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Formulas for Partition, Fragmented Maps, Yet No Solution

Mahdi Abdul Hadi

The author traces the history of the partition formula in Israel and Palestine, beginning with the 1937 British “Peel Commission” through the decades to the June War of 1967 and, almost a decade later, President Jimmy Carter’s mention of a “Palestinian homeland.” The Reagan Plan followed, and the 1980s witnessed a flood of political formulas that attempted to manage the conflict. In the 1990s, in light of the post-Cold War era, a “culture of recognition and reconciliation” was introduced and with it, hopeful times. But the more recent efforts to bring the partition formula back, introduced against a background of a “New World Order” are characterized by concern about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the war against terrorism. The Road Map, similar to previous formulas, is examined and the Israeli and the Palestinian position are described.





The geography of Palestine has suffered greatly because of the many negative changes that have occurred throughout the longest conflict in modern history. The many complex events that have unfolded over the last hundred years have clouded people’s memories and confused their perceptions and have made it difficult if not impossible to agree upon the reasons why there has not been an end to the Palestinian-Israeli problem. One thing, however, is clear; no attempt to divide what is called the Holy Land, the Promised Land, or the Blessed Land (terminology used by the three monotheistic faiths) between Palestinians and Israelis can be considered to be anything resembling a success.

Partition Formula

The history of the partition formula begins in 1937, when the partition idea was brought up officially by the British Peel Commission, which had studied the crisis in the wake of the 1936 Palestinian Revolt against Jewish immigration and British Mandate policies. The Commission concluded that the Mandate was unworkable, that Arabs and Jews would not live in peace together in one state, and that the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state was the only solution. But the Peel Partition Plan failed to bring peace or stability or end the crisis.

Among the many reasons for failure of the British formula was that the proposal ignored the Palestinian’s right to self-determination by stating that the part of

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Mandate Palestine allotted to the Palestinians should not be independent, sovereign, and viable, but that it should be associated or unified with another Arab country, that is, with Trans-Jordan. In addition, the British and the Zionist movement underestimated the resilience of the Palestinian people, their leadership, and the constituents of the national committees when they banned all the national committees, including the Arab Higher Committee headed by the Grand Mufti of Palestine. It is worth mentioning that it was under the joint leadership of the Mufti, political elites, and the various national committees that the Palestinian struggle for statehood and independence continued for so many decades.

Ten years later, the partition formula was proposed again with UN Resolution 181 of 1947. The 1947 Partition Plan allocated 43 percent of the land to the Arab State and 57 percent to the Jewish State — this at a time when Jews comprised only one-third of the total population and were in control of only 7 percent of the land. Shortly after publication of the plan the first Arab-Israeli war took place, and the State of Israel was established in 1948. During the course of the war the West Bank fell under Jordanian control and the Gaza Strip under the Egyptian control.

Among the many reasons why the partition resolution failed to provide a foundation for a settlement was the denial of the Palestinian right to self-determination, the underestimation of the deep-rooted Palestinian identity, and the imbalance in the amount of land allocated for each state. Moreover, in yet another attempt on the part of British, Jewish, and Arab leaders to bypass the Palestinian people and their leadership, the land allocated to the Palestinians (or what was left of it after the War of 1948) was again not to be sovereign and independent, but to be associated with neighboring Arab states. This plan was destined to be unacceptable: the strongly nationalist Palestinians would not be assimilated into “brotherly” Arab identities such as those of Jordan and Egypt.

Another partition formula was proposed in 1962, this time by the UN special representative Dr. Joseph E. Johnson, who, in the 1950s, had been involved in a mission regarding the water crisis in the Arab basin region. When Johnson presented his plan for the Palestinian refugee problem, he insisted on UN Resolution 194, which allowed Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, and called for the implementation of the 1947 Partition Plan, which was, in his view, the only “proper basis for an equitable solution to the tragic problem.”

Israel continued to refuse to acknowledge the Palestinians as a nation and to deal with their leadership directly. This denial of their basic political and human rights including the right to self-determination has been and will continue to be the major obstacle to mutual recognition and reconciliation. Meanwhile, in the 1960s, Arab heads of state continued their verbal and sloganistic boycott of Israel, competing with each other for Arab leadership with the most radical position. They failed to present alternative plans to prevent Israel from diverting the waters of the Jordan River and failed to improve the tragic situation of the Palestinian refugees in their host countries.

