



FORWARD TO THE PAST: THE FALL AND RISE OF THE “ONE-STATE SOLUTION”

Jonathan Spyer*

Deeply embedded in Palestinian nationalism is the notion that Israeli Jewish identity is analogous to that of communities born of European colonialism, which are not seen as having legitimate claim to self-determination. No reconsidering of this characterization took place during the period of the peace process of the 1990s. Hence, the short period of acceptance of the “two-state solution,” was a departure by Palestinian nationalism from its more natural stance, and the current trend of return to the “one-state” option is a return to a position more in keeping with the deep view of the conflict held throughout by this trend.

INTRODUCTION

One of the by-products of the eclipse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process of the 1990s has been the re-emergence into public debate of older strategies for the solution of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Perhaps most noticeable among these is the rebirth of the so-called “one-state solution.” According to this idea, the long conflict between Israelis and Palestinians can be solved only by the replacement of the State of Israel as a Jewish state and its combining with the West Bank and Gaza Strip to form a single entity. This entity, according to most versions of the idea, would be ostensibly constituted as a non-sectarian state with no ethno-national character,¹ although given its advocates’ support for the return of Palestinian refugees of 1948 and their dependents, the implication is that it will have a Palestinian Arab demographic majority. A variant idea proposes the creation of a bi-national state containing guaranteed rights and representation for Jews and Arabs.² Another version, supported by Islamist trends among the Palestinians, supports the creation of a single state ruled by Islamic Shari’a law in the area.³

The one-state idea is not new. Rather, variants of it have formed the preferred outcome of the conflict for the Palestinian national movement throughout the greater period of its history. The “democratic state”

idea became the official stance of the PLO after the eighth Palestinian National Council (PNC) in 1971.⁴ It replaced earlier formulations that had hardly related to the issue of statehood at all but that had instead concentrated on the claim of the injustice of the creation of Israel and the proclaimed Palestinian or Arab right to reverse its creation. The Palestinian National Covenant, for example, makes no mention of statehood and appears to favor the expulsion of all but a small minority of Israeli Jews. It states that Jews “of Palestinian origin will be considered Palestinians if they will undertake to live loyally and peacefully in Palestine.”⁵ The covenant does not define precisely what Jews of Palestinian origin are, but this is usually understood to refer to Jews whose families were resident in the area prior to 1917.⁶ From the early 1970s, however, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) proclaimed itself in support of the idea of a “non-sectarian” state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.⁷

From the mid-1970s, the idea of the “non-sectarian state” appeared to be in a long process of decline in the mainstream Fatah organization and among some other groupings within the PLO. It was replaced with the idea of two states. This idea first appeared in the form of the Palestinian desire to create a state in any area of “liberated” territory. After the Algiers PNC of 1988, it was promoted in

terms of a peaceful two-state outcome. This position made possible the rapid emergence of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in the 1990s.

Since the abrupt demise of the Oslo process in 2000, however, the idea of the "non sectarian state" has been undergoing a process of revival. Due to the contemporary familiarity of the term "two-state solution" in discussion of the conflict, it has been renamed the "one-state solution," but in all particulars it resembles the earlier stance of the movement. Recent pronouncements by senior Fatah leaders have suggested that a version of it might become the official policy of the movement if it despairs of the possibility of reaching a two-state settlement in line with its aspirations. Of course, with Palestinian politics today divided between Fatah and Hamas, it is important to note that 40 percent of the Palestinians resident west of the Jordan River already live under the rule of a movement committed to the "one-state solution." Hamas, as its founding charter makes clear, favors a single state to be governed by Shari'a law.⁸ This article provides a brief history of the one-state solution and discusses the implications and meaning of the revival of the idea. To conclude, the assumptions behind the idea and the implications of its re-emergence for hopes of a peaceful conclusion to the conflict are considered.

THE "ONE-STATE SOLUTION": A BRIEF HISTORY

The termination of the Jewish state of Israel and its replacement by a Palestinian Arab state was the openly declared intention of Palestinian nationalism in its earliest incarnations. Following the 1948 war, the former leadership of the Arabs of Palestine expressed itself exclusively in terms of "return," with no serious discussion of the nature of the state to be built following the reversal of the Israeli victory. The first major organizational expressions of an explicitly Palestinian nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s were also unequivocal in this regard. Thus, the Palestinian National Covenant, authored in

