

<i>V. State-Building Identity, Pluralism and Participation</i>	163
Identity, Pluralism and the Palestinian Experience <i>Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi</i>	163
State-Building, Identity, Pluralism and Participation in Jordan <i>Dr. Mustafa Hamarneh</i>	172
From 'State Within State' to State <i>Dr. David Vital</i>	176

V. STATE-BUILDING, IDENTITY, PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION

Identity, Pluralism and the Palestinian Experience

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The historical, geographical and demographic entity called Palestine is an integral part of the Arab homeland. It was governed for over four centuries by the Ottomans. As early as 1904, the Palestinians joined the other Arab peoples in sharing a heightened consciousness with regard to their various interrelated identities - i.e., religious, cultural, national, political and regional - and thus became a part of what is commonly referred to as the 'Arab awakening'. The 'awakening' resulted in the struggle against Ottoman-Turkish rule in order to achieve a recognized Arab entity on Arab soil and widespread cultural freedom.

National movements in Egypt, Iraq, Syria and other parts of the Arab World succeeded in achieving self-determination, and consequently established a recognized state. For Palestine, it would have been only a matter of time, were it not for the fact that the Palestinians were confronted with the interests and resulting policies of the Western allies, most of which reflected their strong support of the Jewish question, embodied in the Zionist movement.

The British occupation and the subsequent mandate over Palestine, which lasted from 1917 to 1947, were favorable to the establishment of a Jewish entity in Palestine as opposed to the interests and well-being of the Palestinian people. During those years, the national consciousness of the Palestinians, especially with regard to a shared identity, was reflected in three dimensions:

- 1) a sense of belonging to the Palestinian territory and sharing the Palestinian aspirations regarding statehood;
- 2) the Arab heritage of the people, rooted in the Islamic culture; and
- 3) widespread rejection of and resistance against the policies of the British Mandate and Zionist immigration to Palestine.

The first dimension was crystallized in the formation of political parties, the convening of national conferences, and the legitimization of a political leadership comprising the intellectual elite and religious notables.

The second dimension was expressed in an advanced Palestinian media, and was discussed in conferences and cultural institutions that called for Arab support of the Palestinian cause, whilst warning that if Palestine were to fall in the hands of the Zionist movement, the rest of the Arab countries would be at stake. Another aspect of this dimension involved an atmosphere of reciprocity, according to which Palestinians took part in the defense of other Arab countries whilst continuing their state-building processes. They participated, for example, in the Syrian struggle against the French Mandate, in particular in the 1925 revolt. They were also involved in the building of the political, social and cultural system of Jordan in the early days of 1921.

The third dimension was manifested in the various Palestinian revolts and uprisings against both British and Zionist police, namely in 1921, 1933, 1936, and 1939.

All three components mentioned above played a vital role in shaping the Palestinian identity.

By November 1947, the partition solution was advocated and imposed on Palestine against the will of its people. Palestine was to be divided into two states - one Jewish, one Arab - while the heart of the country, Jerusalem, was to be internationalized. The first Arab-Israeli war of 1947/48 ended not with the establishment of a Palestinian state, but with the defeat of the Arab armies and the uprooting, expulsion and dispersal of the Palestinian people. Having thus become stateless and homeless, the Palestinians found themselves either governed by the Arab armies on the West Bank or the Egyptian forces in Gaza, or refugees in neighboring Arab host countries.

During the years 1948-67, the international community addressed the Palestine cause as a refugee question. Meanwhile, the Palestinians in Gaza formed the All-Palestine Government, while those on the West Bank accepted Jordanian citizenship, due to their belief in the power of the Arab identity to protect them, pending the realization of Palestinian self-determination and the liberation of Palestine.

In the Arab countries, we witnessed the Iraqi Government establishing a Palestine army, the Egyptians supporting the *fedayeen* in Gaza, and the Jordanians replacing the Palestinian Salvation Army with a national guard, to be deployed along the borders of the new Israeli state. All these efforts, however, failed to meet the Palestinians' aspirations. All Palestinian thinking was preoccupied with the hope of return, in spite of the fact that there were no political frameworks or venues to allow such a return to take place. At that time, the Palestinians did not call for an entity, nor for an independent or bi-national or democratic-secular state; they merely wanted to return to their homeland and rest their cause in the hands of the Arab states. From the outset, they were treated as refugees to be taken care of by the UNRWA and the governments of the host countries in which they lived under miserable conditions. For the refugees, even the mention of the word Palestine led to painfully nostalgic memories of a house, a garden, a mountain, or a seashore, and many clung on to both the keys to the homes from which they had been cast out and dreams of an imminent return. The phase of Arabizing the Palestine cause and *de facto* inter-Arab differences was characterized by slogans relating to Arab unity and the impending liberation of Palestine.

In October 1956, when Israeli forces occupied the Gaza Strip, the direct confrontation between Palestinians and Israelis was re-launched after a decade-long war of words and rhetoric between the Arab states and Israel. During the resistance to the Israeli occupation of Gaza throughout 1956/57, a new Palestinian cadre was born, and it was determined to reshape and reorganize the Palestinian identity in the refugee camps and amongst Palestinian communities in the Diaspora. In 1957, ten years after the partition of Palestine, a new organization was established by the youth of the Palestinian *naqba* (disaster): Fatah (*Harakat At-Tahrir Al-Filastiniyyeh*), the Palestinian Liberation Movement. Fatah called for the Palestinization of the struggle against the Jewish state, while the Palestinians on the West Bank remained

active in Arab political parties, fully convinced that the Palestinian cause could only be strengthened through Arabization.

