Palestinian opinion, with some echoes in Israel. The expansion of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the construction of the Separation Wall, the insulation of Gaza, the scission between Fatah and Hamas, the futility of Arab representation within Israel, have leached credibility, however weak, from the Road Map. Some months into the Second Intifada, the first incisive argument by a Palestinian for a one-state solution appeared in early December 2001, in an article by Lama Abu-Odeh in the *Boston Review*—to this day, one of the most lucid and eloquent statements of the case. In the summer of 2002 it was succeeded by a powerful and more pointedly political piece from Ghada Karmi in the Lebanese journal *Al-Adab*. Three years later, the first book-length advocacy came with *The One-State Solution* from the American scholar Virginia Tilley, further developed in an effective rejoinder to a left-wing critic from Israel.<sup>34</sup>

Thereafter the dikes opened. In 2006 appeared the Palestinian-American Ali Abunimah's *One Country*, in grace of style and inspiration of outlook the single book closest to Said's own work. In 2007 Joel Kovel published a blistering attack on the conventions of Jewish nationalism in *Overcoming Zionism: Creating a Single Democratic State in Israel/Palestine*. In 2008 Said's nephew Saree Makdisi produced what remains the best documented, most moving of all reports on the condition of the Occupied Territories, *Palestine Inside Out*, which ends with its own case for a single state. In 2012 two works by Israelis and a third with Israeli and Palestinian contributors appeared within a few months of each other: *The One-State Condition* by Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, *Beyond the Two-State Solution* by Yehouda Shenhav and *After Zionism: One State for Israel and Palestine*, edited by Anthony Loewenstein and Ahmed Moor. In 2013, Rashid Khalidi's *Brokers of Deceit* called for the self-dissolution of the Palestinian Authority and shift to a struggle for full democratic rights in a single state, while the volume edited by Hani Faris, *The Failure of the Two-State Solution*, brought together the most

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<sup>34</sup> See Yoav Peled, 'Zionist Realities' and Virginia Tilley, 'The Secular Solution', NLR 38, March–April 2006, pp. 21–57. In 2003, Tony Judt had caused a stir in American Jewish circles in renouncing a Zionist past for a bi-national future in Palestine, no details provided, since 'the just and possible solution' of handing back 22 per cent of the country to Palestinians, minus a few settlements—he had been a champion of the Oslo Accords—was regrettably no longer viable: 'Israel: The Alternative', *New York Review of Books*, 2 November 2003. Perhaps sensing the weakness of this contribution, Judt did not persist with it, omitting the article from the essays he collected in *Reappraisals* five years later.

comprehensive set of reflections and proposals on a one-state agenda to date, from some twenty contributors. Ripostes to this literature have not been slow in coming, from both Israeli and Palestinian sides. In 2009, Benny Morris produced *One State, Two States*, Hussein Ibish *What's Wrong with the One-State Agenda?*; in 2012, Asher Susser *Israel, Jordan and Palestine: The Two-State Imperative*; in 2014, a group of Israeli and Palestinian insiders collaborated on *One Land, Two States*, under Swedish guidance. A new intellectual landscape has begun to emerge, one in which Olmert himself could warn of the dangers to Israel of increased discussion of a single state in the Promised Land.

The forms envisaged for such a state vary across the literature proposing it, from a unitary democracy with equal civil and political rights for all, to a bi-national federation along Belgian lines, to a confederation of ethnic cantons. But the general case they make rests on a set of common observations and arguments. Across the West Bank, not to speak of East Jerusalem, the grid of Jewish logistics and pattern of Jewish settlements have sunk too deep to be reversible: Israeli expansion has effectively destroyed the possibility of a second state nested within Zion. If it were ever to take shape, the second state offered Palestinians since Oslo could only be a dependency of the first, lacking geographical contiguity, economic viability or the rudiments of genuine political sovereignty: not an independent structure, but an outhouse of Israel. But since even the delivery of that is perpetually postponed, it would be better to turn the tables on the oppressor, and demand a single state in which at least there would be demographic parity between the two. As a political banner under which to fight, civil rights—so the argument goes—have a more powerful international appeal than national liberation. If Israel is impregnable to ethnic attack, it is vulnerable to democratic pressure.