Realizing their weakness and the need for an alternative method for facing Israeli challenges, the Arab states invited a Palestinian partner to carry some of their responsibilities toward the “Palestine Question.” Thus, at an Arab League meeting in May 1964, Arab leaders decided to appoint a Palestinian representative, Ahmad Shuqeiri, and to reconstitute the Palestinian entity by establishing the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) with headquarters in Arab East Jerusalem.

The notion of partition made headlines again in April 1965, when Tunisian

President Habib Bourguiba visited Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and called for a settlement of the conflict through a two-state solution, to be negotiated between Arabs and Israel, based on the 1947 Partition Plan. But thanks to Israel's continuing refusal to acknowledge the fact that Palestinians were people with historical, national, and political rights, this initiative, like its predecessors, was destined to fail. Instead, the Israelis preferred separate, direct, and bilateral negotiations with Arab states, as voiced then by Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban and Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, among others.

It is worth noting that Arab leaders, too, rejected Bourguiba's proposals based on their old position of not accepting the Partition Plan. They preferred to leave the newly established PLO to establish its constituency and they tried to contain other emerging Palestinian organizations such as the Fateh movement. The organizations in question established political and military bases in the Gulf countries and insisted on developing and having recognized an independent Palestinian agenda as well the right to make their own decisions with regard to the future of Palestine. They also called for a new era of resistance to the State of Israel.

With the June War of 1967, in the course of which Israeli forces occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as the Syrian Golan Heights and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, it soon became clear that the implementation of the partition formula was becoming increasingly impossible. Nevertheless, UN Security Council Resolution 242 (June 1967) called for the "withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict," the "termination of all claims or states of belligerency," and "a just settlement for the refugee problem."

The War of 1967 was followed by further regional conflicts, including the October War of 1973, which killed and injured thousands. At the same time, Israel, while vehemently rejecting the notion of a Palestinian state, began to pursue a policy of creating "facts on the ground" through the annexation and confiscation of occupied land and the building of settlements. The Arab leaders meanwhile, called for the implementation of Resolution 242, while the new PLO leadership under Chairman Arafat (after 1969) demanded recognition of the right to self-determination, the right to return, and the establishment of an independent state on Palestinian soil.

Over the years, numerous mediators made countless attempts to solve the conflict and to deploy international peacekeeping forces in the region, but all initiatives were weak, incomplete, and short-lived. Examples include the Rogers Plan of June 1970, the Sadat Initiative of February 1971, and the Geneva Conference of 1973.

Almost a decade after the June war, the notion of partition was back in the limelight following a speech by U.S. President Jimmy Carter on March 16, 1977, in which he mentioned a "Palestinian homeland," a term that had never before been used by an American official. His three basic principles for a comprehensive Middle East peace were as follows:

- normal relations, for example, trade and the exchange of diplomats;
- security arrangements for all parties; and
- finding solutions to the political and humanitarian aspects of the Palestinian problem.

Again, the efforts to end the conflict and establish a Palestinian state did not succeed. Israel not only rejected the idea of establishing a Palestinian state but also refused to deal directly with or even recognize the PLO, all the while insisting that

the Palestinians should enter a confederation with Jordan. The Palestinian political elite, academics, and activists working within a climate of fear and uncertainty, found themselves in an endless round of dialogue sessions.

In addition, other historic initiatives, such as the 1978 Camp David Accords and the subsequent Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of March 1979, accepted Israel as an independent state but came short of recognizing the right of the Palestinians to statehood. Nor did it allow the PLO (as the representative of the Palestinians) to share and contribute to the negotiated settlement. Instead, Palestinian political goals were reduced to a five-year autonomy plan in cooperation with Jordan.

Another severe setback to Palestinian aspirations toward statehood was the formula of U.S. President Ronald Reagan, introduced on September 1, 1982. It stated that the United States would oppose both Israeli annexation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Again, Palestinian self-government in the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan was the preferred alternative. There were, however, a few positive aspects when it came to the U.S. position. These included the calls for freezing Israeli settlement-building during the transitional period, calls for real Palestinian authority over the Palestinian land and resources, and calls for Palestinians living in East Jerusalem to be allowed to vote in elections for a self-governing authority.