In the early 1960s, Palestinians spoke openly and with confidence about their legitimate right and need to establish a Palestinian entity. Their demands represented a revolutionary new way of thinking in the national movement to liberate the homeland. The early Palestinian organizations of the 1960s built their alliances with Cairo (Gamal Abdul Nasser), Baghdad (Abdul Karim Qassem), and Riyadh (King Saud) in an attempt to organize, mobilize and obtain financial support for the establishment of a Palestinian entity.

In March 1959, Egypt called on the Arab League to discuss ways and means to help reorganize and mobilize the Palestinian people as one nation, as opposed to refugees scattered in a number of foreign countries. The deliberations of the Arab leaders in the first Arab summit of January 1964 revealed major differences in the various Arab countries' positions and interests regarding the realization of an independent Palestine: Algeria (President Ben Bella) and Tunis (President Habib Bourqiba) called for the formation of a national liberation front; Saudi Arabia (King Saud) called for the formation of a Palestinian government; while Syria (Amin Al-Hafez) called for the formation of a Palestinian entity on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. Jordan (King Hussein), meanwhile, opposed the Syrian request and accepted, albeit reluctantly, the Egyptian call to delegate the Palestinian representative at the Arab League in Cairo, Ahmad Shuqeiri, to begin consultations with the Arab governments in order to establish a sound base on which to organize the Palestinian people and facilitate their role in the liberation of Palestine. The Arab League subsequently delegated Shuqeiri, who started his mission in February 1964. In his first address to the Palestinian people, Shuqeiri summarized the Palestinian situation by saying,

“We are a people without an entity, we are a national cause without leadership; therefore, we must take on our shoulders the responsibility for comprehensive reorganization and a total mobilization of our people.”¹

¹ Issa Al-Shuaibi, *Palestinian Statism: Entity, Consciousness, and Institutional Development*. Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1979, p. 102.

Shuqeiri's words reflected the reality of the Palestinian people, the desire to put an end to their suffering and the hope to rebuild the Palestinian entity with Arab assistance. The question of armed struggle and the mobilization of the political elite, businessmen and economists was confronted with the policies and interests of the Arab host countries. When Shuqeiri toured the Arab countries to consult with Palestinian communities and personalities, his trip concluded in the convening of the first Palestinian national conference in Jerusalem on 14 May 1964, under the auspices of King Hussein. The conference endorsed a Palestinian charter, which established the PLO as an institutional entity with a flag (the Arab revolt flag of 1916), an oath, and a national anthem, in addition to the formation of military units known as the Palestinian Liberation Army. In order to calm the doubts of the Arab governments, Article 24 of the Palestinian National Charter stated that the PLO would not exercise any territorial sovereignty over the West Bank of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, nor over the Gaza Strip, which was under Egyptian rule, nor over the region of Al-Himma, then under Syrian rule.

One year after the formation of the PLO and its headquarters in Jerusalem, the PNC convened for the second time in Cairo. At this meeting, several Palestinian associations joined the PLO, i.e., The General Union of Palestinian Laborers, the General Union of Palestinian Women, the Writers' Union, and the General Union of Palestinian Students. At the same time, there were reservations and objections within the Palestinian communities that were based on a fear of relying on the Arab governments for the formation of the PLO, which reflects the pluralism within the Palestinian house. A group of Palestinian intellectuals objected Shuqeiri's style and decisions by saying, "The people's cause should not be in one man's briefcase."² In opposition to Shuqeiri's appointment of certain personalities to positions within the PLO Executive Committee and the PNC, they called for Palestinian elections in various Palestinian communities.

Several Islamic groups as well as Fatah objected to the continuous Arabization of the Palestinian cause and demanded the Palestinization of the struggle. This position was reflected clearly in the following statement of Abu Jihad (Khalil Al-Wazir):

² Mahdi Abdul Hadi, *The Palestine Question and Political Peaceful Solutions, 1934-1974*. Beirut 1974.

“The armed struggle is the way to rebuild our nation and to expose its national identity to achieve the objectives of return and the liberation of the land.”³

Thus, Palestinian pluralism was reflected by the following tracks:

- the Arabization of the cause, headed by Shuqeiri;
- the democratization of the cause, advocated by intellectuals and professionals; and
- the Palestinization of the cause, demanded by Fatah and Islamic groups.

The manner in which the PLO was established reflected the Arab weakness and incompetence in confronting Israel, which often resulted from widespread disunity and a conflict of interests. At the same time, the PLO was caught between the positions of Riyadh, Cairo and Amman. The latter was very clear in its reservations, objections and worries about the future development of the PLO and its possible impact on Jordan's independence and the Arab state's role on the West Bank. Shuqeiri's favorite slogans (e.g., “We are one people, not two people,” and “We are one country, not two countries”) were one of many reasons why Amman was reluctant in its support of the PLO. The War of June 1967 and the three years that followed gave Fatah and other *fedayeen* organizations the credibility, the legitimacy and the responsibility to lead the Palestinian resistance movement within the various Palestinian communities.

Many university students, professionals and refugees joined the resistance movement in contrast to the experience of 1947/48. Palestinian academic Hisham Sharabi criticized the attitude of his generation during the War of 1947/48 as follows:

“I ask myself now, after many years have passed, how we could have left our homeland during the war, while the Jews were prepared to take it over. It never occurred to us in our thinking to postpone our studies and to stay at home to fight. There were others to fight instead of us, those who fought in the 1936 revolt, and those who will fight in the future: the peasants, who do not need specialization in the West as

³ Quoted in *Palestine Affairs*, Issue 152/153 (November 1985): p. 14.

their natural place is here, on the land. But us, the intellectuals, our place is somewhere else. We struggle on the intellectual front.”⁴

Within three years, the resistance movement took over the PLO, and Fatah, under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, gained full control over the PLO’s infrastructure. This marked not only the total Palestinization of the cause but also the beginning of the development of two Palestinian realities, identities and agendas, i.e., the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’.