## I 2

If the 'two-state notion is essentially a code word'—Joel Kovel's description—for 'the continued aggrandizement of the Jewish state, along with a more or less negligible "other state" on an ever shrinking fragment of land',<sup>35</sup> what is to be said of the idea of a one-state solution, as sketched to date? In the strength of its solidarity with the Palestinians

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<sup>35</sup> Joel Kovel, *Overcoming Zionism: Creating a Single Democratic State in Israel/Palestine*, London–Toronto 2007, p. 216.

and the clarity of its vision of what the two-state solution actually means, it marks a critical advance in the growth of opposition, bi-national and international, to the Zionist state. The best measure of its impact is the official reaction to it. Over a decade ago, at the first hint of—even a merely tactical—interest in it by a functionary of the Palestinian Authority, Secretary of State Powell announced that the US road map to the two-state solution was ‘the only game in town’.<sup>36</sup> The initial Israeli jeer was that one ‘might as well call for a Palestinian state on the moon’. Soon enough, however, Olmert was expressing the fear that Palestinians might move ‘from an Algerian paradigm to a South African one, from a struggle against “occupation” in their parlance, to a struggle for one-man one-vote. That is of course, a much cleaner struggle, a much more popular struggle—and ultimately a much more powerful one.’ Urging his compatriots to wrap up a deal with the Palestinian Authority as quickly as possible, he told them: ‘If the day comes when the two-state solution collapses, and we face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights, then as soon as that happens, the State of Israel is finished.’<sup>37</sup> The warning on the one side was as tactical as the hint on the other, each concerned to shore up a domestic position. But that any one-state solution would mean the end of Zionism and of its creature in the West Bank is plain to both parties.

Fortunately however, they agree, its practicability is zero, since neither Jews nor Palestinians have the slightest wish for it: the passionate commitment of each to belief in their own state and their own faith is an insurmountable barrier to their union in a single political structure. The element of realism in this argument is beyond doubt. But the barrier is less symmetrical than it assumes. For the political establishments of both sides, of course, it is absolute: they are not going to make a suicide pact. The same holds true for the overwhelming majority of the Jewish community, for whom Israel is their fortress. It is not, however, necessarily true of the Palestinian masses, for whom abandonment of the hope of a separate state for integration into Israel could become preferable to indefinite asphyxiation in the status quo. Under Abbas, where the Palestinian Authority has twice ranked lower than any other Arab government in freedom of the press—Said’s works were banned by

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<sup>36</sup> See Tamar Hermann, ‘The Bi-National Idea in Israel/Palestine: Past and Present’, *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2005, pp. 381–2.

<sup>37</sup> *Haaretz*, 29 November 2007. In the same interview, Olmert straightforwardly described ‘the Jewish organizations’ as ‘our power base in America’.

Arafat—censorship and intimidation make reliable assessments of public opinion difficult. But that civil society has not yet been thoroughly coopted or crushed, nor the universities brought to heel, seems clear; and filtered through them are signs of increasing disillusion with the official objectives of the PLO.<sup>38</sup>

It is no surprise, then, that first off the mark in book-length denunciation of the one-state solution should be the party that has most immediate reason to fear it, the Fatah regime in the West Bank, whose front organization in the United States, the American Task Force on Palestine, was ‘proud to present’ Hussein Ibish’s refutation of it in early 2006.<sup>39</sup> After listing and rejecting successive arguments in favour of a single state—naturally, without so much as mentioning the disgust with the police regime of the Palestinian Authority prompting them—Ibish explained what was really required: ‘Most significantly, Palestinians need a robust, professional and independent security service in order to maintain law and order in Palestinian society, meet international and Israeli expectations regarding security, and prevent the rise of militia groups, private armies and *ad hoc* militants.’<sup>40</sup> On the Israeli side Asher Susser, picking up Ibish’s ‘valuable work’, was at pains to discount the notion that BDS, not even of much moment in South Africa, could be of serious effect in the globalized world of today. But however unrealistic, ‘the one-state idea has become a choice vehicle of political warfare against Israel and the Zionist project. It does not seek Israeli acquiescence but collective submission, to be brought about by the coercion of the international community as the natural corollary of Israel’s total delegitimization.’ As such, it had ‘unquestionably eroded the legitimacy of both Israel and the two-state solution’ and ‘played an instrumental role in Israel’s gradual

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<sup>38</sup> For the possible extent of Palestinian support for a single state, see the Bir-Zeit poll cited by Makdisi: *Palestine Inside Out*, pp. 282, 347, and the soundings reported in Faris, ed., *The Failure of the Two-State Solution*, pp. 8, 239, 291. Given ideological controls in the Occupied Territories—which school textbooks essentially identify with Palestine, scarcely mentioning refugees—reliable data are probably out of reach.