1964 and amended at the fourth PNC in July 1968, declares its ambition as the "liberation" of Palestine in order to "destroy the Zionist and imperialist presence."⁹ This liberation is to take place via the means of "armed struggle," and, it is implied, will result in the departure from the country of all Jews not resident in it before the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The document explicitly rejects "all solutions which are substitutes for the total liberation of Palestine."¹⁰ It also clearly bears the influence of the pan-Arab nationalism prominent at the time. The Arab nation is called upon to "mobilize all its military, human, moral, and spiritual capabilities to participate actively with the Palestinian people in the liberation of Palestine."¹¹ Jewish claims of historical or religious attachments to the land are described as "incompatible with the facts of history"¹² and indeed the very claims to peoplehood of the Jews are derided and dismissed.¹³

The 1964 Covenant and the revised Palestinian National Charter of 1968 represent the first serious attempts to codify the aims of Palestinian nationalism. The aim unambiguously outlined in these documents is the nullification of Israel's sovereignty, which is seen as based on a false premise--namely, the claim of the Jews to peoplehood. Since Israeli-Jewish nationhood is seen as fraudulent, it follows that the generally accepted rights of bona fide nations--including to self-determination and sovereignty--need not apply to Israel. Rather, the solution is for the destruction of Zionism and the constitution of former Mandate Palestine as an Arab state, eventually to be included, it makes clear, within a future "Arab Unity."¹⁴ Thus the founding documents of modern, organized Palestinian nationalism offer a definitive statement of the "one-state solution."

This point of view was further ratified in the 1968-1970 period. It was during this period that the idea recognizable today as the "one-state solution" first rose to prominence and then dominance within the embryonic Palestinian national movement. The notion of the Palestinian national movement promoting the creation of a Palestinian state seems in

retrospect self-evident. It was not so at the time. Rather, the PLO's advocacy of its "non-sectarian, democratic state" represented an important break with the domination of the Pan-Arab nationalist ideas which dominated Palestinian political discussion in the preceding two decades. Pan-Arab ideas saw the destruction of Israel as the responsibility of the entirety of the Arab nation, and opposed the notion of a separate Palestinian people. For this reason, the early controversies over the issue were fought not between advocates of the "two-state" and "one-state" solutions. There was no constituency among Palestinian nationalists for a solution to the conflict involving the continued existence of the State of Israel at that time. Rather, the advocates of the "non-sectarian, democratic" Palestinian state--most prominent among them the Fatah movement of Yasir Arafat, but also including the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine or PDFLP (later the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, DFLP)--debated the issue with streams that saw the 'liberation' of Palestine and the destruction of Israel as the task of the entirety of the Arabs, such as the pro-Iraqi Arab Liberation Front. Nasserite tendencies also backed this view (although the Egyptian government was pro-Fatah at the time.) The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) also opposed the "democratic state" idea, which it considered a distraction from the broader task of fomenting a general overthrow of the existing Arab regimes--to be followed by a conventional victory over Israel. The idea was also opposed by the "Old Guard" leadership of the Palestinians in the Arab Higher Committee and among the older PLO leadership.¹⁵

At the sixth and seventh PNCs in 1969 and 1970, debate arose between Fatah and its opponents over the issue of the "democratic state." The discussions took place against the dramatic backdrop of the armed clashes between Palestinian organizations and the Jordanian authorities and army. At the eighth PNC in Cairo in 1971, the PFLP attempted to argue for the "unity of the Jordanian-Palestinian theater." This was a way for the

organization to reassert its Arab nationalist character against the more Palestine-centric Fatah. The eighth PNC took place immediately after the events of "Black September." The PNC endorsed the slogan of a "democratic state". Nevertheless the statement endorsing this strategy also expressed its support for the "unity of the people on the two banks of the Jordan," and noted that the call for the "democratic state" was made "in the framework of the Arab nation's aspiration to national liberation and total unity."¹⁶ Thus the statement did not represent a complete abandonment of the broader Arab nationalist elements of the PLO's outlook.

From 1971, the proposal known today as the "one-state solution" was entrenched as the official position of the Fatah-led PLO. Of course, the triumph of this view did not mean the cutting of links between the PLO and the broader Arab world. The organization remained dependent on support from various Arab states, and the strategy itself did not cut off the Palestinians from broader Arab aspirations. Yet the adoption of the "democratic state" strategy placed the Palestinian national movement within the broader process of the post-1967 Arab world of the growth of local loyalties and the decline of political Pan-Arabism.

The strategy did not, however, bring the PLO into line with the broader reality of Israeli invulnerability to overthrow at the hands of the Palestinians, which seemed to make the "democratic state" solution less than practical. The method chosen to bring about the state was "armed struggle"; but so long as Israel remained superior in military capability, it was difficult to see how this could lead to victory. In practical terms, the goal was pursued by means of terrorist and guerrilla operations throughout the 1970s. Yet despite the undoubted success of such operations in bringing the Palestinian issue to international prominence, it was difficult to see how this could be turned into an overall victory over Israel.