The ‘inside’ was unable to compete with the ‘outside’s’ military resistance, and chose, for the time being, the strategy of *sumud* (steadfastness) and non-cooperation with the occupying power. On the leadership level, however, its members were very clear in demanding a role. Qadri Touqan, a leading Palestinian politician from Nablus, expressed this demand as follows:

“If the PLO leaders come to us through liberation, we will go to Jericho and meet them with flowers and carry them on our shoulders, as they would indeed be our leaders. But if they come through political negotiation, then we are the ones who have the right to lead and govern, for we are the ones who know more, if not better, than they.”⁵

During the first decade of Israeli occupation, the Palestinian ‘outside’ was identified with the PLO, its infrastructure, and the wider Diaspora, all of which supported armed struggle as the only means to achieve the liberation of Palestine. At the same time, there was a struggle for power within the Arab host countries, mainly in Jordan. This confrontation reached its peak with the 1970 civil war between the PLO and the Jordanian army, and ended with the departure of the PLO to Lebanon, where it established its mini-state.

In 1974, ten years after the establishment of the PLO and various Palestinian organizations, the mobilization of numerous Palestinian communities, and the daily confrontation with Israeli policies and practices, there was a major change in the way of thinking concerning the balance of power, and in the awareness of the overall living conditions of the Palestinian people. This was reflected in the PNC’s

⁴ *Memoirs of Arab Intellectuals*. Beirut: Ibn Rushd Publications, Arabic Edition, 1970, pp. 11-12.

⁵ Mahdi Abdul Hadi, *The Palestine Question and Political Peaceful Solutions, 1934-1974*. Beirut 1974.

call for the establishment of a “Palestinian state in any part of the occupied areas, once they are evacuated by Israel.” This was followed by the Ten-Point Program of the PLO announced on 12 June 1974, which outlined the goals of the struggle for self-determination in an independent Palestinian state whilst dropping the call for a democratic, secular state in all of Palestine. On 28 October 1974, Resolution 3110 of the UN General Assembly recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people; thus, international and Arab official recognition of the PLO marked the legitimization of attempts by the Palestinians to resist the occupation and their right to self-determination. The Arab Summit in Rabat added to this recognition the affirmation of the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent national authority in any Palestinian territory to be liberated. Eight years later, in September 1982, the Arab League Summit resulted in the Fez Declaration, which affirmed the right of all states to exist within recognized borders and called for a peaceful settlement, in order to allow for the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

With the outbreak of the *Intifada* in December 1987, another major development in the political thinking of the Palestinians was reflected by the call for a two-state solution. This *Intifada* thesis was endorsed by the PNA during the 1988 meeting in Algiers, and was regarded as the minimum demand capable of guaranteeing the re-establishment of an entity and the maintaining of the national identity.

Four years into the *Intifada*, Palestinian-Israeli negotiations began on an official level, based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and the ‘land-for-peace’ formula. The negotiation process exposed a leadership crisis that evolved as a result of growing disagreement over who should be represented by whom, and who exactly should eventually go to the negotiation table. It was the ‘inside’ who convinced the ‘outside’ to go ahead and overcome the humiliating conditions that the Israeli Government had imposed on the Palestinian people by going to the Madrid Peace Conference. The ‘inside’ was active and productive in two different respects, namely, in confronting the occupiers on the ground and in drafting scenarios and proposals for an interim period. The ‘outside’, meanwhile, became worried about the future role of the ‘inside’ and opened secret channels with the Israelis, one of which led to the Oslo Accords. As we all know, Oslo did not bring a final solution,

but it did lead to a major breakthrough inasmuch as mutual official recognition was finally achieved.

The whole world is well-aware of the fact that 'autonomy' throughout a transitional phase will not satisfy the Palestinian yearning for an independent state. The Palestinians are still facing historical challenges with regard to their institution-building processes and statehood, namely to develop and unite their ranks under one national identity on the soil of Palestine - the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem, the capital - in order to build a democratic system, i.e., elected representatives, an elected president, and an executive authority to govern society.



State-Building, Identity, Pluralism and Participation in Jordan

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The process of state-building in Jordan bore many similarities to the pattern of state-building in Third World countries in general. In the particular case of Jordan, it lacked two important 'ingredients': an economic surplus and an elite other than the Hashemite dynasty stemming for the Hijaz, although both of these, at one point, were temporarily provided by the British authorities. In its attempt to develop as an independent state, Jordan relied heavily on outside help and its evolution was basically the result of the act of decolonization.

For the majority of Jordanians, their sense of 'collectivity' has more to do with their attachment to a certain region than with their Jordanian nationality. The Hashemite dynasty is a fact and has never been seriously questioned, which has allowed the royal family to maintain its position, including its hold over the government and its entire bureaucracy, from the very beginning. Moreover, the Hijaz and Hashemite issue never led to a serious cleavage in the country.

Historically, it was the country's most important people who were given the top positions in the governmental bureaucracy as well as in the military. Most of them belonged to the small nascent group of Jordanians that promoted 'Jordanianism'. People such as Majali, Al-Fayez, and Arra are typical examples; all three demanded that power be given to the sons of the land. At the same time, the exclusion of non-Jordanians from relevant positions in the state bureaucracy began. Lawrence of Arabia also played a role in this regard; when he gathered people to support the anti-Syrian line and to lobby against Damascus in the 1920s, he contributed to the 'separate entity' identity-building of the Jordanians.

