Palestine and Israel: Facts and Opinions

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Disclaimer: As you know, I'm neither a historian nor a political scientist or anything of the sort. I'm merely interested in history and politics (with a special natural focus on the ones of Israel). Nothing I write below is original (except maybe my mistakes). It is all based on things I read (but I don't remember any reference (because these are not important for me and I tend to remember only what is important to me)). On the other hand, I might have misunderstood or distorted the things I read. I will try to clearly distinguish facts from opinions and to indicate my level of confidence about facts.

Needless to say, this text provides an over-simplified account of the history and the current situation. Many crucial issues are ignored, and those discussed are presented in an over-simplified manner.

Comment: Some may want to disregard ideology and some may say that the following comment is always valid, still I'm going to say it: I believe that a discussion of the Zionist ideology is essential to the understanding of the situation. In particular, in my opinion, many Israeli decisions and attitudes cannot be reduced to material issues. Furthermore, one should bear in mind that Zionism is the State Ideology of Israel (which indeed puts Israel's Arab minority in an odd situation). I thus suggest not to skip Section 2.

Suggested reading priorities: Sections 4 and 7 are most important for our discussion, but background material provided in Sections 1-3, 5 and 8 may help in getting a better understanding of the situation. I tried to make the sections self-contained, and make explicit references to other sections whenever adequate.

Provenance: I am defined to be a Jewish citizen of Israel. This means that the State of Israel defines me as belonging to the Jewish nationality, based on the fact that I am Jewish according to the Jewish Religious Law. Actually, I am an atheist. More importantly for our discussion, I am not a Zionist (i.e., I do not subscribe to the State Ideology of Israel).

Contents

1 Basic Geographic Facts

(All numbers is this section are correct up-to 10%.)

Borders. The borders of the British Mandate determine the area of conflict (i.e., the area of both Israel and Palestine). This area is at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, bordering Lebanon (on the North), Syria and Jordan (on the east) and Egypt (on the west/south). See maps on the last page.

Area. The *total area is 30,000 square kilometers* (11,500 square miles). This area is about 500km (300 miles) long (on the North–South axis) with width around 150km in the northern part and going to 10km in the south. The Northern part has "natural" borders: the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Jordan River on the east. The borders of the Southern part are rather arbitrary: An imaginary extension of the Jordan river to the Red Sea in the east and a totally arbitrary border (to the Sinai Dessert) on the west. The Northern border 'fits' the slopes of the (South) Lebanon Mountains.

Most of the population (of both Israel and Palestine) is in the Northern Part, which has area of 18,000 SqKM. The rest is a dessert (call the Negev), which is part of Israel. *The West Bank is 7,000 SqKM while the Gaza Strip is 700 SqKM.* The Northern Part (about 300km long) is roughly divided into a 1-30km "Coastal Plain" strip on the west and a 130km wide (300-700 meter high) "highland" on the east. The latter area, consisting mainly of the Galilee (in the north) and the West Bank (south of it), is the historical territory of the separate historical Kingdoms of Israel (Galilee and north part of West Bank) and Judea (south part of West Bank). The Gaza Strip is at the south part of the Coastal Plain area, and is bordered by the Negev. (The entire south part of the Coastal Plain area is actually a populated dessert.)

(The above description is clearly over-simplified. For example, there is a significant valley between the Galilee and the West Bank, and a significant valley between the Galilee and the Jordan river.)

Population. The current total population of this area is 9.5 million people, of which 5.3 million are Israeli Jews. The population of Israel is about 6.4-6.8 Million, out of which 4.9-5.15M Jews, 1.2-1.35M 'Arabs' (the PC term is 'Palestinian-Israelis' but using it in the current context may be confusing), and 300,000 foreign workers (which are employed under quasi-slavery conditions...). The aforementioned (strange) range-figures are due to whether or not one considers the 1967-annexed East Jerusalem as part of Israel.[1] Most of the Jewish population of Israel resides in the Coastal Plain area, with the most notable exception being 0.8M Jews in Jerusalem and around it.
The population of the West Bank is 2.0 Million, and of the Gaza Strip is 1.1 Million.

Thus, in general, the area is densely populated. By far, the most populated part is the Gaza Strip with an average population density of over 1500 people to SqKM. In the West Bank we have 285 people to SqKM, whereas in Israel (ignoring the Negev dessert) we have 680 people to SqKM (and 380 people to SqKM if we also consider the Negev).

Natural resources. The land is quite poor in (classical) natural resources. (Ironically, the Dead Sea is an exception: it has a rich residue of (commertializeable) minerals.) Furthermore, water is

[1] Similar unclarities effect any data about Israel, which may/may-not include East Jerusalem and may/may-not include the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

a major problem: It merely suffices in the current situation, when sub-adequate consumption is imposed on the Palestinians.

(As an anecdote, let me recall the legendary story told in the Bible about two expeditions sent to survey the Promised Land. The first (deemed bad and wrong) came back saying that the land is unfit for human inhabitation (i.e., it is a "land that eats its inhabitants"), whereas the second (deemed good and true) came back saying that the land is plentiful (i.e., it is a "land that emits milk and honey"). It seems to me that the first expedition was closer to the truth...)

Housing. The following comment is relevant to the discussion of the "Settler Movement" (see Section 7.2). About 90% of the Jewish population of Israel lives in urban areas, but these areas (also the so-called suburbs) are really urban. That is, typically, these people live in condos; specifically, 50-150 square meter apartments in multi-story buildings (having 4-20 apartments). Until the late 1980's, the exceptions to this rule were extremely rare and they are still quite rare.

2 The Zionist movement and ideology

(This section is highly opinionated. The few 'absolute' facts are clearly marked as such.)

The historical context. It is a fact that the Zionist ideology emerged in Europe in the last third of the 19th century. Zionism is a Nationalistic movement, which as usual for the time (19c) and place (Europe), has strong Romantic aspects (e.g., glorifying a legendary past). Another thing to bear in mind is that this movement inherits the European perceptions of the time; in particular, its perception of non-European territories and local population.

First Issue: a nation with no territorial basis. The classification of Zionism as a Nationalistic movement is problematic because of a trivial reason: It is not clear to which nation it applies. The common definition (certainly at the time) was that a nation is a population residing in a specific territory, constituting the majority of the population in that territory and having a common culture (or considering itself to be a nation). In case of the Jews, the common culture is actually a common religion, but it is clear than the territorial conditions are not satisfied. (Although non-territorial nationalism may emerge nowadays, this notion was certainly alien to the period in question.)

Thus, whereas a standard Nationalistic movement is concerned with obtaining independence (i.e., getting rid of a foreign rule), Zionism was concerned with finding a territorial base. Supposedly any "empty" territory (i.e., non-European territory) will do. Indeed this was the opinion of prominent leaders in the Zionist movement, but they were in small minority. The majority opinion, fueled by the Romantic component of Zionism, insisted that the territory must be that of the legendary Kingdom of the Jews (i.e., Palestine).

Second Issue: who's interests does Zionism address? The Zionist's claim that it is The Nationalistic Movement of The Jews (i.e., all Jews) is problematic also because in some sense it was actually a movement of the Jews of Eastern Europe (EE). Indeed, non-EE Jews participated in the movement and even in its leadership (e.g., The Founding Father lived in Vienna and had a West-European orientation), but it is a fact that their participation was typically confined to donations (for sending EE Jews to settle in Palestine (rather than join their non-EE communities)). In any case, Zionism addressed the actual concerns and interests of EE Jews, which were living in an area that went through a deep economical crisis resulting in a host of social and political problems.

Indeed, this crisis lead to a huge wave of immigration from this area mostly to the USA in this very period. Zionism was an attempt for a communal solution of the problems facing many individuals, but most individuals preferred the standard individual solution (i.e., only 65,000 out of the 2.5 million immigrants chose to go to Palestine). That is, I claim that Zionism grew out of a specific historical context (and addresses the problems of that context), and I believe that many of you will consider this claim to be trivial. But the Zionist ideology insists that the aforementioned claim is false!

> The main thesis of Zionism (as an ideology) is almost a-historical. It is claimed that in *all periods and all* (other) *countries, Jews suffer* (*and will suffer*) *discrimination and prosecution, and the only way to escape this "destiny" is for the Jews to create and live in a Jewish state.*

Indeed, this thesis is almost a metaphysical one. Furthermore, it insists that Zionism is relevant to all Jews (and especially to the West European Jews), and not only to the Eastern European Jews (which were the core of the movement). The relevance to Western Europe was argued at the time based on a distorted view of the Dreyfus Trial (France, late 1890's).

A conclusion. Combining all the above, I make the following observation. By nature, any Nationalistic movement will refuse to have its nation included in a state in which the said nation is a minority (not to mention that it will prefer that its own nation-state will be without national minorities). But for Zionism things are even more acute: This movement starts by moving people from various places to one place in order to create a territorial basis for a nation-state (which is the starting point of any other Nationalistic movement). What is the rationale of transferring people from their beloved landscapes (in which they are a national minority) to an alien (dessert-like) land when the end result is that they find themselves to be a minority within some new state? Furthermore, such a result will not address the main thesis of Zionism as formulated above. Thus, I claim that Zionism is likely to object to a state of the aforementioned type much more than other Nationalistic movements.