<sup>39</sup> ‘The subject-matter could not be more timely and significant, particularly given the vigorous re-engagement of the United States government under the leadership of President Barack Obama in the quest for an end-of-conflict agreement between Israel and the Palestinians’, a pursuit that is ‘essential to the American national interest’: preface to Ibish, *What’s Wrong with the One-State Agenda? Why Ending the Occupation and Peace with Israel is Still the Palestinian National Goal*, Washington DC 2006, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Ibish, *What’s Wrong with the One-State Agenda?*, pp. 134–5.

isolation, similar in some ways to the pariah status once reserved for apartheid South Africa'.<sup>41</sup> Israelis would ignore its corrosive effects at their peril.

But is that risk best scotched by simple repetition of the truth that 'we all know what a solution looks like', as outlined by Clinton and narrowly missed at Taba? By 2014, 'a group of outstanding Israeli and Palestinian academics and experts, many with close ties to leaders on their respective sides', veterans of the peace process and its 'highly secret channels both before and after the Oslo negotiations', had come to feel that in the unhappy event the Road Map did not come to fruition, something more imaginative was required.<sup>42</sup> To revive credibility in the two-state solution, an alternative implementation of it could be envisaged: not by a partition of territory but a duplication of function, with parallel Israeli and Palestinian states operating in the same space, each with its own sovereignty. *One Land, Two States* outlines a much more detailed and complex scheme—Swedish helpmeets filling in institutional particulars—than any one-state proposal so far, the better to meet Zionist abhorrence of these. In preserving Israel intact alongside a Palestinian shadow of it, the 'Parallel State Project' ring-fences it against dangers of delegitimation. To be parallel is not, of course, to be equal. The best way to address deep-seated fears about such a solution, one contribution explains, is 'to maintain a clear asymmetry of power'. Taking only questions of security, 'in all possible configurations the Israeli side would insist on maintaining some military advantage.'<sup>43</sup>

## 13

The two-state solution, on which the Obama Administration continues to insist, has never enjoyed more than reluctant lip-service in the revisionist camp in Israel, as a tactical concession to diplomatic *force majeure*. One consequence of the evacuation of Gaza has been to free

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<sup>41</sup> Susser, *Israel, Jordan and Palestine: The Two-State Imperative*, Waltham, MA 2012, pp. 144, 224.

<sup>42</sup> Mark LeVine and Matthias Mossberg, eds, *One Land, Two States: Israel and Palestine as Parallel States*, Berkeley–Los Angeles 2014, p. xiii.

<sup>43</sup> Nimrod Hurvitz and Dror Zeevi, 'Security Strategy for the Parallel States Project: An Israeli Perspective', in LeVine and Mossberg, eds, *One Land, Two States*, pp. 72, 77.

bolder spirits to contemplate putting it to rest altogether. In 2014 Caroline Glick, deputy managing editor of the *Jerusalem Post* and lecturer for the IDF, published *The Israeli Solution: A One-State Plan for Peace in the Middle East*, proposing straightforward annexation of Judea and Samaria, making them an integral part of Israel, like East Jerusalem, to round out the natural frontiers of contemporary Zionism. Fears that this would threaten Jewish predominance in Israel were unfounded, based on inflated statistics for the Arab population produced by West Bank agencies. Closing down the Palestinian Authority, which the Arab states were in no position to help, would lift an economic burden from the US, giving it reason to welcome the change. The only real difficulty would be European reaction. But EU sanctions, should they materialize, would not be the end of the world: Israel was already diversifying its partners in trade, and the economic future lay with Asia, whose major powers were investing in Israeli infrastructure and buying Israeli arms without worrying about Ramallah.<sup>44</sup>

For more cautious spirits this is too sanguine a scenario, depending on amateur projections that Jews would still comprise two-thirds of the population of Israel after absorption of the West Bank, which find no support in the work of the country's leading demographic authority, Sergio DellaPergola.<sup>45</sup> A more tough-minded view of the dilemmas facing Israel comes from Benny Morris, the distinguished historian who pioneered demolition of the official mythology that Palestine was emptied of 80 per cent of its Arab population in 1947–48 by flight, and for over a decade was a central figure in critical re-examination of the construction of Israel, before rallying to the Zionist mainstream at the turn of the century and becoming one of the most extreme security hawks in

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<sup>44</sup> Caroline Glick, *The Israeli Solution: A One-State Plan for Peace in the Middle East*, New York 2014, pp. 122–35, 259–60, 228–34.