The next step in the state-building process was to Jordanize the Palestinian population of Jordan but what was intended to be an integration process turned into a series of conflicts and clashes,

including over political positions. During the 1950s and 1960s, relations between the Jordanians and Palestinians were relatively calm, and there were even a few Palestinian members of parliament. This changed, however, with the War of 1967, when Fatah, then led from Gaza, brought a lot of unrest into the country and disturbed the process of harmonization. It was Fatah that was responsible for the situation whereby we suddenly had general unions of *Palestinian* students, women, etc., in addition to the existing general unions of *Jordanian* students, women, etc. As a consequence, the exclusion of Palestinians from positions of power and discrimination against them reached a peak.

Today, we can speak to a large extent of integration although there are still certain important issues that need to be addressed, including the sense of 'dual identity' amongst Palestinians. I personally believe that it would be possible for Jordanians and Palestinians to maintain their respective identities, but perhaps only as sub-identities.

I think it has become clear to many of Jordan's neighbors, including Israel, that the Jordanian society is much more mature than they previously thought. The question that is often asked, however, relates to why the King resorted to violence in 1989. The answer of the King's advisor was that it was never meant to happen and that violence and viciousness are not the Jordanian 'way'; on the contrary, the state aims to be open and modern. Unfortunately, an excellent opportunity for improving relations between Palestinians and Jordanians was lost during the Gulf crisis, and all we can do now is to wait and see where the current round of mutual analysis will lead. As for the future of the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship, I do not foresee a confederation with the Palestinians in the near future, although I am confident that we will continue to have a say on the West Bank.

With regard to Jordan's many other problems, I am concerned about the internal/domestic Jordanian developments, especially with regard to the democratization process. Democracy in Jordan has faced many setbacks as far as political participation and pluralism are concerned, and it would be fair to say that Jordan is to some extent still totalitarian and authoritarian. The state is able to introduce and promote decentralizing technologies in the civil society, such as faxes, e-mail and other means of communication. Why not let even the opposition groups publish what they want? This could only have a

positive impact on the society inasmuch as it would help pinpoint the internal reforms that are needed. The King has taken some steps in this direction, and it would be fair to say that he is, by and large, considered popular. The Hashemites are lucky as there are no real opposition forces with a desire to destroy the country. Nevertheless, we need to develop our political culture.

The Jordanian government is clearly adept at dealing with its problems. If the peace process appears to be going through a stage of regression, for example, the government gives incentives for progress by 'opening' here and there. For Jordanians, real long-term peace is linked to Israel and the Israelis' performance within this process. Jordanian-Israeli bilateral relations will develop but there is also the possibility that they may freeze or be put on hold. It all depends on Israel. It will certainly be difficult to go ahead if the so-called dividends of peace are not felt, which is currently the case.

In the political spectrum, we are currently witnessing the main party lose ground. The Islamic movement is more sound than in other Arab states; it is rooted in the middle class and not so much a protest movement as one that promotes Islamic ideas and beliefs. A major problem, however, is that of tribalism and strong communal relations. From the Jordanian point of view, the Arab-Israeli conflict has formally come to an end, and no major protest has occurred. Political activism, political participation and political mobilization are all regarded as being less fruitful than in the 1960s, and more difficult to implement. As for elections, they are run along tribal lines and other clan linkages, which are usually based on patterns of land distribution. Political parties exist but not as formal institutions as in the West. At some time, tribal links will become democratic in terms of voting patterns, but the long-term impact of such a change on the Jordanian civil society is unclear.

All these factors make it difficult for the system to proceed but one can say with confidence that a democratization process has begun and that the Palestinian issue is not a big problem in Jordan. What speaks for Jordan's strength is that it has succeeded to prove its ability to survive two major crises: the Gulf War and the peace process it entered with Israel.

Domestic systems and policies, as well as their implementation and impact on socio-economic structures, in addition to the image of Jordan abroad, are important issues that we now need to study and analyze. We need to work constructively to bridge the critical gap between the people and civil society on the one hand and the government on the other.



From 'State Within A State' To State

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The topic I have been asked to try to deal with prompts discussion on at least two levels. There is, necessarily, a comparative aspect of great interest and importance, but also of great complexity. It may well be, that this is the aspect which the sponsors of this conference had most clearly in mind as central to the issue as a whole, or at any rate as one that lies very close to its center. Nevertheless, I shall make no attempt to deal with it, not directly, at all events; and certainly not *ex cathedra*. I believe it would be more useful if I restricted myself to an aspect of the subject which, for all its own inherent complexity and many ramifications, is more amenable to the compact treatment demanded of a participant in a meeting of this kind. It is the one that has to do with the fact - a curious fact in itself - that the independent State of Israel was up and running on the 15 May 1948 - precisely on schedule, that is to say, and in a form, moreover, which it has retained to quite a remarkable extent and without interruption ever since.

It will be recalled, that there was no orderly transfer of power from the imperial authority to the emerging state of Israel - nor indeed, although for quite different reasons, to the Arab state that was supposed to find its place alongside. There was no ceremonial lowering and raising of flags in May 1948, no bands playing national anthems, no dignitaries exchanging salutes and pious messages of hope and amity, no be-medalled and tiraded representatives of the British royal family present. Palestine, a political unit unknown before the British arrived, was simply evacuated and, upon evacuation, dissolved. Moreover, as a consequence of high policy dictated in London and much local, bitter bloody-mindedness, the country had been reduced to a condition of semi-anarchy in the last few months of British presence. The dominant mood in which its rulers left their charge was one of grim satisfaction at being at long last shot of the mess. The general conviction among them - laced, in some cases, with positive relish - was that a very bad state of affairs was about to turn a good deal worse. The

common expectation (in Washington, no less than in London, be it noted) was that one consequence of the chaos was that the new state of Israel would be crushed - if not immediately, then within a few months. And while it was not wholly unreasonable to think so, the fact that so many highly intelligent and experienced people, all of whom were presumed to be exceedingly well-informed, *did* think so remains an enduring (and, I think, sadly neglected) part of the general puzzle. I mention all this not, I should emphasize, to jeer retrospectively at so much human frailty and prejudice on display, but rather because it helps to put the questions I propose to deal with here and now in something like their proper historical context.