3 History of Zionist Colonization of Palestine (1881-1947)

The area of Palestine was under the direct rule of big empires for more than 2,000 years (say, since 63BC). The borders of Palestine have changed from time to time, but since the failure of the 132AD Revolt against Rome, Jews were no longer a majority in the country (which at that time was called Judaea). As centuries passed, the Jewish presence in (renamed) Palestine reduced considerably. It became a small religious minority that was tolerated by the various Muslin Empires that ruled the land since 638 (with partial loss of control to the Crusaders (1099-1291)). Since 1516, Palestine was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire (and its Jewish population maintained the size of 10,000-20,000). The proportional numbers at the year 1881 seem to reflect the situation throughout the entire Ottoman period: A general population of 450,000 out of which 24,000 were Jews.

(The ordinary members of the Zionist movement were typically unaware of the size of the local population of Palestine (or did not interpret this fact correctly). This is captured by a famous saying of one Zionist leader that asserts "a land without a nation for a nation without a land" (my point being that both parts of the equation were assumed to be well-known to the listener and the punchline was the evident conclusion that universal justice will be served by a process that eliminates the two vacancies).)

The first wave of Zionist immigration to Palestine was in the period 1881-1904 (i.e., mostly before the official birth of the Zionist movement but certainly caused by the crisis discussed in Section 2). As a result, the Jewish population grew to around 65,000 (and became involved in agriculture).

3.1 The Formative Immigration (1905-14)

The next wave of immigration was smaller (25,000), but had a much greater impact on history. It consisted mainly of young middle-class romantic idealists who subscribed to the Social-Zionist ideology, which gave preference to the national component but was committed (certainly rhetorically) to the Socialist (and sometimes even to the Communist) ideology. These people escaped the economical/social crisis in Russia as well as what they perceived to be a suffocating Jewish society (governed by old traditions and Petite Bourgeoisie mentality). The impact of this immigration was much greater than its size, because its members formed relatively strong communal organizations, the first and most important one being The General Organization of Jewish Workers (formed 1921). The latter, aka The Organization, created and directly operated a full-fledged Health Care Service, a country-wide employment assignment service, a country-wide Elementary Education system, and a wide-circulation daily newspaper, in addition to forcing all Jewish employers to use unionized workers and conducting all negotiations on the terms of employment of these workers. Through these organizations the Social-Zionists managed to obtain the admiration and support of the entire Zionist movement, and later seize control of it. Consequently, the parties they formed dominated the politics of the Zionist movement, and their leaders determined the Zionist's strategies (starting from the early 1930's till 1977).

Parenthetical comments

It is puzzling that people with Communist ideology enlisted themselves to a national project, especially if we bear in mind the time (i.e., pre-WW1). But, on the other hand, we should recall that these people viewed the Ottoman Empire as an oppressor and an ally of a system that has to be overthrown, and viewed the local population as being exploited by the Ottoman Empire. They planned to ally themselves with the local population in a Class Struggle against Capitalism. When faced with the realities of the situation, some stopped being Communists and some stopped being Zionists (but stayed viewing themselves as locals).

The General Organization of Jewish Workers, which later became The General Organization of Workers in Israel, is an amazing socialist success story. In addition to the aforementioned services provided to each of its members, The Organization also established and operated a large bank (in order to help finance its activities), a large construction company and many heavy industries (in order to provide employment). However, these activities (as well as the aforementioned services) causes a conflict between The Organization's interests as the second largest employer in the country and its interests as the representative of all unionized workers. This conflict became acute only decades later, but an acute conflict which troubled The Organization from the beginning was the conflict between its socialist and nationalist commitments. As hinted above, in case of conflict, the nationalist interest was typically preferred.

I think that this subsection is not very relevant to our discussion, but I still find these issues fascinating: How a synthesis is formed out of two conflicting ideologies, how one becomes the primary one, and how the secondary ideology still continues to have a great effect. Getting back to our specific context I note that, at crucial points, the "national interest" was preferred over the class interests.

3.2 The British Mandate between the World Wars (1919-39)

The country was in crisis during WW1 and the crisis hit the Zionist settlers even harder (as some of them were citizens of enemy countries and had to leave Palestine). In 1917 the British conquered Palestine and in 1920 they were entrusted as a Mandatory for it (confirmed by the League of Nations in 1922). As is common in international resolutions, the Mandate was somewhat contradictory in nature (and subsequently open to conflicting interpretation). On one hand, it required the Mandatory Power to place the country "under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home" (Art. 2), where the term 'national home' was left undefined (with the Jews claiming that it meant an independent nation-state (or an "autonomous Commonwealth" as the original Jewish proposal states it)). On the other hand, Art. 6 restricts these actions to "ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced" (where the word 'position', which is absent from the original Jewish proposal, was understood by the Arabs as referring to their position as a national majority).

In any case, the British Mandate put Palestine in a different situation (than under the Ottoman Empire). Firstly, the Mandate was temporary (but as usual with no explicit expiration date). Secondly, it had a mission (albeit an unclear one), which was at the very least sympathetic to the goals of the Zionist movement. This setting and the economical development of the country was certainly more inviting to new waves of immigration. In addition, with the introduction of immigration quotas in the US (in the early 1920's), the Eastern European Jews (and later the Central European Jews fleeing the NAZI regime) had few other choices. So the Jewish population of Palestine grew in this 20-year period (from 65,000) to 470,000. At the same time, the Arab population grew (from 450,000) to about one million. Thus, at 1939 (if not before), the country has become bi-national.

Indeed, the big controversy throughout the entire Mandate period was on the immigration policy. At the very least, this policy had to take into account both the needs of Jewish Immigration and the economic possibilities of the land. (The Arab claim was that it also had to preserve the status of the country as an Arab country.) In 1934, the British imposed stricter limitations on Jewish immigration to Palestine, and the Zionist movement reacted by organizing secret illegal immigration.

3.3 World War II and 1945-48

World War II caused a big economical boom in Palestine, with industrial product tripling in the course of two years. (This was, of course, due to services and products supplied to the British forces stationed in the country and its neighborhood.) Following WW2, additional immigration (half of it of NAZI survivors) put the total Jewish population at 600,000.

4 Birth of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Problem

The population of Palestine in 1947 consisted of 1.2M Arabs and 0.6M Jews. As part of a new world order and in the face of severe local pressures, the British were (reluctantly) preparing to terminate their Mandate on Palestine. The question was what should replace the British Mandate and the two just solutions seems to be the very two solutions available today (and stated in Section 9): Either the creation of two independent nation-states (i.e., a partition of the land between the Jews and the Arabs) or a democratic Bi-National state.

In view of the conflict between the Jews and Arabs residing in Palestine and the fact that this conflict has already demonstrated its volatile potential in the past (e.g., 1921 and 1936-39), the UN assigned a special committee to examine the situation. The committee heard the leaders of both sides and came-up with (yet another) partition plan for Palestine (the first formal and "independent" partition plan was of the Royal Commission headed by Lord Peel, 1937). This partition plan was approved by the UN General Assembly (in Resolution 181, of Nov. 29, 1947).

4.1 The UN Partition Resolution (UN Resolution 181)

UN Resolution 181 (aka the Partition Plan) calls for the creation of two independent states: a Jewish state and an Arab State (see maps on the last page). An attempt is made to partition the land's resources on an equal basis, and a plan of economical union is outlined. The territorial partition is based on trying to minimize the size of national minorities in the two states, while trying to maintain at least a weak form of territorial continuity for each state. In the relevant reality (of 1947), these two principles contradict each other and thus none is fully satisfied (e.g., consider mixed cities such as Haifa or the fact that each state is to consist of three regions that only touch each other).[2] In addition, the "metropolitan area" of Jerusalem is to be established as a "corpus separatum under a special international regime" (to be administrated indirectly by the UN). Finally, the resolution "calls upon the inhabitants of Palestine to take such steps as may be necessary on their part to put this plan into effect".

(So we see all the components that arise in current day discussions: the principles of minimizing the size of national minorities versus maintaining territorial continuity as well as the problematic nature of Jerusalem. The refugee problem will follow...)

The UN partition plan (as any other partition plan) was rejected by the Arabs of Palestine (as well as by the Arab states), who argued that the only just solution is the establishment of an Arab and democratic state, which will grant the Jewish minority equal civil rights. On the other hand, the Jewish leadership accepted the UN partition plan, although they had reservations regarding some of its details (most importantly the lack of territorial continuity for the Jewish state).

(This asymmetry is not surprising: The Arab rejection of any partition plan reflects their traditional position that *Palestine is one country* and that its inhabitants (which are mostly Arabs and were a even in greater majority in 1917 when the British conquered the land) are entitled to self-determining their government. In contrast, the Jewish position has often (but not always) been that the land can (and should) be partitioned, and the issue (according to that position) was merely of how to partition it fairly (addressing the concerns of both sides). In fact, the Jewish side has submitted a proposal for a partition plan to the special committee.)

Anyhow, the consequence was that the Jewish leadership declared the establishment of a Jewish State, called the State of Israel, while trying to satisfy all requirements set forth in the UN Resolution. (As a child, I always admired these leaders for having a declaration of independence that contained an article promising "all inhabitants equal civil rights, regardless of their religion, race or gender", but later I realized that such an article was required by the UN Resolution.)