Israel, now under Prime Minister Begin, immediately rejected the Reagan Plan, while Defense Minister Sharon “hoped that the defeat of the PLO in Lebanon would enable him to dictate his own terms in the negotiations on the future of the OPT (occupied Palestine territory). . . and give Israel unchallenged control over the West Bank”¹ Not long afterwards, Sharon launched the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, during which “at least 21,000 Palestinians and Lebanese were killed and more than 600,000 were rendered homeless.”²

The overall response of the Arab governments to the Reagan Plan was fairly positive. The Palestinians and their leadership, on the other hand, rejected the Jordanian trusteeship role and considered the plan a supplement to Camp David, which had failed to grant them an independent state.

The 1980s witnessed a flood of political formulas — exercises in “conflict management” with the aim of setting the stage for a breakthrough and an eventual settlement. Examples include some that originated from the Arab World (including from the Palestinians themselves) such as the “Eight-Point Plan” of the Fez summit of September 1982, the Palestinian and Jordanian Accords of February 1985, and the clear agenda of the Palestinian National Council sessions in Algeria (the 18th session in April 1987, and the 19th session in November 1988, during which the fourteen points mentioned in the first Intifada leaflet of February 1988 were adopted).

All of these formulas, without exception, called for an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the resolving of the refugee issue in accordance with UN resolutions. As for the two superpowers, they came with separate initiatives: a Six-Point Plan with the same essence as the Arab-Palestinian formulas, presented by President Brezhnev of the U.S.S.R. in September 1982, and the initiative of U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, presented on March 4, 1988, which called for peace negotiations based on Resolutions 242 and 338 between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

As for the Israelis, their position with regard to various initiatives of the 1980s

was consistently negative: NO to dismantling the settlements, NO to a Palestinian state, NO to sharing Jerusalem, and NO to the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

But the 1990s witnessed several major historical changes. Many states began a process of reshaping their relations and developing new policies in light of the new post-Cold War era. A “culture of recognition and reconciliation” was consequently introduced to the parties involved in the Middle East conflict. Some, however, had doubts concerning the feasibility of this approach to end the conflict, while others found themselves sinking into the details. Among the major events that took place around this time were the Palestinian Intifada of 1987–93, the fall of the Berlin Wall (November 9, 1989), the Gulf crisis (August 2, 1990 to February 28, 1991), the beefing up of the U.S. military presence in the region, and the fall of the Soviet Union.

Following U.S. President George Bush’s call for a Middle East peace conference (held on October 31, 1991, in Madrid) based on the “land for peace” formula, Europe, Russia, the Arab States, the Palestinians, and Israel all participated in collective efforts to reach a settlement. But although the Palestinians and Israelis were both active participants in the meetings, dialogue sessions, negotiations, and the drafting of joint statements between 1988 and 1999, Israel continued its settlement expansion (the number of settlers in the OPTs doubled during the 1990s), while the Palestinians continued with their Intifadas, that is, civil and armed resistance. Nevertheless, the countless meetings that took place in this period succeeded in leading to a breakthrough and exposing taboos relating to the major issues, that is, the geography of the future Palestinian state, the identity of settlers in a two-state solution, the future of Jerusalem, and that of the Palestinian refugees.

The negotiations that followed Madrid and that were hosted by the U.S. State Department in Washington in 1991 were challenged by the “holy document” of the Israeli autonomy plan, based on former Prime Minister Begin’s thesis at Camp David in 1978. This plan was countered by a document from the “inside Palestinians” calling for a “Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority” or PISGA, and endorsed, albeit reluctantly, by the PLO leadership based in Tunis at that time.

The presenting of the Palestinian counter-document preceded the opening of several secret channels, one of which delivered the “Declaration of Principles” of Oslo in 1993. All these events helped to facilitate a process whereby the two leaders, Rabin and Arafat, eventually found themselves agreeing to a formal, public and joint meeting, which was manifested in the signing of the Oslo accords between the PLO and the Government of Israel at the White House in September 1993.

To judge whether this recognition really was a breakthrough and should be considered historic, it is necessary to examine the two very different contexts in which the Palestinians and Israelis found themselves at the time, as well as their leaders’ political agendas. Rabin was challenged to face the rising power of the Islamic movement, and he responded by deporting more than four hundred of their leaders to South Lebanon, while the PLO remained isolated and crippled in Tunis, challenged not only by the Islamists but also by the local political leadership in the Occupied Territories who were leading the negotiations in Madrid and who stood to gain power if an agreement were reached.