<sup>45</sup> See DellaPergola, 'Demography in Israel/Palestine: Trends, Prospects, Policy Implications', IUSSP XXIV General Population Conference, Salvador de Bahia, August 2001, p. 17. A decade later, he would explain: 'If people ask when Jews will lose their majority, then it's already happened. If one combines the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, includes foreign workers and refugees, whose numbers have grown rapidly in recent years, and omits Israelis who made *aliya* under the Law of Return but are not recognized as Jews by the Interior Ministry, then Jews are slightly less than 50 per cent of the population': *Jerusalem Post*, 26 November 2010. For the vagaries of the sources on which Glick relies, see Ian Lustick, 'What Counts is the Counting: Statistical Manipulation as a Solution to Israel's "Demographic Problem"', *Middle East Journal*, Spring 2013, pp. 185–205.

the country.<sup>46</sup> In his second phase, Morris has given voice to much crude anti-Arab sentiment. But even as his politics have changed, the historical intelligence which once allowed him to break so many patriotic taboos has not deserted him. Now in the service of a cause that once reviled him, a cool ability to call a spade a spade remains.

Morris's *One State, Two States* offers a historical overview of each of these ideas within the two communities. No significant Arab opinion has ever accepted a bi-national solution for Palestine. Current talk of one secular, democratic state in the country is no more than a cover for the aim of repossessing all of it, by weight of numerical superiority to come. On the Jewish side, by contrast, there were tiny minorities in the Yishuv that argued for a bi-national state in Palestine, a few isolated voices lasting down to independence. But these were of no political importance. Mainstream Zionism sought a mono-ethnic Jewish state from the start, originally stretching from Transjordan to the Mediterranean and up into southern Lebanon, then scaled back to the British mandate in Palestine. Its leaders knew their goal required expulsion of Arabs, and had no qualms about 'transfer'—ethnic cleansing. But since they could not hope to persuade the British to hand over the whole of Palestine to them, they accepted the Peel Commission's proposal of a partition as a tactical step to gain a Piedmont, as Ben-Gurion put it, from which to extend Jewish power throughout the land.<sup>47</sup> The war of 1947–48 gave Zionism its opportunity, clearing most of the country of its Arab population. But in the hour of victory, Ben-Gurion's nerve failed him: instead of annexing and cleansing the West Bank, too, he made the mistake of allowing it to fester as an alien pocket within Israel, and once the chance to clean it out was missed—it could only come again in the event of another major war—most Jews have come to accept that a Palestinian state of some sort could in the end be erected there.<sup>48</sup>

The idea that this history could be undone by the creation in the twenty-first century of a bi-national state was pure fantasy. Religious conflict

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<sup>46</sup> In the summer of 2014, criticizing the inadequacy of Protective Edge, Morris called for Israel to strike a 'killer blow' at Gaza, with a full-scale IDF reoccupation of the enclave to wipe out Hamas and crush all resistance in it. 'We Must Defeat Hamas—Next Time', *Haaretz*, 30 July 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Morris, *One State, Two States: Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict*, New Haven 2009, p. 73.

<sup>48</sup> Morris, 'Survival of the Fittest', *Haaretz*, 8 January 2004.



alone precluded any such thing. The one-state solution was a pipe-dream. Only a two-state solution was on the table. But how realistic was even that? ‘The very shape and smallness of the Land of Israel/Palestine—about fifty miles from east to west—makes its division into two states a practical nightmare and well-nigh unthinkable.’ Not only that. ‘The division of historic Mandatory Palestine as proposed, of 79 per cent for the Jews and 21 for the Palestinian Arabs, cannot fail to leave the Arabs, all Arabs, with a deep sense of injustice, affront and humiliation and a legitimate perception that a state consisting of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank is simply not viable, politically and economically.’ Why then should Palestinians not proceed just as Zionists had done, taking what they were given simply as a way-station for what they wanted? Such a state, ‘driven by objective economic, demographic and political factors, would inevitably seek more territory and try to expand’—at Israel’s expense.<sup>49</sup> The logic of a two-state solution was thus bleak: it was a recipe for perpetual turmoil. Only if that expansion could be diverted into Jordan was there any hope that the creation of a second state might have an outcome safe for Israel, though it was a faint one, which would certainly be resisted in arms by the Hashemite monarchy.

## 14

Precautions against any such dynamic are, of course, built into Israeli conceptions of a two-state solution. The Palestinian entity on offer is not an independent state in the lands yet to be occupied by Israel before 1967, as they were then. Gaza indicates why there will be no significant withdrawal of settlements from the West Bank, let alone East Jerusalem.