[2] In fact, the Arab state was to consist of four regions, the fourth being a small enclave containing Jaffa. The population of the proposed Jewish State would be 500,000 Jews and 325,000 non-Jews. The population of the proposed Arab State would be 800,000 non-Jews and 10,000 Jews. The population for the proposed International Zone (of Jerusalem) would be 100,000 non-Jews and 100,000 Jews.

4.2 Two narratives and the search of facts

The Jewish narrative is that a fair offer was made (by the international community), and that the Jewish side accepted it although it was very painful to it (e.g., Jerusalem) but the Arab side did not. Furthermore, the Arab side has initiated a war aimed at the destruction of the Jewish State that was formed on the basis of international legitimacy (as expressed in UN Resolution 181). The war was quite bloody (e.g., 6000 casualties on the Jewish side out of a population of 600,000), and (as is the case with wars) a new situation has emerged. Specifically, most of the Arab population left the country (although they were promised full citizenship in the newly formed state). That is, those who left made their choice (which is a legitimate) and they cannot reverse their choice now (in view of its consequences). Furthermore, this is not merely a matter of "fair game"; by making their choice those who left manifested their reluctance to becoming loyal citizens of the newly formed state, and admitting them as citizens constitutes a huge security risk (which a state that does not enjoy peace with its neighbors, which are of related (if not the same) nationality, cannot afford).

The Arab narrative is that they are the local population of a country that should have been granted independence in 1917 (with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire). Furthermore, this country was Arab in character and is part of a large region of the Arab Nation. The British Mandate was not in place to begin with, and the fact that the British allowed foreign people to settle in this country was in violation of its mandate to develop the country to the benefit of its inhabitants. Given this situation, the mandate had to be terminated and the actual inhabitants should have been given the right of self-determination. Even after the "Zionist invasion", the Arab inhabitants form a big majority (say 2/3 of the population) and their right of self-determination should not be compromised. Thus, they rejected the Partition Plan and tried to protect their legitimate rights (but failed). This should not be counted against them. Furthermore, most of the Arab population did not "leave the land" but were rather forced out of it, and now the Jewish State does not allow them to return to their homes and land. Thus, they did not only lose their legitimate rights as a nation but also suffered a human tragedy (becoming land-less and homeless refugees).

The facts are as follows. The war did start with an invasion of Arab armies (from the neighboring Arab countries) into Palestine, and it ended with cease-fire borders that were far better for Israel than the Partition Plan borders (see maps on the last page). In particular, Israel seized the entire northern region (i.e., Galilee) originally assigned to the Arab state as well as 20% of the central region (the remaining part of it is currently called the West Bank) and half of the remaining region (the remaining part of it is currently called the Gaza Strip). In addition, it seized half of the metropolitan area of Jerusalem (i.e., West Jerusalem), and lost the other half (i.e., East Jerusalem) to the Kingdom of Jordan. Most of the Arab population of these areas (as well as of the areas originally assigned to the Jewish state) did not inhabit these areas at the end of the war. In particular, at the end of the war 600,000 Arabs found themselves away from their home. A question in dispute was whether they fled out of their own choice or were forced to leave. Actually, given that there are reliable records for both cases, the real question is how many fled and how many were forced to leave.

(The mere fact that there exist Israeli records indicating that in some cases Arabs were forced to leave proves that the Israeli official claim by which all Arabs left out of their own choice is false. On the other hand, in my opinion, the lack of Israeli records of a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing seems to indicate that these procedures were applied only in special cases or at the initiative of a local commander.)

Anyhow, regardless of the question why these 600,000 Arabs left, the international community was rather united in demanding that they be allowed to return. This demand was formalized in the UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (Dec. 11, 1948). This UN General Assembly resolved that the metropolitan area of Jerusalem be granted an international stature (as in the Partition Plan) and that the Arab refugees "wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date". Both items (of the said resolution) were fiercely objected to by Israel (see Section 5.1 and 5.6). Regarding the Arab refugees, Israel's position was that this issue should be resolved as part of the general peace treaty (with the neighboring Arab countries). This position relies on the 'live in peace' clause in the resolution (but contradicts the 'practicable date' clause). Referring to another part of the resolution, Israel further claimed that a possible solution may involve compensations and resettlement (in these Arab countries), and that such a solution would also be consistent with the resolution.

5 The consolidation of the state of Israel (1949-1967-today)

(This section is highly opinionated and I even allowed myself at times to be sarcastic. Again, the few "absolute" facts are clearly marked as such.)

In my opinion, the history of Israel has to be partitioned into two parts with the divide-line at the 1967 War. The main characteristics of Israel were determined in the early 1950's in a sequence of historical decisions, four of which are discussed below (see Sections 5.1-5.4). The main post-1967 decision refers to the status of the territories conquered during that war (see Section 7). Somewhat related processes that took places since 1967 but do not seem to be totally determined by the occupation of the said territories are discussed in Sections 5.5-5.6.

Let's recall the facts. At 1949, the population of Israel reached 1.2M, consisting of 1M Jews and 0.16M Arabs. Note that 0.6M Arabs were not allowed to return to their homes, and that additional Jewish immigration took place during 1947-49.

5.1 The Right of Return and the Law of Return

As stated in Section 4.2, Israel has *practically* refused to recognized the right of its pre-1948 Arab inhabitants to return to their homes or even get compensations for their property *at a practicable date*. (It did so by deferring negotiation of the issue to the time of a full peace treaty with its neighbors.) Practically refusing the Right of Return was a crucial decision with far-reaching consequences. It ensured the Jewish character of the newly formed state, and allowed the free usage of property (especially houses and land) that was "left behind", but created the refugee problem.

(One alternative could have been allowing for the return of 0.6M Arabs, which would have created a Bi-National state. Another could have been a withdrawal from the territories not assigned to the Jewish State by the Partition Plan, which would have increased the Arab population by only 0.2M but would have resulted in borders that are harder to defend as well as problems of securing transportation between the three regions that are hardly connected. Both these alternatives were considered impractical (or endangering the very existence of Israel), especially in view of the evaluation that Israel will not enjoy peace with the neighboring countries even if it follows these alternatives.)

It is ironic that at the same time (i.e., 1950), the Israeli Parliament passed the Law of Return practically stating that every Jew is entitled to an Israeli citizenship. (The name of this law reflects the romantic view of such a (Jewish!) immigrant as returning to the homeland, after a 2000-year absence.) Thus, whereas the “natural right” of non-Jews to return to their homes is declined, an “artificial right” of immigration is granted to any Jew.

The Law of Return had a great rhetorical impact on the Jews of Western Europe and the US. It asserted that they are potential citizens of Israel, and this assertion strengthened the moral demand that they contribute to Israel (by donations and political influence, whereas the demand that they become actual residents was merely rhetoric and made only occasionally by few untactful Israeli leaders).

5.2 The effects of the Holocaust on Israel

But money (and political influence) was not enough. There was a clear feeling that a population of about a million people is way below the critical mass required for the country. The original plan was that once the state is established more Jews will come, especially from Eastern Europe. But the Eastern European Jewry was wiped-out in the Holocaust. So one had to find a replacement, and one did: Jews from the Arab countries. These Jews came from a traditional culture very different from the one of the earlier immigrations, and were expected to adapt to the modern culture of Israel. In the meanwhile, they were used as cheap labor, and this supposedly temporary situation just perpetuated. In any case, the goal was achieved: The population grew to a reasonable size (reaching a total of 2.8M with 2.4M Jews in 1967). As a by-product, the earlier immigrations improved its economical status by exploiting cheap labor.

(The previous paragraph may hide the fact that a crucial strategic decision was made. The decision was to *actively encourage* immigration from these countries. More importantly the decision was to bring immigrants at the earliest possible moment (in which they can leave their homelands), regardless of the non-existence of infrastructure for providing these immigrants with housing and work.)

The second effect of the holocaust is well-know to your all: It is its extensive usage as a method of blocking any kind of critique of Israel.

A third effect, which is commonly forgotten, is the compensation agreement signed between (West) Germany and the State of Israel (which nominated itself the inheritor of the murdered Jews). This agreement played an important economical role in the 1950’s. The direct compensation to the State of Israel in the years 1953-65 amounted to 820M Dollars, whereas the country’s annual export in these years grew from 50M to 400M.

5.3 Allying with the West/US

In the early 1950’s (if not before), Israel made a strategic decision to ally itself with the West. This was not an obvious choice for several reasons. Firstly, Israel was lead by socialist parties (which at the time were still committed, although at different levels, to socialist ideas). Furthermore, these parties held anti-colonial and anti-capitalist sentiments, and for some of them allying with USSR seemed much more natural than allying with USA. Lastly, in 1948, USSR seems much more supportive of Israel than any country in the West (especially USA and Britain). On the other hand, the influential Jews (i.e., potential donors) were in the West. Furthermore, things changed in the early 1950’s when USSR began supporting the Arab countries (e.g., by arms). Still, the choice could have been to remain “nonaligned” (i.e., join the Nonaligned block (aka the Third World block)), but one may argue that such a choice would not have satisfied the USA (and thus its Jewry). (In fact, what Israel really wanted (and tried to do) was to be conceived by the West as belonging to it while being conceived by the rest of the world (including itself!) as belonging to the “awakening” Third World.)