Of further significance is the change in the global balance of power following the first Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The many uncompleted formulas, such as Oslo I and II (1994–95), Wye River (1997), Sharm Esh-Sheikh

(1999), Camp David II (July 2000), and Taba (2001), were too short-lived in the light of continuous settlement expansion and Israeli military control.

The 1990s chapter concluded with a last minute attempt by President Clinton to reach a final agreement with his “parameters” of December 2000. Because his term in office was coming to an end, there was insufficient time to negotiate them and there were no guarantees that the succeeding administration would adopt the Clinton proposals — another major cause of reluctance on both sides.

The Road Map

Recent efforts to bring the partition formula back on track were introduced against the background of a “New World Order,” an era characterized by widespread concern regarding economic development and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region as well as the war against terrorism and the drive to contain Islamic movements. Interest in these issues, particularly on the part of the United States, became all the more acute following the events of September 11, 2001.

The suicide attacks that shook New York and Washington empowered the U.S. administration under President Bush and led to engagement in the Middle East “mud” and a new military agenda, that is, the invasion, occupation, and control of both Afghanistan and Iraq. This was accompanied by a new political formula for dividing the Holy Land. Worthy of mention is the fact that the formula in question, “A Performance-Based and Goal-Driven Road Map,”³ is in many regards very similar to previous formulas proposed by other international mediators, all of whom came to the following conclusions:

- A secular bi-national state solution will not fulfill Zionist desires for an exclusively “Jewish” state;
- The continuous control of one party by another, no matter how long (in this case, over fifty years) or how brutal and bloody (over half a million Palestinians have been imprisoned, thousands killed, and over three million turned into refugees or exiles), is incapable of bringing stability to the State of Israel or to the region as a whole;
- The attempts to maintain the status quo with its demographic and security threat to the Jewish state and the continuous denial of Palestinian rights cannot be ignored any longer, and therefore;
- The only realistic formula involves somehow partitioning the land, containing Israel’s appetite for territory, and partially meeting Palestinian aspirations.

The latest initiative was launched with the famous speech made by President George W. Bush on June 24, 2002, supported by EU, Russia, and the UN, when the ongoing second Palestinian Intifada, which broke out in September 2000, was almost two years old. In his speech, President Bush spelled out an American “vision” for a permanent settlement negotiated between the parties, stating that the hoped-for result was the “emergence of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel.” This notion was later manifested in the form of the “road map” officially presented on June 4, 2003, at a mini-summit in Aqaba, hosted by Jordan’s King Abdullah, chaired by President

Bush, and limited to the Israeli and Palestinian prime ministers (Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas).

The “road map” showed the importance of the connection between the three main components of the conflict, namely, the land, that is, the land involved in the “occupation that began in 1967”; the people, including the refugees (among other things, it called for an agreed, just, fair, and realistic solution to the refugee issues); and their main symbol, that is, the question of Jerusalem with all its political, religious, and societal aspects. The road map also reminded people of the basis on which the negotiations should focus: UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 348, and 1397, as well as the need for “clear phases,” timelines, target dates, and benchmarks.

The purpose was to facilitate the taking of reciprocal steps by the two parties toward the political, security, economic, humanitarian, and institution-building goals. As to the ultimate aim of the road map, it was a “final and comprehensive settlement of the conflict by 2005” based on a full two-state solution, starting with an end to Palestinian “terrorism” and a freeze on Israeli settlement building and expansion.

The Aqaba summit coincided with the thirty-sixth anniversary of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and this served to highlight the widespread doubts that the road map would really open a new window of hope, especially in light of the United States’ military, economic, and political domination of the region.⁴ Another major cause for concern was the fourteen Israeli reservations relating to the road map, which were being considered by the United States and their potential to scuttle the agreement. This is similar to what happened to UN Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967, whose correct interpretation is yet to be agreed upon, especially with regard to the inclusion or exclusion of the term “the Occupied Territories,” from which the Israeli forces should withdraw, and exactly what constitutes “a just settlement” to the refugee issue.