They are two:

- 1) How was it, given the circumstances that prevailed from about the end of November 1947 to the middle of May 1948, that a functioning state did promptly emerge after all. And, by extension,
- 2) How was it that modern Israel turned out to be, from the first, not only an authentic, but an enduring parliamentary democracy?

It may be worth remarking, that these questions are prompted not only by consideration of the immediate circumstances in which Israel was born - or, perhaps more precisely, re-born - but by the evident, cardinal fact that the greater part of the Jewish people had, for the greater part of their long exile, been devoid not only of a central, sovereign government of any kind of their own, but of any generally recognized and encompassing structure of authority, secular or clerical. They had, that is to say, no king, no prince, no pope,¹ no established supra-communal council of elders, no hereditary aristocracy, no clans and clan leadership, no bishops, and, more fundamentally, and often with dire consequences for themselves, no method for identifying and agreeing on common interests and, even in the face of the greatest and most pressing of public dangers, no way at all of first deciding upon a common course of action and then proceeding to implement it. The seeming oddity about all this lay in the fact that the essential characteristic of the Jews was in no way affected: they continued to constitute a distinctive, observable, and coherent social entity, a nation that both saw itself and was seen by others as one of the constituent peoples of eastern and south-eastern Europe and the Near East. Linguistically, culturally, religiously, and historically distinct, they differed from the other politically submerged peoples of these vast regions only in

three important, seemingly contradictory respects. They were no longer a *territorial* people. They lacked, as I have said, at least for the greater part of their Dispersion, an overarching, supra-communal authority.² And there was a sense in which it was possible, admittedly at high moral cost, for individual members of the Jewish people to contract out of it, so to speak, if they so desired. The result was, that on the one hand, membership in the Jewish people and obedience to such *internal* authority as there might be - setting aside matters of religious belief and conviction - was to a certain extent voluntary and conditional. And, on the other hand, that in their communal affairs, they were throughout the greater part of their history and, in the decisive case of what may be termed the heartland of Jewry in eastern Europe down to the period immediately preceding World War II, remarkably autonomous. It is indeed here that some of the clues to the puzzle of modern, contemporary Israel as a viable democracy lie. For side by side with their invertebrate political condition nationally, they did none the less have the benefit of centuries of experience in the running of their own affairs and conducting their own public business communally. They did so, moreover, at least until modern times and the emergence of the bureaucratic state, on a basis that virtually excluded the participation of the sovereign power, let alone the imposition of its will - except of course *in extremis* and by sheer brute force. This was possible because in general - and I would emphasize the phrase 'in general' - this division of powers was acceptable to both sides. It enabled the Jews to maintain their separate national cultural, religious, and social identity. It made it a great deal easier for the sovereign power to collect taxes from them, recruit them for military service and forced labor if and when it so wished, and, of course, to keep them apart so far so possible from all others who were subject to its authority if that was its desire.

But the essential point about Jewish internal autonomy is that the authority of the internal, communal leadership - and hence its efficacy - was of a rare kind in its day. It depended ultimately on a *moral* hold over the community: on the degree to which members were prepared to trust it and rely upon it - *not*, that is to say, on force, nor, in final analysis, on such powers, if any, as had been delegated to it by the sovereign power. And given the general prohibition on ownership of land by Jews and their exclusion from the estates of the realm under the Old Regime in Europe and their no more than tolerated existence

in the Islamic World, Jewish leadership was unusual too in that it could not be aristocratic or hereditary or military. Nor could it even be priestly. It was drawn from two sources: the rabbis on the one hand - not priests at all, but men of learning who function as judges; and the men of material substance on the other. It was therefore oligarchic, to be sure: not populist, nor necessarily popular. What was crucial was that it needed in all cases to be perceived as legitimate; and that there was really no way in which it could function for very long once it had been perceived as illegitimate. There is, of course, a great deal more that could be said about the manner in which this double-headed, clerical *and* lay system of communal self-government worked in various countries and at various times over an immensely extended period. There are, however, three general points to be made about it that seem to me to be especially relevant to the present subject.

One is the Jewish society at all levels was first and foremost a society accustomed to being bound by *law* - the law of the land, to be sure, but more profoundly, by its own law, that which all in Jewry took to be the Law of God and which it was, indeed, the central function of the rabbis to propound. Law, authentic, universally binding Law is, as I need hardly say, at once the foundation of democracy and the antithesis of despotism.

The second point is that Jewish society was for this reason inherently conservative, but not for this reason alone. Its conservatism owed much to the fragility and vulnerability of its special circumstances. There had been induced in the Jews a deeply ingrained wariness of change: change being intuited as apt to be change for the worse, a venture into a dangerous unknown. Its conservatism owed a very great deal too to the fact, that the governing rule of rabbinical judgment was itself one of very great caution: never stray too far from what was commonly accepted by the majority of one's fellows, always keep within whatever it was that passed for the mainstream of opinion. The marginal, the eccentric, the minoritarian positions - all these were to be avoided.

The third point is that in all circumstances communal leadership had ultimately to be consensual and, in an important if certainly restricted sense, democratic. Social, no less than rabbinic wisdom was encapsulated in the Biblical injunction much relied upon by the Jewish Sages: *aharei rabim lehattot* which, somewhat crudely translated, may be taken as meaning 'follow the majority'.