Anyhow, the choice to ally with the West was not made explicit until the mid 1950's. The circumstances are discussed in Section 6. As described there, the pro-West orientation led to a war-coalition with France and England against Egypt (i.e., the 1956 War), or maybe the other way around. Relations with France remained very "warm" until the 1967 War. In contrast, a "warm" relationship with the US started to emerge only after that war, whereas in prior years the American position was more "pro-Arab". Since that time, the US tried to maintain a "balanced position" (see Rogers address of Dec. 1969), but its position was shifting with time towards Israel.

5.4 A superficial democracy

Most Israelis (also in the political establishment!) interpret the term "democracy" to mean that people participate in a general election every few years. In this sense, Israel is indeed a democracy. But if democracy means protection of the rights of the minority (from legal procedures of the majority) and respect of human rights, then Israel is very far from being a democracy. The most obvious point is its treatment of the Arab national minority, but things don't end at this point (i.e., in contrary to the famous statement cited in Section 8.1, I claim that Israel is not democratic even with respect to its Jewish citizens).

As stated in Section 5.1, the Law of Return makes each Jew a potential citizen of the state of Israel. Even if this potential remains immaterialized it carries a declarative weight not only towards the outside but also towards inside: As a non-Jewish citizen you cannot feel but as a second-rate citizen.

But the Arab citizens of Israel do not need subtle hints in order to feel second-rate citizens; a host of very concrete explicit and implicit governmental policies makes the Arabs second-rate citizens. Let's start from the fact that almost all the Arab population (of Israel) was under a Martial Rule in the period 1949-65. Yes, they were citizens and were allowed to vote in elections (and were actually encouraged to vote (for suitable parties!)), but they were under Martial Rule and needed a permit (from a relevant Military commander) for almost any non-trivial action. Much of the mind-frame that underlies that Martial Rule is still present nowadays (decades after the Martial Rule was resolved). In addition, the state's infrastructure in the Arab sector is underdeveloped (when compared to the general population) and the clear impression is that development plans of the local Arab communities face an unsympathetic governmental attitude (at the very least, the fact is that these initiatives are almost always blocked).

Another clear issue is the fact that Israel is constantly violating the human rights of the Palestinians living in the territories occupied by it. Such a massive violation of human rights that goes on for decades (and becomes more severe with time) says something about the society that commits it.

The lack of a secured constitutional structure. Even ignoring all the above, I would like to argue that the constitutional structure in Israel provides no protection from the tyranny of a majority in the parliament. Such a majority (in most cases one does not even need a special strict majority) can pass any piece of legislation of whatever barbaric nature it pleases.[3] In addition, the Government has at its disposal "special" Emergency Regulations that allow it to do anything at any time, provided that it declares that this is required by the situation. My conclusion is that Israel

[3]Yes, I am aware of the fact that the Chief Justice has a theory by which such laws can be made void (by the courts) by referring to the (benign) Human Dignity and Liberty Basic-Law. However, I would not trust the Supreme Court to do so in every case in which such an action is called for. Furthermore, the parliament can easily avoid such a "risk" by simply canceling the said Basic Law.

has no real constitutional structure (as long as the latter term is given some non-trivial meaning). Furthermore, Israel's political and social culture lacks any notion of respect of the Other as well as a strong sense of fair play.

The above is not merely an academic concern. Many governmental practices could not have taken place if there was a real constitutional structure. Consider, for example, the fact that governmental agencies constantly violate various Employment Laws as well as Work Agreements (and commercial contracts), constantly violate binding governmental decisions, and sometimes even violate court decisions. In fact, one should add that the Government and its agencies seem to have a general contempt of law (not only of International Law...).

The lack of a Bill of Rights. In view of the previous paragraphs, even if Israel has had a Bill of Rights then it could have had no secure status. But the fact is that Israel has no Bill of Rights. The only thing that comes close is a passage in the declaration of independence, but this laconic passage has no binding power.

The weakness of the local government. Israel has adopted with little change the British colonial structure of government. This structure views the local government as a weak sub-contractor of the central government, and drastically limits the powers of the locally elected representatives (which are at the mercy of the appointed bureaucracy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the central government). Needless to say, this structure limits the possible strategies of grass-root movements (which are typically forced to become country-wide movements in too early stages of their development).

(The non-democratic character of Israel can be traced to the semi-Bolshevik attitudes of its founding fathers. But this point is mute because, as I claim in Section 8.1, Israel cannot be both "Jewish" and democratic, while having a significant non-Jewish population.)

5.5 The Economy: from necessities to luxury

The British left a reasonable infrastructure, but no cash, and cash was needed to recover from the 1948 war as well as for financing the gigantic "immigration absorption" project undertaken by the newly formed state. The economic situation reached the margins of a disaster in the early 1950's and a rationing regime was announced. (As far as I recall things improved by the support of the world Jewry and the compensation agreement with Germany, without taking loans from the World Bank...) This allowed investments in industry and in infrastructure, resulting in an amazing improvement (e.g., an average 10% yearly growth in GNP over fifteen consecutive decades). In 1950, the export was 30$ per capita, whereas in 1966 it reached 220$ per capita. For comparison, the import increased from 200$ per capita in 1950 to 300$ per capita in 1966. At that year, economy entered recession.

Surprisingly (or not), the economy got out of the recession just after the 1967 War. It actually entered a period of prosperity to end with the 1973 War (and the world-wide Fuel crisis). The prosperity following the 1967 War was fueled by economic exploitation of the Palestinian people (no figures available...) and increased economical aid from USA and world Jewry (directed to defense expenses but effectively boosting the economy).

In the 1990's Israel adapted to the "global economy" and its development was further fueled by foreign investments following the 1993 Oslo Accords. It became quite a rich country.

It will not come as a surprise that as the country's economy became stronger, the level of social inequality increased.

5.6 Growing acceptance of the existence of Israel

This subsection is more speculative, as we are referring to things that are hard to qualify. Still, it is my clear impression that there is a clear divide-line in 1967: From that time on, opposition to the *mere existence* of a Jewish state declines and similarly does the opposition to Israel's rule of West Jerusalem. (A depressing meditation on the role of power...)

In the summer of 1967, the Arab League resolves (or rather re-affirms the traditional Arab position) that there will be no recognition, negotiation of peace with Israel (as well as no compromise on the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people). However, in the 1973 (following the October War), the position was drastically different – posing two conditions to having peace with Israel: its complete withdrawal from all the occupied (of the 1967 War) and its acknowledgment of the national rights of the Palestinian people.

A few milestone in the process (of the Arab and Palestinian acceptance of the existence of Israel) include:

- the peace treaty with Egypt (Camp David Accords, 1978);
- the official PLO statement of a departure from the vision of a single democratic state in the entire area of Palestine and the acceptability of a two-state solution (1988);
- the Oslo Declaration of Principles (1993);
- the peace treaty with Jordan (Oct. 1994);

Similarly, there seems to be a de facto acceptance of Israeli rule of West Jerusalem, as the Palestinian demands are restricted to East Jerusalem.

6 The Anglo-Franco connection or the 1956 War

(BG is David Ben-Gurion, a brilliant strategic and somewhat of a tyrant, who led the Zionist movement from the late 1930's till 1963. In my opinion, all strategic decisions of the Zionist movement at that period are to be attributed to BG.)

In the mod 1950's, BG recognized a big opportunity (i.e., a temporary episode with great benefits): Allying with Britain and France in the 1956 War, allowed Israel to eliminate the terrorist activity of the time (coming out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip)[4] as well as provided it with modern weapons and an Atomic Bomb.

Eliminating the terrorist activity of the time was of great importance (because it has caused many casualties as well as a major demoralization in Israel), but the real issue was obtaining modern weapons. In 1955 Egypt, under the charismatic leadership of Nasser, modernized its armed forces by a massive Weapon Deal with Soviet Czech. Furthermore, Egypt sought to unite the Arab World, free it from colonial domination, and lead it in a military campaign against Israel.[5] On the other hand, Israel was unable to buy modern weapons (as the main manufacturing countries refused to sell it such weapons). The situation was conceived as a threat to Israel's existence, and the solution was an alliance with France and England, whose colonial interests favored opposition to Egypt (let alone that it has nationalized "their" Suez Canal). It was clear to BG that these colonial powers

[4] Israel committed a few acts of state terrorism also at that period (but far less than nowadays). Guess who was the commander of the unit that performed a massacre in a village in the West Bank in year 1952.

[5] An additional central issue was social reform.

are in decline, but a decade of good supplies of modern weapons was going to revolutionize the balance of power in the area.

Needless to say, the alliance of Israel with the (declining) colonial powers has severely hurt the relationship that Israel was trying to build with the Third World countries. Of course, this consequence was predictable, but it is worthwhile to BG because in his opinion Israel's relationship with the Third World was doomed anyhow. (The wider context is discussed in Section 5.3.)

7 The 1967 War and the occupation of West-Bank and Gaza Strip

(This section is quite opinionated. Again, the few "absolute" facts are clearly marked as such.)