Israel’s Position

The Israeli Government once again ignored or distorted the essence of the three basic components of the conflict. Sharon suggested, with regard to the question of land, that the West Bank and Gaza be further divided with the establishment of a Palestinian state in 42 percent of the West Bank, excluding Jerusalem (equivalent to less than 9 percent of the area of British Mandate Palestine). In essence what he was calling for was for some 400,000 Israeli settlers, whose built-up areas in 200 colonies currently consume 1.6 percent of the West Bank territory, excluding East Jerusalem, to establish a “settler state” in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, home to 3.5 million indigenous Palestinians.⁵

The Israeli Government’s response to the road map has been to excessively implement the “Three G’s” security doctrine — gates, guards, and guns. The Israeli gates took the form of more than one hundred check-points, which effectively close off all Palestinian cities, towns, and refugee camps; to make matters worse, Israel, after constructing its huge “security” wall, permitted the operation of only fourteen gates among a total of forty-one (which it continues to claim are accessible). In short, Israel has attempted to contain and humiliate 3.5 million Palestinians while imprisoning more than 7,000 individuals, including the PLO and PA elected leader, Yasser Arafat, who has been kept a prisoner at his offices at Al-Muqata’a in Ramallah for the last two years.

At the same time, it has continued to enforce the crippling closure with its unilateral separation plan, one of whose physical manifestations is the so-called “security” or “apartheid” wall mentioned above, the purpose of which has little to do with security and far more to do with dividing Palestinian land and destroying Palestinian infrastructure as well as neutralizing any aspirations for statehood by isolating numerous Palestinian villages and threatening a number of major Palestinian cities.⁶

Judging by the Israeli interpretation of the road map and its subsequent response, one can only conclude that the two-state solution idea is dead and has been replaced, in Israel’s mind at least, by the idea of an Israeli-controlled apartheid regime, which for all intents and purposes already exists.

The Palestinian Position

The Palestinian leadership, having accepted all the recent plans presented by the United States, that is, the Mitchell Report, the George Tenet (of the CIA) plan, and General Zinni’s security proposal, decided to accept the Quartet’s road map as presented.⁷

Among other things, the Quartet pressured the Palestinian leadership to amend the Basic Law and appoint a Palestinian Prime Minister to share, if not take over at a later stage, the authority of President Arafat, who has been referred to by U.S. President George W. Bush as “irrelevant” and someone who “must be replaced.” In the midst of a political storm in the Palestinian house and, in particular, in the mainstream Fateh movement, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), one of the architects of the Oslo Accords of 1993, was appointed Prime Minister in March 2003 and confirmed as the first Palestinian Prime Minister the following April, at which point a new government was also announced.

During the 1990s, the Palestinian National Movement saw the development of several political factions and the disappearance of others. The major factions that succeeded in maintaining and empowering their strong hold on the Palestinian soil while expanding their constituencies were the mainstream Fateh movement, which probably represents 40–45 percent of the Palestinian society, the Islamic groups, which represent roughly 18–20 percent of the society, and a third group, the self-proclaimed independents and professionals working mainly in the private sector and in various organizations including the NGOs, which enjoy the support of 10–15 percent of the society. The members of the last group, for the most part, have chosen to remain silent and to “wait and see” before declaring their loyalties and political affiliations. As to the secular opposition, it is embodied in groups that, although small, have relatively loud voices and classical leftist slogans; for example, the People’s Party (ex-Communist party), the Democratic Party for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

The Fateh establishment, which has been led for the past four decades by President Arafat, today includes the “Old Guard” of the Muqawama resistance groups, who still cling to the seeds of power at the Central Council. There are also the professionals and businessmen who represent the bulk of the returnee elites and who have succeeded in monopolizing the economy with the help of the Palestinian security apparatus. Finally, there is the young generation of the Palestinian Intifada society of 1988 and the Tanzim and Al-Aqsa Brigades activists who are carrying the responsibilities and burden of the current Intifada, in addition to approximately 70 percent of the members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and most of the

120,000 employees of the PA governmental institutions.

Arafat's Fateh regime has been characterized, since 1994, as yet another authoritarian Arab regime, complete with ruthless security forces and censorship. As a result, many people expected that the Palestinian society's call for reforms would undoubtedly lead to an internal crisis with only limited changes and a continuous power struggle within the Fateh movement.

The Palestinian NGOs, having appreciated the benefits of calling for reforms at the same time as similar calls were originating from the United States, Europe, and Israel, have recently become increasingly vocal about their demand for a new leadership and comprehensive reforms. Such calls have not been in vain. President Arafat signed the Basic Law in May 2002, while a newly appointed professional committee introduced another new draft for the Palestinian Constitution in December 2002 and made it accessible to the public in January 2003.