For all these reasons - and for others which time and space do not allow me to elaborate upon - traditional Jewish society must be understood as having long been in important respects a free one. It was a society, that is to say, in which the many varieties of coercion on which non-Jewish polities commonly relied upon in one degree or another were unavailable.³ It was also - a matter crucial in the present context - one in which the ruling oligarchies, no matter how firmly situated, were subject ultimately to two sanctions: that of the Law by which all Jews abided and which, more than anything, kept them together as a coherent social body; and that of public opinion. Leaders, no matter how great their learning or their material wealth or their influence at (the alien) court or the sheer power of their personae, had always to present themselves (or be presented by others) as, in some real and fundamental sense, servants of their community and/or, in exceptional circumstances, that of the Jewish people as a whole. Commonly, the rabbi's concern might be more with the strict letter of the Law than with his flock's moral and religious, let alone material condition; and the lay notable's concern might be, and probably would be, with his own political or economic interests and vulnerabilities before all else. In all cases, nevertheless, what was said and done had to end by being at any rate consistent with the health, continuity and, above all, the values of Jewry as a whole as well. The moral authority of all leaders, lay as well as clerical, hinged on their being thought to know what those values were and on being regarded as having them genuinely to heart.

Traditionally, and at their deepest roots, the values in question had much to do with profound and unquestioning religious belief. So long as this was present, the extraordinarily effective disciplinary hold enjoyed by the masters of the traditional Jewish community over their respective communal flocks is in great part accounted for. And it is true, that the effect of the processes of modernization and secularization (where they were operative) were very precisely to reduce the hold of the community - through its elders - on the individual. Nonetheless, in the increasingly wretched circumstances of the greater part of European Jewry in the later 19th and early 20th century these did relatively little to undermine the two central operative principles on which Jewish society needed to be led if it were to be led at all: that social action must in all cases be substantially free and voluntary; and

that leaders were in all cases answerable to those they presumed to lead and subject at all times to public criticism.

It is for all these reasons, that parliamentary democracy not only came naturally to the Jews in the course of their transition from traditional to modern social forms; it was to all intents and purposes the sole form of government that, within a strictly Jewish context, was conceivably acceptable to them. What was lacking was that structure of overall, *supra*-communal leadership that they had not had since late Antiquity at least. Organizations founded for very strictly philanthropic purposes (the Paris-based Alliance Israélite Universelle, founded in 1860, for example) and such as functioned on an essentially orthodox and traditionalist religious basis (notably Agudat Yisrael, founded in 1912) constitute partial exceptions to this rule. But the great and historically decisive deviation from it was, of course, the Zionist movement - the essential, unifying tenet of which was that it was incumbent on the Jews to leave the lands of their dispersion altogether if they were to preserve their honor, their safety, and the perpetuation of their national identity and cohesion. It was the insight of the founder of the movement, Herzl, that for this revolutionary program to be implemented it was necessary to establish a sort of government-in-exile which would assume the twin tasks of rallying the Jewish people behind its banner and, at the same time, represent it in the international political arena vis- -vis such states and nations as might be relevant. Here we come, needless to say, to the very heart of the present matter.

Despite the fact that the Zionist movement in its early days formed no more than a small fraction of the Jewish people world-wide, the system of government invented for it by Herzl was relatively elaborate. A small executive committee (known as the Smaller Actions Committee) presided over by Herzl himself was authorized to handle the affairs of the movement on a day-to-day basis. This Actions Committee, later to be termed the Executive, would be elected by a fully democratic, regularly elected parliament. This parliament, the Congress of Zionists, composed of several hundred delegates, men and women, was to meet annually, later bi-annually. Any Jew, man or woman, who subscribed to the basic program of the movement was entitled to participate in the elections to it as candidate or voter. An intermediate, smaller body, the Greater Actions Committee, elected by the full Congress and reflective of party divisions within it (as the Executive needed not to

be), but meeting more frequently, would deal with major questions of policy that arose between sessions of the Congress itself. This was the skeleton of government. It would be fleshed out in the course of a very few years in two ways. A small departmental bureaucracy was set up to deal with the press and the nuts and bolts of settlement, finance, immigration, and the like. And, rather more significantly, there evolved a range of ideological and regional parties and associations of all kinds - socialists and middle-of-the-roaders, secularists and orthodox, proponents of this or that line of political action - all striving to elect their delegates to the Congress, all seeking the support of the Jewish public at large.⁴

The general point to be made here is that the line of succession from Herzl's small, powerless, virtually moneyless and, above all, unrecognized simulacrum of national government, to the government established in 1948, and indeed to the Government of Israel today, could not be clearer. The major political parties in modern Israel, the Knesset itself, the Cabinet system as it has operated until now - all these have their origins in their analogues in the Zionist movement founded 99 years ago. Thus in form - notably and very noticeably the electoral system (PR) and parliamentary procedure; thus in political and operative substance; thus too, in style and spirit.

Historically and institutionally, the link between the Zionist movement as it emerged in the Diaspora and the present Government of Israel was provided, as is well known, by the so-called Jewish Agency. The Agency, established under the terms of the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine⁵, was led by an Executive which, over time, became almost identical for all practical purposes with the Zionist Executive itself.⁶ It is, indeed, the Jewish Agency which provides the greater part of the answer to the primary question with which this paper is concerned. It does so by virtue of the statutory functions devolved upon it under the Mandate. It does so *a fortiori* in consequence of its efficacy in fulfilling. But it does so above all because that same efficacy was founded on the willing support and loyalty of the overwhelming majority of the Jewish population in Palestine as articulated through the parliamentary mechanisms provided by the Zionist Organization. It was both dependent, utterly so, on its public and, at the same time, in day to day practice, able to a remarkable extent to rely upon it. In sum, there was combined in the Jewish

Agency/Zionist Executive, for the first time in very many centuries, a form of national-political leadership, the bases of which were precisely those which are, as it seems to me, crucial to the present subject: territorial on the one hand; fully and freely representative in the modern, essentially western sense of the term on the other.