The main facts are that a large portion of the Egyptian Army entered the Sinai Peninsula, which borders Israel, in May 1967. This was in violation of agreements set in 1957 (following the 1956 War) and was accompanied by massive rhetorics (by Egypt) about the inevitability of war. In response Israel mobilized its reserve army, but it could not maintain this situation for a long time (because this almost paralyzed the economy). Military accords signed (resp., reconfirmed) between Egypt and Jordan (resp., Syria) raised the Israeli fear of a three-frontier war. The three weeks given to diplomatic attempts to resolve the situation bore no fruits and the Israeli public was quite in panic (because the general perception was that the war may result in either the total destruction of Israel or enormous casualties).[6] In contrast, following a surprising Israeli Air-Force attack on the Arab air-forces, Israel won the war quite easily, conquering the Sinai Peninsula (including the Gaza Strip), the West Bank (from Jordan) and the Golan Heights (from Syria).

Here too, there are two narratives. According to the Israeli narrative, Israel was on the verge of being wiped out, and it was quite a miracle that it survived (let alone with so little harm). In retrospect, it is clear that Israel was not in a real existential danger, but it is also clear that its population felt that it was. (Unlike in 1948, the armed forces were equally equipped, but again Israel had a huge advantage in the training of forces, command ability and Military doctrine.) According to the Palestinian and Arab narrative, Israel was seeking expansion, and the Arab countries tried to prevent it but failed.

7.1 From "Conquered Territories" to "Judea and Samaria" (1967-77)

It seems that the Israeli government was itself surprised by the extent of the success. Anyhow, it moved quickly to seize its fruits. The day following the war, the government decided to annex East Jerusalem. A few weeks later, it decided that the territories won in the war will be held as bargaining chips for the time of peace negotiations.

(Technically, the first decision did not mention the word 'annex' nor East Jerusalem. It "just" modified the municipal borders of Jerusalem to include East Jerusalem (via indirect reference), and by doing so implicitly made this area part of Israel. One has to recall that Israel has no statutory borders (i.e., its borders are not defined in any of its internal laws and were not recognized as permanent borders in any international document of the time).)

(The second decision, which presumes that these territories are occupied territories in the sense of the 4th Geneva Convention, stood in contrast to the right-wing demand to annex these territories. However, the exact status of these territories was not explicitly stated, and this issue was avoided in all future governmental actions.)

[6] For example, during the said period, many of the gardens of Tel-Aviv were prepared to serve as temporary burial grounds.

Initially the occupied territories were referred to as conquered territories, but the official term soon became 'occupied territories' and remained so till the right-wing came to power in 1977.

The meaning of Israeli government decision of June 1967. In my opinion, in June 1967, the aforementioned Israeli government decision was understood by most its members to mean that *these territories* (except maybe for minor border modifications, some pending since 1947) *will be traded-in for a full, comprehensive peace.* But by November 1967, the mood has changed and Israel has initially objected to the UN Security Council Resolution 242 (of Nov. 22, 1967), which asserted that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East should include "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict". Israel took comfort in its success to cause the omission of the definite article 'the' (which is present in the French version), opening the door to the claim that the condition can be met by withdrawal from some of these territories (but even one square mile was too much for the extreme right-wing to take...). This interpretation was rejected by the international community (including the US).

(By the way, after Israel withdraw from Sinai, the right-wing government claimed that this withdraw by itself already satisfies the requirements of Resolution 242. That is, there is no need to withdraw from some territories in each of the three fronts, having withdrawn at one front (let alone a full withdrawal) suffices.)

The Israeli declared policy regarding the occupied territories during 1967–1977. In the period 1967-1977, Israeli governments remained committed to another formula that dates back to June 1967 by which "everything is negotiable in the context of a full peace agreement" (i.e., even the standard (international) interpretation of the UN Resolution 242 is opened to negotiations, but so is the Israeli interpretation...). The aforementioned formula was typically accompanied by the phrase "Israel is interested in direct negotiations with no pre-conditions" (meaning that the Arab side is condemned for not agreeing to direct/unmoderated negotiations and that the standard interpretation of the UN Resolution 242 is rejected as a pre-condition to negotiation). Israel has also (eventually) accepted UN Resolution 242 and the Rogers Plan set forth to implement it, *under its own interpretations of these documents.* (But even these maneuvers met the opposition of the right-wing in Israel.) Although the declared policy has not changed in the said period (1967-1977), the actual implementation has changed. Specifically, since early 1969, the international intiatives met a much colder Israeli shoulder. (This change is indeed related to a personality change: the minimalist PM died and was replaced by a maximalist one.)

A modest beginning of a big disaster. In 1969 (if not already before?), the Israeli government initiated a small-scale settlement project in the occupied territories, restricted to areas (e.g., the Jordan Valley) that it thought should remain under Israeli rule also in the context of a peace treaty. These actions, which were disguised as Military ones, were claimed to be consistent with international law (by virtue of their being done out of security considerations). Under pressures of right-wing groups, mainly after 1973, the government also approved settlements that had nothing to do with security considerations (except maybe by virtue of creating security problems).[7] By 1970, there were 1,500 Jewish (civilians) in the occupied territories, and by 1977 their number reached 5K (i.e., 5,000).

[7] A typical story is that of a handful of religious fanatics that settled in a house in the heart of the Arab city of Hebron in 1968). Eventually, they (i.e., the fanatics) agreed to move to a new neighborhood (constructed for them) at the outskirt of Hebron. In the early 1980's, under the right-wing government, these fanatics returned to the heart of the Arab city.

Important Note: All the figures (above and below) exclude Jews living in the expanded area of Jerusalem (i.e., in areas that used to be part of either East Jerusalem or other territories added to Jerusalem by the aforementioned government decision of June 11, 1967).

7.2 From rhetorics to massive colonization (1977-1993)

One of its first actions of the newly formed right-wing government was to replace the terminology in all official communications. The occupied territories were now referred to as Judea, Samaria and the District of Gaza. The point was that the southern part of the West Bank overlaps with the historical Kingdom of Judea, whereas the northern part overlaps with Samaria (the southern part of the historical Kingdom of Israel). But except for historical rhetorics relatively little happened in the first three years: The Jewish population grew (from 5K in 1977) to 12K in 1980. Things changed once Sharon became Defense Minister. In 1990 the Jewish population in the occupied territories reached 76K, and by 1992 the figure was 123K.

Note: Throughout the entire period, the international community (including the US) has maintained that the entire "Jewish settlement project" was in violation of international law (specifically of the 4th Geneva Convention Protocol of 1949). Similarly, the annexation of East Jerusalem was fiercely objected (on similar grounds).

7.3 After the Oslo Accords (1993-today)

One would have thought that this process would come to an end with the Oslo Accords. This was at least the understanding of the Palestinians as well as of the international community (including the US). In contrast to these expectations, the Jewish settlement project went on "full steam": The size of the Jewish population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip grew from 123K in 1992 to 225K in 2002.

Following is my opinionated analysis of the failure of the Oslo Accords. It seems to me that from the very beginning the real interests of Israel (let alone the well-being of the Palestinians) were sacrificed for short-term political stability. That is, the Oslo Accords constitute the decade-long wet-dream of almost all Zionists: A true reconciliation with the Palestinians to be followed by a reconciliation with the entire Arab world, and all of this at the cost of something that Israel does not really need (and arguably only hurts it). But it was preferred not to get into a vicious confrontation with the Zionist right-wing. Thus, the first (and only!) actual withdrawals that took place were constrained by the desire not to evacuate even a single Jewish settlement.

The result is a clear absurd. For example, supposedly Israel withdrew (in 1993) from the entire Gaza Strip, but actually it maintained control of its main two roads and a few enclaves (with 6000 settlers). Because of these 6000 settlers, a population of 1.1 million Palestinians cannot move freely on the main roads, and when the situation becomes 'severe' (as is the case throughout the entire 3 years) it can hardly use these roads at all. Currently, the Gaza Strip is cut into two parts (by the Israeli army seizing a security zone around one of the aforementioned roads).

An even worse atrocity occurred in Hebron, the second largest city of the West Bank (after East Jerusalem). When withdrawing from the large cities of the West Bank, the issue of a group of 400 Jewish fanatics that 'live' in the heart of the old city arose. The solution adopted by Israel was to keep control of 20% of the area of the city, inhabited by 35,000 Palestinians. This population remained under Israeli rule and is subjected to constant harassments of the aforementioned Jews (in addition to the usual treatment of the Israeli army).

Negotiations of practically nothing lead nowhere. Getting back to the facts, the 'peace process' started in Oslo got stuck in 1996. It is also a fact that the cards are all in Israel hands: it occupies the territories, it determines all aspects of life in them, and it can truly withdraw from them if it chooses. If it chooses to negotiate nothing then things get stuck and the situation deteriorates. Israel always offers excuses (typically, "security concerns"), but in my opinion there is really no rationale to its continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (except that the Jewish Settlers and their right-wing political allies insist on it).