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<sup>49</sup> Morris, *One State, Two States*, pp. 177, 195–6. Morris’s conviction of Palestinian *arrière-pensées* like those of Ben-Gurion is not wrong. Even such a pillar of official two-state doctrines as Salim Tamari can be found writing: ‘A truncated state enshrined in a peace treaty would leave considerable latitude for continued struggle aimed at consolidating its territorial domain and achieving substantial sovereignty.’ Nasser Abufarha is blunter. Many Palestinians who support the call for a state in the West Bank and Gaza, he writes, regard it as ‘a first step towards the total liberation of Palestine’, adding with caustic accuracy: ‘That is not to say this is the real intention of the Palestinian leadership; far from it, the only real programme of this leadership is the programme to maintain its leadership.’ See, respectively, ‘The Dubious Lure of Bi-Nationalism’ (Tamari) and ‘Alternative Palestinian Agenda’ (Abufarha), in Hadi, ed., *Palestinian-Israeli Impasse: Exploring Alternative Solutions to the Palestine-Israel Conflict*, pp. 70, 152.

To relocate 8,000 settlers from Gaza to Israel cost the Jewish state 2 per cent of its GDP.<sup>50</sup> A comparable removal of the 350,000 entrenched in the West Bank would consume 80 per cent of GDP; with East Jerusalem 120 per cent. In any second state, they are there to stay. Gaza also offers a foretaste of the matrix of Jewish control over what would become of the West Bank, even without IDF garrisons and checkpoints. After rebuffing any idea of a one-state solution, Asher Susser does not beat about the bush in laying down what the two-state solution he champions has always entailed: 'The Palestinian state that the Israelis were willing to endorse was never a fully sovereign and independent member of the family of nations, but an emasculated, demilitarized and supervised entity, with Israeli control of its airspace and possibly of its borders too, and some element of Israeli and/or foreign military presence as well.'<sup>51</sup> Such is the imperative of his subtitle. Among two-staters, Susser is a dove.

That a Palestinian Authority along these lines, granted the paraphernalia of embassies and re-labelled a Palestinian State, would be little more than a couple of Bantustans has long been obvious; it is the principal reason why advocacy of one-state solutions has spread. Israel took an early interest in South Africa's invention of these statelets—it was the only country in the world where Bophuthatswana had a diplomatic mission—and behind closed doors their example has informed official thinking ever since. In a telling passage, Abunimah contrasts 'the courage and principle of Mandela, who preferred to stay in prison rather than grant legitimacy to the Bantustans' when the apartheid regime offered to release him if he would recognize and relocate to the Transkei, with 'the desperate, foolish, self-serving decision of Yasser Arafat to accept Israel's conditions as a tin-pot ruler of a Transkei by the Mediterranean.'<sup>52</sup> Just there, however, lies the explosive contradiction in Israel's designs for a Palestinian protectorate. The tighter its system of insurance against any real sovereignty, the less credibility the regime installed by it will have, and the more probable popular risings against it would be. The domestication of a collaborator elite risks the combustion of a humiliated anger

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<sup>50</sup> Rivlin, *The Israeli Economy*, p. 245. The average settler received compensation of over \$200,000: Shir Hever, *The Political Economy of Israel's Occupation: Repression Beyond Exploitation*, London 2010, p. 71.

<sup>51</sup> Susser, *Israel, Jordan and Palestine: The Two-State Imperative*, p. 220.

<sup>52</sup> Ali Abunimah, *One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse*, New York 2006, pp. 145–6.

at it. The safety-catches are liable to become boomerangs. The stronger the precautions taken in setting up a second state, the greater the provocations to revolt against it.

A one-state solution would not be subject to this dialectic. But it has its own hidden reefs, little broached in the proposals set out for it so far. It aims to overcome the original division of the country in 1948, rather than just the occupations of 1967. But most of the literature it has produced avoids not the fact, but the consequences of that division: the enormity of the plunder seized by the conqueror, and the scale of the exile that the conquest created.<sup>53</sup> In 1947, Jews owned 8 per cent of the land in what is today Israel. They now control 93 per cent—Arabs, 3.5 per cent.<sup>54</sup> Two independent estimates reckon the value of the property the Zionist state confiscated from the Palestinian population and associated losses at just under \$300 billion, in 2008–09 prices.<sup>55</sup> Nearly half the population even of the Occupied Territories themselves are registered refugees—just under 2 million, out of the 5 million on UN rolls. The number of stateless exiles is 2.5 million. The number of refugees living in camps is 1.5 million. What is to happen to this property and these people in the political system of a single state? In tip-toeing past the issue that is at the root of the conflict between the two communities

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<sup>53</sup> For a rare exception, see Ian Lustick, 'Thinking about the Futures of Palestine with the Pasts of Others', in Hadi, ed., *Palestinian-Israeli Impasse*, p. 214: 'The fact that establishing one state and one legal jurisdiction over the entire country would open up to radical challenge the wholesale transfer of Arab and public land inside the Green Line into Jewish hands is an immense roadblock on the way to ever getting the Israelis to agree to take the one-state solution seriously.'