But this was not all. The special efficacy of the Jewish Agency/ Zionist Executive lay no less in its standing at the peak of an entire network, or pyramid, of interlocking social, economic, financial, educational, and military institutions, chief of which were the elected Va'ad Leumi (or Representative Council) of the Jewish population of the country (as opposed to the *world*-wide Zionist Organization), the Histadrut workers' organization, and the semi-clandestine military arm of the *yishuv*, the Haganah. To some or all of these the great majority of the Jewish inhabitants of Mandatory Palestine - although never all - adhered: at once supported and were dependent upon. Taken together, these and other institutions provided the majority of the Jews of Palestine with trade union protection and often with work itself, with schooling, with health care, and with defense. Taxes were collected. Funds were budgeted and disbursed for public purposes. And all this and indeed more with barely minimal reference to the Mandatory government, or none at all, or, in notable cases, in direct defiance of it. Thus internally. The other side of the coin was the Jewish Agency's recognized external, representative capacity vis- -vis the Mandatory Administration and, of course, the Imperial government in London, but also, when necessary, elsewhere - in Turkey, in the US, in certain European capitals.

In sum, in a manner analogous to that of any truly sovereign government, it served both as the central political motor force of the community over which it was placed - or, as some would say, placed itself - and as the spokesman for the community in that community's external relations with the fully sovereign governments of the day, that of the United Kingdom before all others. The authors of what is, to my mind, much the clearest and most penetrating analysis of the so-called Palestine Problem ever written, the Report of the Peel Commission of 1937, wrote of the Jewish Agency, that

ôallied as it is to the *Va'ad Leumi*, and commanding the allegiance of the great majority of the Jews in Palestine, it unquestionably exercises,

both in Jerusalem and in London, a considerable influence on the conduct of Government.

Speaking generally, it may be said that the Jewish Agency has used to the fullest extent the position conferred on it by the Mandate. In the course of time it has created a complete administrative apparatus. This powerful and effective organization amounts, in fact, to a Government existing side by side with the Mandatory Government.⁷

The rapidity with which the Jewish Agency/Zionist Executive assumed this role offers the central clue to the puzzle - if puzzle it is - of the smooth transition from 'State within a State' to the State of Israel itself. But there are two further points that need to be made.

The first is that while the *yishuv* was politically divided, it was none the less the case, that the greater part of it - notably that part which was integrated into, and covered by the ramified institutional structure I have alluded to - came rapidly to be led by a single, remarkably effective and well-organized party. This, of course, was the moderately - some would say, nominally - socialist Mapai, transmogrified in the course of time into what is now the Israel Labor Party (which needs to be understood as barely a shadow of its old self). Neither the unquestioned, in many ways remarkable political cohesiveness of the *yishuv* despite the deep party-political divisions within it, nor the consequent efficacy and influence - indeed power - of its elected leadership, can be accounted for without paying due attention to the strength of Mapai as a structured party. It was Mapai - in coalition with several other, lesser parties to be sure - that through the dominant presence it achieved in all the relevant institutions - the Zionist Organization, the Histadrut, the Va'ad Le'umi, the Jewish Agency and, by extension, in the major social services and in the Haganah as well - that largely pulled everything together. It was the basis on which the cardinal role played by David Ben Gurion, to a very great extent the creator of the party and of course its long-time leader, and the immensely important role he was to play in the conversion of the *yishuv* into a fully autonomous state rested.

The second point to be made, is that, as hardly needs saying, all this occurred at a time when the issues facing the *yishuv*, but also the Jewish people generally, were exceptionally stark. The impact upon it, first of Arab, then, especially after 1939, British opposition to the central national political purposes to which the overwhelming majority

of the Jewish population was firmly wedded did as much as anything else to weld it together. This was the case well before the outbreak of World War II. It was doubly the case thereafter. But it is worth noting, that the particular issue around which, it is no exaggeration to say, all in the *yishuv* were absolutely united was not so much independence as a matter of absolute and immediate priority as immigration. It was the issue of immigration too, that, for obvious reasons, had been continually stoking the fires of the triangular Jewish-Arab-British conflict as well. At all events, so far as the Jews of Palestine were concerned, the immense, steadily growing public pressure throughout the world of Jewry to ensure that those in dire need of escape from Europe be allowed to enter the country was seen as, at once proof positive of the validity of the Zionist analysis of the desperate condition and absolute needs of the Jewish people and, at the same time, a matter which transcended Zionism altogether. On this, then, there was absolute consensus; and the effect was to give the Jewish Agency/Zionist Executive as free a hand as it could wish and to ensure that it would be followed in essentials by virtually the entire Jewish population of the country. Indeed, its chief problem would be the difficulty of coping with those who wished to go much further and faster than it itself thought politic at particular times.

In this connection, the views of Sir Harold MacMichael, High Commissioner between 1938 and 1944 are of special interest. Sir Harold was no friend of the Jewish people or of the *yishuv*, or of the Zionist movement in particular. He was the man, moreover, whose primary job it was to implement the White Paper of 1939 - hated by the Jews of Palestine because it had been designed to put an end, once and for all, to Jewish dreams of political independence and plainly envisaged their eventual subjection to an Arab majority. MacMichael, as might be expected, had begun his time in Palestine as a firm enemy of the idea of partition. Six and a half years later, however, in contrast to the views of the Foreign Office in London, the British Ambassadors in the Middle East, and the military commanders in Cairo, it was the solution he had come round to recommending. He still had some reservations about the Peel Commission Report. But on the whole he had learned to think highly of it and to consider that in essentials its authors' judgment had been correct.