Recently, the members of the various Fateh groups have found themselves at a delicate stage, especially in terms of their loyalty and their political interests, and are having to choose between two very different schools of thought and two very different leaders; the old school of Arafat's leadership and its banner, "Revolution until victory," on the one hand and the emerging "realistic" approach of the Prime Minister's Office with its banner, "Dialogue and negotiations toward statehood" on the other.

In spite of the many complaints from members of the various groups within Fateh about the problems they are facing in adjusting to a "realistic" and pragmatic style of governing, they nonetheless continue to hope that the government will be able to deliver when it comes to at least some of the Palestinian demands. In particular they hope that progress will be possible with regard to freedom of movement, the dismantling of outposts and settlements, and the release of prisoners, as well as in terms of fighting against Sharon's "apartheid wall" and facilitating the much-needed governance, political, and security reforms. Yet, on the other hand, they still have no other historical leader or symbol apart from Arafat.

The second political tribe, that consisting of the Islamic groups, denounces the road map as a plot intended to end the Intifada without any Palestinian gains having been achieved. At the same time, small leftist opposition groups refer to the road map as a fraud, supporting their argument by pointing to the continuing Israeli incursions into Palestinian cities and refugee camps as well as Israel's record of assassinating Palestinian political activists and the continuous expansion of the settlement project.

Although the Islamic and secular opposition groups, due to both internal and external pressure, agreed to sign an agreement with the PA concerning a three-month military truce, the acceptance was conditional on Israel fulfilling its obligations as outlined in the road map — obligations that have yet to be met. What this means is that the truce, or "hudna," will remain fragile and easily shaken by violations by either side, which, if severe enough, will have the potential to render it totally meaningless.

As to the third visible component in the Palestinian society, that comprising the "independents," "leftists," and pan-Arab nationalists, it consists mainly of professionals from the private sector and NGOs as well as academics and silent observers. With an agenda based on the need to promote and facilitate political, economic, security, and governance reforms with the aim of creating a culture of democracy and the rule of law, the members of this particular group have found themselves

caught between the two major political tribes of Fateh and Hamas with little ability to challenge them. These groups began calling for local elections and municipalities to bring a new generation of leaders into civil society and to empower them to meet the daily needs of the community in the absence of a political solution.

Because of all the things mentioned above, the Palestinian leadership is eager for Israel to take much-needed confidence-building measures that will enable it to convince the average Palestinian of the need to embrace the new “negotiation-based” culture, which will, it is hoped, result in the cessation of the bleeding in both societies, the two peoples being brought together, and an environment characterized not by bloodshed and animosity but by coexistence and reconciliation.

A New Formula in the Making

It becomes clear, upon looking at the fate of all the aforementioned attempts and fragmented plans to divide historic Palestine into two separate entities, that the road to relative peace and some security can only be built on equality, in the absence of which, the road to a settlement will be full of hurdles and will undoubtedly lead to a dead end.

A theory being discussed in the current dead end environment suggests that Palestinians and Israelis are living in a “Binational Condition,” that is, the two peoples have become so intertwined with one another that a two-state solution is no longer possible. Instead, the situation on the ground is an apartheid-style regime where Israel colonizes and controls the land and the people and is the only sovereign power while the Palestinians are pushed into “cantons” and are denied dignity, the right to true self-determination, and other basic freedoms and rights. The only way forward on this model is for Palestinians to demand equal citizenship of the sovereign state (Israel) — a non-partition approach.

In addition to the above-mentioned road map, a number of other scenarios have been put forward. The first is the Clinton Parameters of 2000, which were left on the shelf after Barak’s Labor government left office and with Arafat’s sulky position upon his return to Ramallah. The next is the Nusseibeh/Ayalon Guidelines of 2002, which are very much a personal plan and lack popular backing. Likud opposes them and most Palestinians have doubts about them. Finally the Geneva Accords (Berlin — Abed Rabbo) of 2003, which were warmly welcomed by Western wishful thinkers as offering a window of hope but are strongly rejected by Sharon. All of these plans call for the division of the land into two states, with a Palestinian entity in most of the West Bank and Gaza, and the removal of settlements and Israeli military control.