The Camp David Summit. We now get to the death of the 'peace process' started in Oslo. It seems to me that Israel arrived to the Camp David Summit (of July 2001) prepared to dictated a final agreement and not to negotiate one. The final agreement that Israel (or rather its PM Barak) had in mind was truly revolutionary from its point of view, but it fell very short from the very minimum that can be accepted by the Palestinians. On one hand, the Israeli "proposal" contained a crucial element to which Israel has objected for decades: withdrawing from some parts of East Jerusalem (i.e., essentially "re-dividing" the city). In addition, it overcame two more recently formulated Israeli taboos: the evacuation of some (albeit few) Jewish settlements, and a significant withdrawal in the West Bank (yielding to the Palestinians 80-90% of its total area). On the other hand, the Israeli proposals left the West Bank divided into a few (2-4?) disconnected regions (not to mention Jerusalem), left a significant part of the Palestinian population under Israeli rule (most annoyingly so in East Jerusalem), failed to address the Refugee problem as well as the status of the old city of Jerusalem, and was annoying in several other aspects (e.g., control of borders). In my opinion, the problem was not that much the gap between the expectations but rather the fundamentally inegalitarian attitude of Israel (which was unfortunately not confronted by the US). Assuming that Israel really meant what a good-hearted person may understand from the protocols (i.e., to actually end the occupation), it seems that by changing its attitude and paying considerable attention to the concerns of the other party, an agreement could have been reached. (In contrast, some annalists believe that Israel did not really mean what a good-hearted person may understand from the protocols.)

Anyhow, in September 2001, the leader of the right-wing opposition (i.e., Sharon) asked for a police permit to "visit the Mount Temple" (without an invitation or even an agreement of the Muslim Vakf). A permit was (and is) required because the holy site is de facto under the rule of the Vakf, a status that no Israeli government has dared to challenge. The entire point of the "visit" was to either force the left-wing government to demonstrate de facto rule of the site (by providing adequate police protection for such a provocative visit) or portray this government as betraying Jewish interests. Again, short-term internal political calculations prevailed and the permit was granted. You know the rest of the story...

8 The internal-politics of Israel

(Needless to say, this too is an opinionated section. In my opinion, the internal politics of Israel are determined by the fact that Zionism serves as a state ideology.)

8.1 Zionism as a state ideology

Let's start with facts. Israel defines itself as a Jewish-Democratic state. This definition was made explicit in the "Human Dignity and Liberty Basic-Law" (intended to be part of a forever-to-be-written constitution) passed in 1992, but it is implicit in all prior legislation and in all governmental policies. What exactly does this phase means remains unclear (i.e., unspecified by law), but it is clear that a non-Jewish (e.g., Arab) citizen cannot feel comfortable with this phrase (i.e., Jewish-Democratic state).

The meaning of the phrase 'a Jewish-Democratic State' is best explained by a famous saying of a central Israeli-Arab leader: *It is Jewish for the Arabs and Democratic for the Jews.* That is, it excludes you if you are not Jewish and offer you a democracy if you are Jewish. (The latter is also a false pretense, but that's a different story.)

The notion of a Jewish-Democratic State sounds to me like squaring the circle. Indeed it is a fascinating project (and maybe we are all wrong and it can be done after all). Getting serious, the promoters of the aforementioned notion claim that people may create or synthesis new notions and in particular that a meaningful notion of a democratic nation-state with a large national minority may exist. Even if this is true in theory, the question is whether this theory can be implemented in the current situation. My opinion is that the answer is negative, and that the state of Israel is doomed to be non-democratic (although it may become more kind to the Arab minority).

(To demonstrate the contradiction, let me tell a story. Before the 2003 elections, the Central Election Committee decided to ban an Arab Party of the grounds that it platform contained the demand for a "state of all its citizens". The committee ruled that this demand stands in contradiction to the state's character as a Jewish-Democratic State, and that such a contradiction was a valid statutory reason for banning the party from the election. This position was supported (or rather promoted) by the Attorney General. An appeal was made to the Supreme Court, which reversed the decision by small majority. None of the judges asserted that there is no contradiction. The majority opinion was that the contradiction was not concrete enough and did not constitute a danger of sufficient intensity to warrant the application of the extreme statutory measure.)

It seems to me that the real meaning of Zionism today is captured by one's answer to the following question: Should Arabs and Jews be equal citizens of Israel, in all aspects and with no tricks, or not? If one answers with a 'yes' then the Law of Return (see Section 5.1) as well as any piece of legislation that gives preference to Jews (typically, in disguised forms) should be made void or modified. I estimate that 99.9% of the Israeli-Jews would answer with a 'no' (whereas my own answer is 'yes').

8.2 The marginalized Arab Minority

Needless to say, the fact that Zionism is a state ideology makes the Arabs second-rate citizens. Still second-rate citizens may have some impact on the political system, and the question is how much impact do the Arab citizens have on Israel's politics. The answer is that they have very little impact nowadays, and their (small) influence is in decline in the last decade. An indication to my claim is the mere fact that following question arises let alone that nowadays it is answered negatively:

May a left-wing government rely on Arab votes in the parliament?

Let me first clarify this atrocious question. Say (which was indeed the case in 1992 and 1999 elections) that the Zionist left-wing parties hold 45% of the seats in the parliament and that "Arab parties" hold another 8%. (An issue by itself is that the bi-national communist party is considered by the Jewish public (but not by the Arab public) to be an 'Arab party'.) The question is whether it is "publicly legitimate" for the Zionist left-wing to form a governmental coalition with the "Arab parties" (and even have them participate in the government). The answer in 1992 was a mild "no", in 1999 it was a clear "no", and nowadays it is an absolute "no". In the last five years you can even hear proposals that in certain decisions of the parliament the votes of "Arab parties" should not be considered. (Typically, the formal proposal does not say so explicitly, but the informal motivational explanations do state it explicitly.)

In such a state of affairs, the political impact of the Arab citizens of Israel is marginal. Needless to say, the right-wing is very happy with this situation and is actively trying to secure it. In addition to the aforementioned attempts, an attempt is made to humiliate the members of the "Arab parties" in the eyes of their voters and to prove to these voters that the "Arab parties" don't count (and so there is no point in voting for them or even voting at all).

8.3 The old Zionist divide-lines

The Zionist parties have traditionally differed on the following three issues:

1. *Social and economical issues*: This was usually reduced to questions regarding the level of social services and economical regulation to be provided or imposed by the national/state government. The goals of regulation were also in dispute (i.e., promoting working class or national interests). The different approaches have included Communist, Social-Reformist, Liberal (in the European sense), and Fascist.

2. *Attitude towards religion*: This was usually reduced to questions regarding the level of involvement or indifference of the national/state government towards religious affairs. Advocating a great involvement in religious affairs has been the main agenda of the various religious (Jewish) parties.

3. *International politics*: The issues have changed (during the 20th century) and the political alliances have changed accordingly. In the first two decades the issue was mainly of prioritizing international diplomacy versus actual settlement. In the next decade the confrontation was between (empty) military rhetorics (put forward by the Fascists) and actual development of the country (advocated by the rest). Since the mid 1940's the divide-line is between the "maximalists" (wishing to maximize territory while ignoring the objections and interests of the Arab population) and "minimalists" (which, taking into account these objections and interests, have advocated settling for the minimum that seems sufficient for the Zionist project).

The different parties have represented almost all possible combinations of attitudes regarding the above questions. Needless to say, the number of these parties was always quite big (i.e., around a dozen).

8.4 The new divide-lines: Identity Politics

This subsection is very speculative because it refers to current developments that seem to be still in progress. Nonetheless, it is my impression that the ideologically-based divide-lines are being replaced by identity-based divide-lines.

For example, it seems that much of the support enjoyed by the "Herut" and later "Likud" (right-wing) Party in the last four decades is due to identity issues. This party, which was almost excluded from real politics till 1967, managed to appeal to the relative new immigrations (from Arab countries) that felt excluded by the central Zionist narrative (which was European). I claim that the appeal is based on solidarity of the excluded, rather than on any actual interests or political attitudes. (Note that this example dates back to the 1960's.)

A more recent phenomenon is the emergence in the 1980's of a party (call Shas) that focuses on the religious culture of Jews coming from Arab countries. The concrete agenda of this party is confined to allocating resources for the preservation and development of the said culture, which seems a rather minor issue bearing in mind the problems of Israel. At times, the party has also adopted welfare-state rhetorics, but its actual actions fall short of significantly advancing such an agenda. (We are talking of a party that holds more than 10% of the seats in a parliament in which no party holds more that 35% of the seats.)

An even more recent phenomenon is the emergence in 1999 of a party that focuses on opposing the aforementioned party (i.e., Shas) as well as the century-old Religious Jewish-Orthodox party. This party also promotes an Eco-Liberal agenda, but it seems that its real source of attraction is its vulgar anti-Shas rhetorics.

At times, also the "left-wing" parties seem to rely on identity-based voters that wish to identify themselves with the "modern and global culture".

9 Positive visions for an Israel-Palestinian treaty

The possible solutions are the obvious ones: Either divide the land *in a just fashion* or establish a (democratic) bi-national state (see Sections 9.1 and 9.2, respectively). These solutions have been on the table for decades, the question is who supports them.

Recall that the traditional Palestinian position opposed any partition plan. This position was changed formally in 1988. Such a change has been the wet-dream of all main Zionist leaders (till 1977). But the Zionist parties (or fractions) supporting the aforementioned partition now are merely 10-20% of the parliament, and I estimate that the wide public support of this solution (within the Zionists) is similar. From the perspective of the past, this is disappointing (because I estimate that 95% of the population would have supported such a plan in 1967, and at least 80% in 1977). On the other hand, from the perspective of the future, there is hope...