MacMichael's own argument for partition, seven years on, rested chiefly on what he knew of the continuing pressure of Jews to immigrate and on his belief that this pressure was likely to continue, even intensify, after the war. It might be added here, parenthetically, that no shadow of what is now termed the holocaust is apparent in the High Commissioner's argument. He must have had some idea of what was going on in the European death camps. But it in no way affected his views. These hinged exclusively on what he judged would be best for *Britain* in the Middle East. In any event, what worried MacMichael was that he thought the pressure to enter the country would be all but impossible to stem and that, at the same time, if acceded to, the impact on British interests, more specifically on British-Arab relations, would be dire. He thought, however, that that impact could be substantially reduced if the entry of Jews into the country was limited in practice to a very small part of it, a part that could be hived off from the rest and allowed to turn into a Jewish state. Immigration would then be the responsibility of a Jewish government and Britain would be, if not entirely, at any rate substantially quit of the problem and the responsibility.⁸ What, however, is most interesting - and most relevant to our topic - is that it is evident, that MacMichael did not doubt, as the authors of the Peel Commission's report did not doubt, that a Jewish state in Palestine, whatever frontiers might be allotted to it, would be intrinsically viable.

As with so many people concerned with Palestine in one way or another, a thin thread of what may, I think, be legitimately termed controlled paranoia ran through the High Commissioner's opinions when he came to deal with the purposes and abilities of the Jews in Palestine - or indeed anywhere else. But in this particular respect, his wisdom was very much that of the man on the spot. Like the Royal Commissioners seven years earlier, he knew what he was talking about.

Notes:

¹ Partial exceptions to this general rule were the Babylonian Exilarchy that flourished in late antiquity and the post of *Hakham Bashi* (or Chief Rabbi) that was created by the Ottomans.

² Exceptionally in the history of the Jewish people in Europe - where there had never been any equivalent to the Babylonian Exilarch or the Ottoman *Hakham Bashi*, a 'Council of the Four Lands' was allowed to function in Poland-Lithuania towards the end of the 16th century. It may be said of it, that, characteristically enough, it owed its existence chiefly to the promise it

appeared to hold out for the Polish authorities as an instrument for the extraction of taxes from the Jewish population. When the increasing impoverishment of the Jews rendered it useless for any such purpose, the Polish Sejm (parliament) dissolved it (1764).

³ It is true, that traditional communal authority, while rarely coercive in the usual sense, was not entirely powerless. Police, prisons, executioners, and so forth were of course the monopoly of the (invariably non-Jewish) sovereign power in the land. But communal elders did have the powerful weapon of excommunication, for example. Life under ban of excommunication for one who would not, or could not, bring himself to apostatize was rendered intolerable, in many ways impossible. There could be no marriage, no divorce, no schooling for one's children, no burial of the family's dead, no effective observance of the dietary laws for the living. Other Jews would be duty-bound to refrain from professional or economic - and of course social - relations with the excommunicant. In brief, to be under the ban was to be cast out, condemned to a terrible loneliness, and in all likelihood to poverty too, in a world that had become doubly and, so long as the ban was enforced, irredeemably hostile. It followed, that the power to place its members, however well-placed and protected they might be on other counts, under the ban was power enough to induce all but the most determined and rebellious to knuckle under to those who held what all others in the community accepted as legitimate authority. But that said, the principle that authority within the Jewish collectivity had in all cases to be exercised - and therefore, in practice, perpetually justified and renewed - in *its* name and in *its* interests remained fundamental to the Jewish ethos.

⁴ The rules governing the Zionist Organization, as amended from time and in force on the eve of independence, will be found in *Hukei ha-histadrut ha-zionit* (Jerusalem, 1947), a publication of the Organization Department of the Zionist Executive.

⁵ The wording of the relevant articles of the Mandate was as follows:

Article 2: "The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home, as laid down in the preamble, and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion."

Article 3: "The Mandatory shall, so far as circumstances permit, encourage local autonomy."

Article 4: "An appropriate Jewish agency shall be recognized as a public body for the purpose of advising and cooperating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine, and, subject always to the control of the Administration, to assist and take part in the development of the country."

The Zionist organization, so long as its organization and constitution are in the opinion of the Mandatory appropriate, shall be recognized as such agency. It shall take steps in consultation with His Britannic Majesty's Government to

secure the cooperation of all Jews who are willing to assist in the establishment of the Jewish national home.ö

It may be worth noting, that it was proposed in 1923 that a parallel Arab Agency - öexactly analogous", in the language of the then Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Jewish Agency - be established. This was rejected by the effective leaders of the Arab community on the grounds, presumably, that to agree to the provision of such an instrument would be indirectly to recognize the legitimacy of the Jewish Agency.

⁶ Not without some difficulty, however, and in defiance of non-and anti-Zionist opposition. For a recent account, see Herskovits, Aviva, 'Ya'adeiha shel 'ha-sokhnut ha-yehudit le-ma'an Erets Yisrael' - behina mehudeshet', *Zion: Riv'on le-heker toledot Yisrael*, IX, 4, 1995, p. 425

⁷ Palestine Royal Commission, *Report*, Cmd. 5479 (London, 1937), p. 174.

⁸ For an analysis of MacMichael views and details of the actual, exceedingly complex way in which he thought the country could be divided between Jews, Arabs, and Great Britain itself, see Gavriel Cohen, 'Harold MacMichael u-she'elat 'atid Erets-Yisrael', *Ha-Mizrah he-hadash*, xxv, 1-2 (98-97), 1975, pp. 52-68. For an amended, English-language version of G. Cohen's original article, see 'Harold MacMichael and Palestine's Future', *Zionism: an International Journal of Social, Political History* (Tel Aviv), 3, Spring 1981, pp. 133-55.