The current Palestinian Prime Minister, Ahmed Qreia (Abu Ala’), has admitted publicly that he has no power to meet the basic needs of the Palestinian people. The separation wall is creating a de facto border between Israel and the West Bank/Gaza Strip and confining the Palestinian people to less than 40 percent of the Occupied Territories. The Israeli colonization process with its brutal military incursions and wanton destruction is preventing any possibility of an official meeting to negotiate a formula for a two-state settlement.

The Prime Minister has made a clear statement that Israel’s actions are leading the Palestinians to shift from demanding their own independent state to demanding one,

binational state with equal citizenship, that is, “if I can’t have a room of my own, then we have to share the house.” This very pragmatic approach has met with a surprise message from the Islamic groups.

They have signaled that they are moving from the old call for an Islamic state in all of Palestine, to the position the PLO has adopted for the last four decades — a Palestine state in the West Bank and Gaza with East Jerusalem as its capital, the implementation of UN Resolution 194 on the refugee question, and the removal of all the settlements. These developments are new political challenges to Israel’s existence as a Jewish state and also to the PLO. The Islamic movement is saying that if the secular PLO “can’t build a state or deliver a solution then we will.” In other words, they are suggesting that they will assume control not only over negotiations and leadership, but they will govern as well. In two recent episodes (at the Cairo talks, and through informal contacts with U.S. officials) the Hamas leadership requested a “share of political power” in the territories.

Justice relates to Palestinian rights on Palestinian soil. Equality, meanwhile, relates to the need for the existence of a single law to govern the relationship between the two peoples, one that is free of double standards. As to fairness, it relates to the need for mediators who, no matter how powerful, are prepared to act in a fair and unbiased manner, to enforce the implementation of what has been agreed upon, to help build trust and confidence, and to refrain from taking detours and bypass roads because of short-lived political games and personal interests.

The Arab leaders, including the Palestinians, have officially invited the Israelis to become fully recognized and equal citizens in the Middle East, yet Sharon declined the offer. The Israelis have been offered 78 percent of historical Palestine in return for an independent and sovereign Palestinian state in only 22 percent of the Palestinian homeland, but again Sharon declined. Rather than accept those offers, he chose instead to deny the rights of the Palestinian people, so obsessed was he with the exclusiveness thesis and the seemingly inherent need to control others while cultivating a revenge-oriented culture. What this means, in simple terms, is that the fear and animosity that exist today will most probably continue to haunt the people of the Holy Land for many years to come. It also means that the fate of the most recent attempt to divide the Holy Land, namely, the road map will be similar if not identical to that of previous formulas. ❁

Notes

1. Shalom Avi, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 401.
2. *The Palestine Question in Maps 1878–2002* (PASSIA Publication, August 2002), 60.
3. U.S. Department of State press statement, Washington, D.C., April 30, 2003.
4. “I urge nations throughout the region to open their market, to seek broader trade in the world and to join us in creating a US-Middle East area within a decade.” Statement of U.S. President Bush following a summit with Arab leaders at Sharm Esh-Sheikh, Egypt, June 4, 2003.
5. “What’s being proposed is a regime of ethnic cantons inside a political unit comparable to the old South Africa,” Meron Benvenisti, *Ha’aretz*, June 19, 2003.
6. “More than 200,000 Palestinians are trapped on the Israeli side of the barrier, or it cuts through their town as in Jayous village, which is one of 51 villages isolated from its land.” Nicole Gaouette, *Christian Science Monitor*, August 14, 2003. “The barrier detours into the West Bank and takes almost 30,500 acres of the land on to the Israeli side, nearly two percent of the West Bank.” Nicole Gaouette, *Christian Science Monitor*, August 14, 2003.

7. On October 17, 2000, at the conclusion of the Middle East Peace Summit at Sharm Esh-Sheikh, Egypt, the participants — Israel, the PA, Egypt, Jordan, and the U.S., the UN, and the EU—decided to establish a fact-finding committee to look into the events (outbreak of the Intifada) of the past several weeks and how to prevent their recurrence. The committee was made up of the following members: Suleyman Demirel, 9th President of the Republic of Turkey, Thorbjørn Jagland, PM of Norway, George J. Mitchell, Chairman, former member and Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate, Warren B. Rudman, former member of the U.S. Senate, and Javier Solana, High Representative for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Mitchell report was completed on April 30, 2001 and published on May 20, 2001.