In my opinion, the bi-national solution is impractical because the Zionist ideology, which governs more than 99% of the Israeli Jews, cannot tolerate it (see Section 2). Furthermore, I fear that if implemented such a solution will result in an oppressive rule of the Jewish majority. (Of course, one may say that it will be implemented only after people undergo a change of heart, but then I'd say that this is a plan for the latter days (or alternatively, that it is better to implement the partition plan first, and see if the hearts change so to move forward to the bi-national solution).)

9.1 The partition program (at approximately 1967 borders)

This solution consists of a *fast* Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders with *mutually-agreed minor* modifications. Two points should be stressed in order to distinguish this proposal from generic and uncommitted rhetorics of the "moderate left-wing" of Israel's politics.

Firstly, the modifications should be really minor and more importantly they should be negotiated and agreed upon with the Palestinian side (rather than dictated to it!). Both parties may have legitimate concerns regarding such minor modifications (e.g., minimizing population transfer and/or population that remains under the rule of the other party) that should be addressed by a clever compromise (i.e., a compromise that each of the parties can tolerate). For example, Israel wants most of the settlers to remain under its rule, but it must understand that this should not be done by subjecting Palestinians to Israel's rule nor by cutting the Palestinian territory with ex-territorial Israel roads.

Secondly, Israel should withdraw immediately from the territories that it means to cede in any case. That is, if the opening proposal of Israel is that it wants to annex 5% of the territory (and it should not be allowed to ask for more than that), then it should withdraw immediately from the rest 95% (and not postpone this withdrawal to the completion of the negotiations). The Palestinians have suffered more than enough and one should try to end the suffering of most of them as soon as possible. That is, occupation of most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has to end within a few months, under a strict time-table announced immediately. In addition to serving justice, this will also allow for creating Palestinian confidence in Israel's intentions (assuming it really has such intentions), and consequently support a call for the end of "Palestinian terror". Needless to say, the state-terror practiced by Israel has to cease immediately.

Estimated support for this plan. My impression is that such a plan will gain the immediate support of a vast majority (say over 70%) of the Palestinians and has the potential of gaining the support of a majority of the Israelis. The fact that currently such a plan only enjoys a small (but still significant) support in Israel does not matter. The question is what will happen if the Israeli government adopts such a plan. As an indication, consider the Oslo Accords. If you polled about their context a year before they were signed, you'd hardly get a 10% support among the Jews, but once announced they enjoyed a very strong support (say of 70% of the population). Likewise, I speculate that if the Israeli government adopts the aforementioned plan then it will receive a similar support.

I would like to mention that two "private" bi-national initiatives that seem to have the aforementioned spirit have been put forward in the last year. The first is a declaration of principles for an Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty drafted by a former Israeli head of secret service (Ayalon) and the Palestinian intellectual and former president of the East Jerusalem university (Nusseibeh). The initiator have already gathered 170,000 signatures of support by Israelis and 130,000 signatures by Palestinians. The second initiative is a quite detailed draft for an Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty (i.e., "Geneva Accord") agreed upon by a ground of active and senior politicians from both sides.

9.2 The One State Solution

The one-state solution is even easier to state and certainly easier to implement, provided both parties agree to it. The problem is that I don't think that there is even a slim chance that any of the parties (certainly the Israeli one) would agree to it. As stated above, I speculate (and believe that the Palestinians will speculate similarly) that if implemented (now) then such a solution will result in an oppressive rule of the Jewish majority.

The supporters of this solution seem to be either very naive or very radical communist thinkers. The latter believe that the resulting oppressive rule will actually oppress the working class of both nations, and will cause them to unite in a bi-national Class Struggle that will result in real freedom.

I repeat my claim that the bi-national plan cannot be accepted by any true Zionist, and so has no chance of ever getting the support of more than a tiny portion of the Israeli Jews. Also, the bi-national plan may be implemented if the far future, following the implementation of the partition plan (and not instead of it).

10 Zionist Historiography

The Zionist Historiography claims to provide an account of the entire history of the Jewish people. But the account it provides is distorted in two major ways.

First, typically, the presentation lacks a wide historical perspective: It focused on what "happened" (or "was done") to the Jews, and fails to provide an account of what led to these events. The result is an almost metaphysical account in which a single pattern re-occurs with no reference to a context (i.e., the Jews were minding their business and all of a sudden, out of nowhere, a big disaster hit them). This generic pattern facilitates the view that the Palestinians are merely another type of Jew-haters, their "violent riots" are merely Pogroms and their leaders are new Hitlers. This historiography also serves the main Zionist thesis cited in Section 2.

(The implication of the aforementioned perspective to the description of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are clear: In the standard textbooks, there is no account of the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine (say prior to 1881), although there is an account of what foreign powers ruled the land. Similarly, these texts lack a real analysis of the reaction of the Palestinians to the Jewish immigration (in the period 1881-1947), and of the Arab position regarding the UN Partition resolution. Etc.)

A second issue is the distortion of the ancient history of the "Jews" (i.e., events of the period 13th century BC to 2nd century AD). Examples follow.

10.1 The uncritical adoption of the historiography of the bible

This subsection is focused on the unreliable historiography of the bible, which has been uncritical adopted by the Zionist Historiography. Three main issues are:

1. The bible tells a dramatic story about the conquest of the land of Canaan by a collection of wandering tribes (supposedly in the 12th century BC). This myth serves to assert the original unity of the tribes, which (as usual in mythologies) declined in subsequent centuries. Archaeological findings show no sign of such a dramatic event, but rather tell a story of the integration of the early Israelite in the local population of Canaan (a story that would not have pleases neither the editors of the bible nor the Zionists). Indeed, the constant tension (reported in the bible) between the Jewish culture and the local culture seems far more consistent with the latter story.

2. The bible tells a story about a legendary united kingdom, which was later divided (supposedly in the 10th century BC). The archaeological findings referring to a centralized government date to a later period (of two independent kingdoms, in the 9th century BC). It seems that the myth of a united kingdom served the political ends of the kings of Judea, while a story of glory and deterioration served the political ends of the Zionists.

3. The bible tries to give the impression that the Jewish religion of the Second Temple (516BC onward) is identical with the one of the First Temple (before 586BC), whereas a careful reading conveys a radical religious revolution performed by Judea's elite (while in exile) in Babylon. (Only the political and religious elite was in exile in Babylon.) It seems clear that this revolution was not fully adopted by most of the Jewish population of the time. Again, both the editors of the bible and the Zionists preferred to claim that the character of the nation remained unchanged throughout the relevant period.

10.2 Distorted accounts of rebellions against foreign powers

Whereas the traditional Jewish accounts of the rebellions against foreign powers in the post-biblical period are mixed, the Zionists adopted a one dimensional perspective of these events. For example, the Zionist historiography glorifies the bravery of the "Maccabee Revolt" (167BC onward), and makes no mention of the fact that this event was actually more a civil war than a rebellion against a (Hellenist) foreign power (and that diplomacy played a key role in its evolution). Furthermore, the Zionist historiography dims the "holy anger" that the "Maccabee" had towards their "fellow" Jews that adopted the Hellenist culture.

Similarly, the Zionist historiography provides an uncritical and glorified account of the failed rebellions (66AD and 132AD) against the Roman Empire, while not referring to the responsibility of these rebellions (esp., the second one) for their fatal consequences (i.e., the exile).

11 The Missing Palestinian History

Writing this text, I was amazed to see how little I know about the history of the Palestinian people. (*The next three paragraphs contain my speculations regarding the Palestinian history till 1949. These speculations are based on what can be extrapolated from a partial perspective provided by the books that were available to me in the past. It may have been wiser not to make these speculations, but I certainly want to call attention to the gap in my account.*)

The Zionist textbooks discuss the history of the land but do not refer to the non-Jews that inhabited it before 1881 (and in doing so they echo the quote cited in Section 3). In discussing the dozen centuries prior to 1881, the focus is on the foreign powers ruling the area and on its small Jewish population. Regarding the post-1881 period, these texts take notice of the fact that the Palestinians were "unhappy" about the Zionist immigration, that they refused various offers made by the Zionists, and that they committed several massacres (e.g., in the 1920s). No analysis is provided for their behavior. Then there is an account of the Big Arab Revolt (1936-39), but again no analysis is provided.

My impression is that in the period 1881-1949 the Palestinian leadership was far less organized and active than the Jewish one. Before 1917, the country was part of the Ottoman Empire and so non-local affairs were relegated to it (i.e., the Empire). It seems that this was also the attitude during the British Mandate, save for protests when the British government did not act as the Palestinians expected it to behave.

It is clear that the Palestinian leaders did not make it their business to present their case before the international community. This task was typically performed by the Arab states and/or the League of Arab States (Arab League). Similarly, the Palestinians counted on the Arab states to conquer Palestine both in 1948 and 1967. (Whereas the Jews were laying foundations for a country-wide armed force, no such country-wide organization was prepared by the Palestinian, which were organized only at the local level (e.g., of a village).)