<sup>54</sup> Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*, Philadelphia 2006, p. 58; for the mechanisms of post-conquest Judaization of land in Israel, pp. 137–40.

<sup>55</sup> See Rex Brynen and Roula E-Rifai, eds, *Compensation to Palestinian Refugees and the Search for Palestinian-Israeli Peace*, London 2013, pp. 10, 132–69. Both estimates come from economists with a UN background: Thierry Senechal and Leila Halal, 'The Value of 1948 Palestinian Refugee Material Damages' and Atef Kubursi, 'Palestinian Refugee Losses in 1948'. For a rare Israeli willing to entertain the subject, the 'maximum feasible' compensation for all the Palestinian dispossessed would be in the range of \$15 billion, mainly from Western sources: Ruth Klimov, 'Reparations and Rehabilitation of Palestinian Refugees', in Eyal Benvenisti, Chaim Gans and Sari Hanafi, eds, *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, Heidelberg 2007, p. 342. At Taba, negotiators for Tel Aviv mooted a gingerly \$3–5 billion from Zionist pockets for five million Palestinian refugees. As noted, the Knesset would lavish \$1 billion on relocating a grand total of 8,000 Jewish settlers from Gaza.

in the former Mandate, the one-state—a *fortiori* parallel-state—literature signals tacit acceptance that reparations and return will be no more than symbolic, at best. In so doing, it rejoins the two-state solution in blindness to the improbability that the staggering inequality between Palestinians and Jews, founded on ruthless dispossession of one party by the other, would not be a continual, burning source of anger—held at bay, at gun-point, along the border between two states; haunting the streets and cities of a single state, every monument of wealth and privilege a daily reminder of original theft. In Morris's ability to see, and state, this prospect lies his advantage.

## 15

Improbability is not certainty. The dictum attributed to General Moshe Ya'alon, former IDF Chief of Staff and Defence Minister in charge of Protective Edge is apocryphal (he has made many an actual statement that is more incendiary), but its diffusion expresses a sense, on all sides, that such is the wager—outspoken in the Revisionist, unspoken in the Labour Israeli establishment: 'The Palestinians must be made to understand in the deepest recesses of their consciousness that they are a defeated people.' Seventy years of expulsion and occupation is a long time. With another twenty or thirty, would not conclusive fatigue and resignation set in? The evidence is ambiguous. The blitz into Lebanon and the defeat of the first Intifada brought the PLO to heel at Oslo. The crushing of the second Intifada yielded Abbas and Fayyad. Cast Lead converted Hamas to the Green Line. Each time the blow reduced the pretensions of resistance. But each time it also displaced it. Once the PLO was out of action in Lebanon, revolt beyond its control broke out on the West Bank. Once the impotence of the Palestinian Authority became clear, there was a second and more radical rebellion in the West Bank. Once Abbas was lowered into place, Hamas swept to electoral victory. Once Hamas began to temporize in Gaza, Islamic Jihad gained strength. East Jerusalem could be the next flash-point.<sup>56</sup> Has the cumulative effect

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<sup>56</sup> See Nathan Thrall, 'Rage in Jerusalem', *London Review of Books*, 4 December 2014, who reports that 'more than a thousand Palestinians in Jerusalem, most of them minors, have been detained since July—four times the total arrests in East Jerusalem for security-related offences between 2000 and 2008, a period that includes the Second Intifada.'

of the displacements ended by lowering the net capacity for resistance? It is too early to say. But it is unlikely that the cycle of repression and resurgence has ceased to revolve.

Fear of it is, of course, the driving force behind Western attempts to corral the Israeli political class into conceding a two-state settlement along Clinton lines. These have always found a response in the Labour camp of Zionism—congenitally more deferential to imperial requirements, first British and then American, than the more independent-minded Revisionist tradition—and need a return of it to office as more than a subordinate partner in a Likud coalition to come to fruition. The US and EU have pinned their colours to a two-state solution so publicly that it would be difficult for either to haul them down, and in that sense some version of Clinton-minus remains the most likely proximate outcome. But so long as the Middle East continues to be a battle-ground of sectarian conflicts within Islam, there is no pressing urgency for Western movement towards it. The US has leverage in Tel Aviv, but risks little by deferral.<sup>57</sup> The EU risks some disquiet, but has little leverage. For the time being, the Occupied Territories can rejoin Western Sahara or Northern Cyprus in the memory-limbo of the West.

## 16

Where does all this now leave the Palestinian struggle for liberation? It is difficult to think of any national movement that has suffered from such ruinous leadership. Once British imperialism had broken the great Palestinian rising of 1936–37, whose repression required more troops than any other colonial revolt between the wars, the Yishuv reaped the inheritance of an easy upper hand in the Mandate, which an assortment of ill-led and under-equipped Arab armies was in no position to offset.