The Palestinian Refugee Camps and Diaspora. Most Palestinian refugees settled in refugee camps, which were supposed to be temporary but became permanent (although they are inadequate for permanent living). The main camps are in the Gaza Strip and West Bank as well as in neighboring Arab states (Jordan, Lebanon and Syria). Other Palestinians took residence in various Arab countries and many have immigrated to Europe and North America.

In the period 1949-56, three types of Palestinians tried to cross the border into Israel: terrorists (called at the time Fedayeen), smugglers and people seeking to (illegally) return to their homes. (The terrorist activity of this period was very extensive, see Section 6.)

PLO. Formed in 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) is a loose federation of many (mostly leftist) organizations, which is dominated since 1968 by the largest mainstream organization, called al-Fatah. Till 1968 PLO followed the strategy of relying on the armies of the

Arab states to reconquer Palestine. The strategy was changed in the late 1960's when the PLO began to assume primary responsibility for the Palestinian people and asserted its independence of the Arab states (although it continued to be hosted and manipulated by them). The PLO gained the support of the Palestinian people by assuming responsibility for civil life in the Palestinian refugee camps and by launching a series of "spectacular" terror attacks on Israeli targets (both within Israel/Palestine and outside of it).

In 1974 the PLO was recognized by the Arab League and consequently by the international community as the *sole representative of the Palestinian people*. At that time, PLO also changed its strategy from a focus on terrorist attacks to combining such attacks (now confined to Israel/Palestine) with willingness to negotiate (with Israel). For more than a decade, PLO has maintained ambiguity as to whether this willingness means a recognition of Israel's right to exist. In 1988, such a formal declaration was made, a month after rhetorically declaring Palestinian independence. Indirect negotiations with Israel started in 1991 (under Israel's pretense that it negotiates with the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to the Middle East Peace Conference), whereas direct secret negotiations lead to the Oslo Declaration of Principles (1993).

The Palestinian-Arabs in Israel. During the period 1949-65 almost all the Arab population (of Israel) was under a Martial Rule, although its members were citizens of Israel. In the elections of that period, this population used to vote mainly for "puppet parties" that were linked to the ruling left-wing. In 1969 the situation changed, and the Arab population began supporting the bi-national communist party (which, in turn, was deserted by most of its Jewish voters).

(Formed in the early 1920's, by the Jewish Communists mentioned in Section 3.1, the (bi-national) communist party remained committed to a non-Zionist agenda and encouraged bi-national membership and action throughout its entire existence. However, till 1967 its main support was in the Jewish sector, giving it 2.5-4% of the votes. Since then, the Jewish support has declined to roughly 0.1% nowadays, whereas the Arab support maintained its total support of 2.5-4% of the population. The party is in decline in the last decade, losing votes to Arab nationalist parties, because it refuses to identify itself as an Arab party but rather remains committed to a bi-national platform.) (Proper disclosure: I voted for this party in the last two elections.)

In 30.3.76 (the "Day of the Land"), the Arab population decided to protest against massive confiscation of its land (for army usage). Such confiscations have occurred in the past, what was special about that date is the decision to mount a massive protest in the Arab sector, which resulted in four dead Arabs. The date is commemorated since in a yearly assemblies and demonstrations.

In the 1980's, independent Arab parties were formed, and support started shifting from the bi-national communist party to these parties. In the 1999 elections, the latter parties obtained 6.1% of the total vote, whereas the bi-national communist party got 2.6%. (A small portion of the "Arab vote" goes to Zionist parties, even religious ones, in attempt to please the ministers (esp., the one of Interior Affairs) that control most aspects of local life; see Section 5.4.) It is estimated that a third of the Arab population boycotted the 2003 elections, demonstrating loss of faith in the Israeli political system. Anyhow, in the 2003 elections the Arab parties got 4.3% of the vote while the bi-national got 3%.

Note: In the 1980's, in attempt to reduce the influence of PLO in the occupied territories and of the bi-national communist party in Israel, the Israeli government has encouraged the development and growth of various Islamic groups.

12 Israel's Security Concerns: a neurosis and an excuse

I am aware of the fact that "national psychoanalysis" has been out of fashion for ages. Still, I believe that it provides an explanation for phenomena that cannot be explained otherwise. In particular, I claim that almost all of Israel's "security concerns" are not real. They are either a playing out of a national neurosis or an excuse for any atrocity.

The neurosis (as usual) is rooted in a traumatic past, and constitutes of an anxiety of being defenseless and helpless. The neurotic solution is an obsession with acquiring power and being in control. Often, actions are aimed at dealing with the anxiety rather than addressing the actual reality.

(Needless to say, the past is really traumatic, but acting out of the trauma in the present is nothing but a classical neurotic solution.)

It is possible to tell when Israel is acting out of a neurotic state and when it uses security concerns as an excuse. A good indication is how much planning is involved in the action and whether there exists an alternative rationale (even a bad one; typically, submitting to pressures of the settlers) for the action. (Indeed, the same applies to ordinary neurosis...)

As is the case with standard neurosis, determining that in a certain case Israel is acting out of a neurotic state does not really solve the problem. Typically, the solution of letting it act this way is not reasonable and there is a need to confront the neurosis.

13 Speculations about the Future

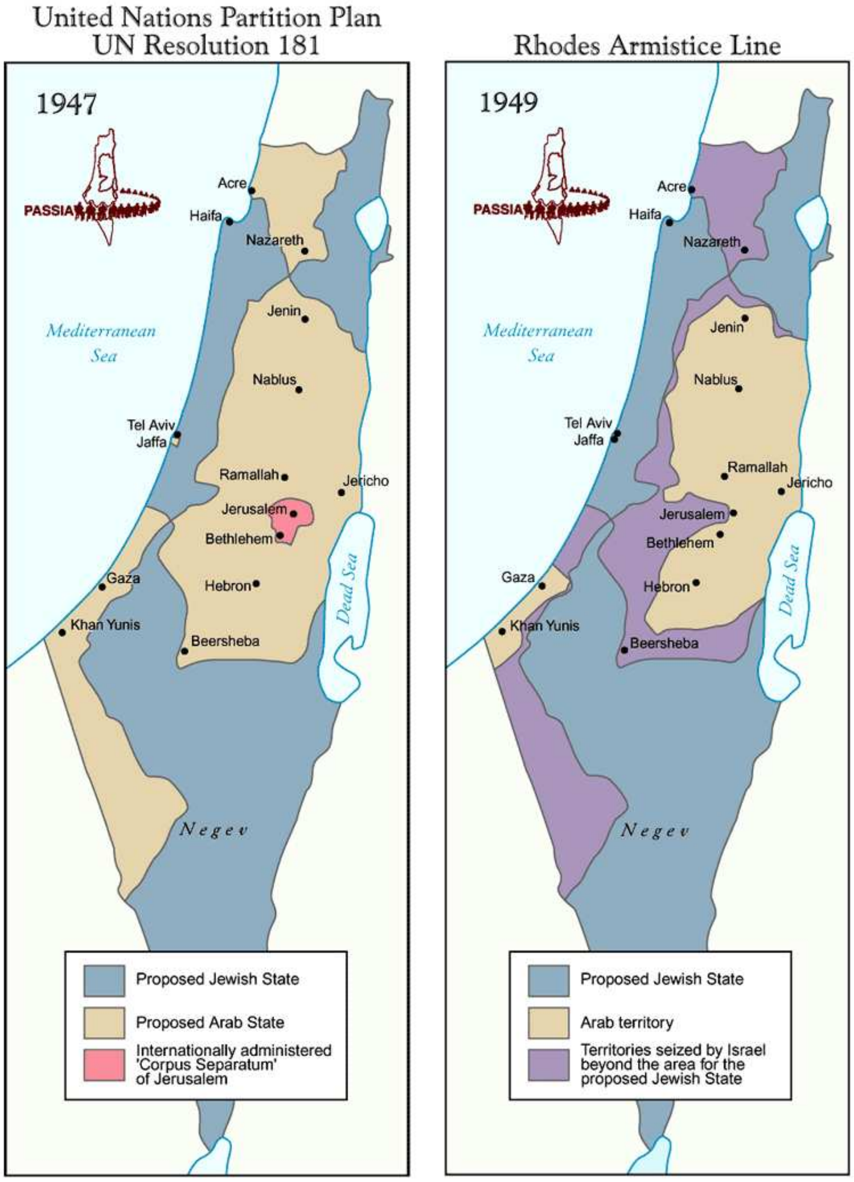
Following are three theoretically-possible scenarios. As usual, the actual future may well be something else...

The latter day scenario: Israel will realize that its actions are both morally wrong and politically silly, and will wholeheartedly adopt the solution outlined in Section 9.1. Peace will come to the region.

A less remote possibility: Severe pressure of the US will force Israel to withdraw from almost all the territories and there may even be a forced peace treaty (which both parties will hate). This will be a great improvement over the current situation, but it will not eliminate the massive mutual hatred. Maybe the latter will decline with time.

The realistic scenario: I don't see the forces leading to either of the two aforementioned positive scenarios. I only see the negative forces gaining more power. Palestinians will continue to survive in sub-Human conditions. The Israeli society will become even more brutal and immoral. (Among the next targets of the evil forces in Israel are the Supreme Court and the Academia, which are still relatively reasonable.)

Maps



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