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<sup>57</sup> ‘The potential benefits of creating a small, poor and strategically inconsequential Palestinian State are tiny when compared with the domestic costs of heavily pressuring a close ally wielding significant regional and US domestic political power’, writes Nathan Thrall, in the most acute analysis of American policy towards Israel, from Clinton to Obama: ‘Israel and the US: the Delusions of Our Diplomacy’, *New York Review of Books*, 9 October 2014. In their combination of clear-eyed criticism and level-headed realism, Thrall’s reports from and on Israel have consistently been outstanding.

The Nakba was so swift and catastrophic that no Palestinian political organization of any kind existed for over a decade after it. The PLO itself, which came sixteen years later, was in origin less a national initiative than a construct of Egyptian diplomacy, put together by the Arab League. Objectively, the conditions for building a strong movement with a coherent strategy were thus exceptionally difficult from the start. But they would be fatally compounded by the delusions and incompetence of Fatah and Arafat's leadership of it. For a quarter of a century, the official aim of the PLO was to recover the whole territory of the Mandate by force of arms, making an end to Zionism, when it was perfectly clear—American protection alone ruling it out—that there was not the remotest possibility of achieving that. When this finally dawned on Fatah, and the Palestinian National Council accepted the principle of two states, fantasy maximalism capsized into ignominious minimalism, Arafat receiving a Nobel Prize for agreeing to put up with hope of a fifth of the country of which, till the day before yesterday, he had claimed the whole; and that merely as a vague promise, for a down payment of 3 per cent of it, and the trinket of a title as President. Since then, even the withered stump on offer at Oslo has been whittled down.<sup>58</sup>

Instead of claiming the totality of the land, and settling for a remnant, the demand should always have been an equitable distribution of it between its two peoples. The Partition Plan of 1947, fruit of a rigged enquiry, rammed through by the US with bribes and blackmail at the UN, was a caricature of this from the start: with 32 per cent of the population, Jews

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<sup>58</sup> Around 2003 a Palestinian friend wrote to Gershon Shafir: 'The United Nations partition plan said to the Palestinians you are going to have 47 of the 100 per cent that was originally yours. The 1993 Oslo agreement said to the Palestinians: you are going to have 22 of the 100 per cent that was originally yours. Ehud Barak's "generous offer" to the Palestinians in 2000 said: we are going to give you 80 per cent of the 22 per cent of the 100 per cent of the land that was originally yours. Finally, Sharon's peace plan to the Palestinians in 2002 said: we are going to give you 42 per cent of the 80 per cent of the 22 per cent of the 100 per cent of land that was originally yours, and this 42 per cent will remain under continuous curfew.' Shafir comments: 'A particularly painful aspect of this land-for-peace formulation from a Palestinian perspective is that by using the current possession of the land as the starting-point instead of the respective group's original relationship to the land, the categories of who gives and who receives are reversed, and it is Israel that appears generous': 'Reflections on the Right of Return: Divisible or Indivisible?', in Ann Lesch and Ian Lustick, eds, *Exile and Return: Predicaments of Palestinians and Jews*, Philadelphia 2005, p. 302.

were awarded 55 per cent of the land and 80 per cent of the coastline; Arabs, with 68 per cent of the population, were allocated 45 per cent of the land. A year later, Israel had seized 78 per cent of the land, to which it added the rest of Jerusalem in 1967.<sup>59</sup> In the years since, the ratios between the two communities have fluctuated, but with heavy Jewish immigration and high Palestinian birth-rates have ended in the rough parity at which they stand today—Jews leading Palestinians by a dwindling margin, Palestinians soon to overtake them. Had the PLO based its struggle on the bedrock enormity of the disproportion between territory and demography, and campaigned internationally for equality of comparable resources, it would have put the Zionist state on the defensive. How could such spoliation ever have been justified? It is too late for that today. Instead, we have the spectacle of even highly enlightened Israelis informing the world they have never questioned the legitimacy of Israel's appropriation of four-fifths of the country and, give or take a few adjustments, think Clinton's mite offered to Palestinians quite a good deal—with scarcely a murmur to the contrary from Ramallah.

## 17

In this scenery, the demand for one state is now the best Palestinian option available. That it should be dismissed with such vehemence by Zionist and Scurrier spokesmen alike is evidence enough of that. It will remain an idea, rather than a programme, so long as it sidesteps the issues of reparation and return, which will not be resolved by fobbing off the fleeced with gestures of symbolic rather than material restitution, nor dumping refugees into the reservations of Oslo rather than

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<sup>59</sup> In one of the finest reflections of any Jewish thinker on this history, Andrei Marmor pointed out that not only was there no difference of principle in the seizures of territory in 1948 and 1967, but that 'in a moral comparison between these two episodes of conquest, the occupation of Arab land in 1948 would fare much worse. As morally wrong and politically stupid as the settlements are, at least they are not established in a process of ethnic cleansing. To the best of my knowledge, relatively few Palestinian residents were evicted from their homes in the course of resettlement, no atrocities accompanied the confiscation of Palestinian (mostly agricultural) land on which those settlements have been erected, and there were no population transfers involved. Unfortunately, none of this can be said of the 1948 conquest': 'Entitlement to Land and the Right to Return: An Embarrassing Challenge for Liberal Zionism', in Lukas Meyer, ed., *Justice in Time: Responding to Historical Injustice*, Baden-Baden 1994, p. 323.

allowing them to go where their families came from.<sup>60</sup> But above all, of course, what a one-state agenda requires is an organized movement giving shape to a reconstruction of the future as a struggle for democracy. By definition, it must encompass all three sections of the Palestinian population under Israeli control, currently cut off from each other—not to speak of the diaspora. No such thing is at present conceivable. But it makes sense to ask: what would it in principle involve? On the West Bank, Khalidi—echoed by others—has called for a self-dissolution of the Palestinian Authority, to which Israel has sub-contracted policing of parts of the West Bank.<sup>61</sup> For that to occur a third Intifada would be needed, a popular rising against the repressive Fatah regime, rallying its less infected cadres against it. In Gaza, probity and discipline are values critical for any movement of the oppressed; but has the fate of its parent organization in Egypt yet taught Hamas the costs of putting religion before democracy, not least for the faithful themselves? Last but not least, in Israel itself the Palestinian community gains nothing from impotent representation in the Knesset, whose ostracized Arab parties merely legitimize a system that ignores them. The most effective political boycott would start there, abandoning the Knesset for an Aventine assembly based on its own Arab elections, to bring home to the world—and to Israelis themselves—just how far from any democratic equality the Zionist construct has always been, and to offer a positive example of free debate and representation to the Occupied Territories.<sup>62</sup>

If a unitary Palestinian movement for democracy is a condition of a single state at any point in the future, the obstacles to one are plain,

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<sup>60</sup> The vast majority come from what is today Israel, not the Occupied Territories. Any idea that they should be allowed to return to what were once their homes 'is and will continue to be anathema to an overwhelming, remarkably unshakable majority of Israelis': Dan Rabinowitz, 'Beyond Recognition: Staggered Limited Return of Palestinians into Israel', in Lesch and Lustick, eds, *Exile and Return*, p. 415.

<sup>61</sup> Rashid Khalidi, *Brokers of Deceit: How the US Has Undermined Peace in the Middle East*, Boston 2013, pp. 117–19.

<sup>62</sup> It is noticeable that one of the earliest and clearest critiques of the Ramallah regime came from inside the Palestinian community in Israel: see Azmi Bishara, '4 May 1999 and Palestinian Statehood: to Declare or Not to Declare', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1999, pp. 14–15, eliciting an indignant protest from the Israeli peacenik Uri Avnery, who expressed his 'whole-hearted support' for Arafat and faith in 'the remarkable story of Ehud Barak', as ushers of a realistic two-state solution to come: 'A Binational State? God Forbid!', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1999, pp. 55–60.



and at present insurmountable. They include not just the resistance of gendarmes and torturers in Ramallah, bigots in Gaza, placemen in Jerusalem and the hostility of the West and of Israel. For it is also as true today as in the past that without a revolutionary transformation of the surrounding Arab landscape, bringing an end to its suffocating universe of feudal autocracy and military tyranny, client regimes and rentier states, which religious wars now cross-cut but do not alter, the chances of emancipation in Palestine are small. There are two reasons for that. In the absence of any framing or corresponding move towards more democratic political structures in the leading Arab countries, Palestinian experience with them in isolation is bound to be weakened. When the Palestinian elections in 2006 were cashiered by the US, EU and Israel, there was no countervailing Arab support for the government they produced. An island of Palestinian democracy of any kind, preamble to a single state or otherwise, is unlikely in a sea of despotism. Nor will Israel ever yield its positions of strength until it is confronted with a real threat in the Middle East, which can only come when the region is no longer a zone on whose corruption and submission Washington can rely. Only then, faced with an Arab solidarity in control of its own natural resources and strategic emplacements, would the United States have reason to oblige its *alter ego* to come to terms.