The beginnings of the current, familiar debate in secular Palestinian nationalism

between the “two-state” and “one-state” solutions may be dated to the period following the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The idea first surfaced prior to the war, but was very firmly rejected by Yasir Arafat.

Scholars have noted the slow and gradual evolution of PLO policy toward the acceptance of partition. The twelfth PNC of 1974 has been singled out as representing an important watershed in this process. Observation of the program adopted at this PNC illustrates the ambiguities of the process. The twelfth PNC included the adoption of a ten-point program outlining a “phased” policy for Palestinian nationalism.¹⁷ This policy continued the movement's rejection of Resolution 242 and its blunt opposition to any recognition of Israel. However, the program accepted the possibility of establishing an “independent and fighting authority” on any part of the country “liberated from Israel.”¹⁸ Such a gain was seen as a way-station on the road to the final victory of the destruction of Israel. Still, in the opinion of some observers, it represented the first seeds of a growing political realism in the PLO. They considered that since this program contained within it a policy goal (even if an “intermediate” one) that envisaged the establishing of a Palestinian national authority alongside Israel, this therefore marked the beginnings of a de facto Palestinian acceptance of partition.¹⁹

What may be stated with confidence is that the PLO leadership henceforth adopted a position of studied ambiguity on this issue--with certain statements indicating that the acceptance of independence in an area “liberated” from Israel might eventually make possible a more long-term arrangement, and other statements indicating that such an authority would be intended as a way-station on the road to the eventual “liberation” of the entire land and the demise of Israel. In opposition to the position of ambiguity adopted by the leadership--which placed the PLO at an imprecise point somewhere between the “one-state” and “two-state” solutions--the leadership was opposed by a PFLP-led opposition within the PLO that vowed continued loyalty to the destruction of

the Zionist state of Israel and the creation of the “non-sectarian, democratic” state in place of it.

The policy of ambiguity favored by the Fatah and PLO leadership began to pay dividends in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It made possible the granting of observer status to the PLO at the UN, and PLO leader Arafat's subsequent address to the UN General Assembly. It also made possible the EU's 1980 Venice Declaration, which offered de facto recognition of the PLO as the leader of the Palestinians. The policy of constructive ambiguity permitted contacts between leftist Israelis and PLO officials. Yet the PLO's stated policy remained not a two-state outcome to the conflict, but rather the acceptance of the creation of a “Palestinian national authority” (or later a “Palestinian national state”) on any part of land “liberated” from Israel.

The peace process of the 1990s became a possibility with the PLO's adoption of the November 15, 1988 Algiers Declaration. The declaration took place at the height of the intifada and was part of the PLO's attempt to secure the leadership of the uprising and to capitalize on the renewed international focus on Palestinian aspirations. The declaration was based on Resolution 181, the 1947 partition resolution, and consisted in effect of a unilateral declaration of statehood by the Palestinians. The UN General Assembly subsequently recognized the right of the Palestinians to declare a state according to resolution 181 (which at the time had been rejected by the Palestinian leadership), and 89 UN member states recognized the state of “Palestine” in subsequent weeks.

The Algiers Declaration opened the possibility of dialogue between the United States and the PLO for the first time. However, the United States made it clear that only if the PLO explicitly recognized Israel and renounced terrorism would dialogue become possible. Arafat then made a statement in Geneva publicly recognizing Resolutions 181, 242, and 338, and renouncing terrorism. This statement appeared to settle officially the argument between the

“two-state” and “one-state” formulas in the PLO--decisively in favor of the former.

The apparent adoption by the PLO of the two-state solution made possible the rapid emergence of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in the early 1990s. This acceptance (partial and grudging, as many in Israel argued it was) of partition meant that within five years the PLO was in negotiations with Israel, and within six it had achieved the creation and leadership of a sizeable Palestinian Authority (PA) encompassing all of the Gaza Strip and a considerable part of the West Bank. This authority stood on the threshold of sovereignty alongside Israel by the end of the 1990s.

Thus, the abandonment of the “one-state solution” and the apparent acceptance of partition brought rapid diplomatic gains for the PLO and may have saved it from eclipse in the period following the collapse of the USSR and Yasir Arafat's ill-judged embrace of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Disputes remained as to the extent of the partition, and the Oslo peace process of the 1990s of course ended in failure.

Two points are notable regarding the PLO's embrace of the two-state solution. The first, as we have seen, is its relatively recent vintage. An overt acceptance of Resolution 242 took place only in 1988. The second point is that acceptance of Resolution 242 did not lead to a major rethink in terms of the Palestinian national movement's understanding of the nature of the conflict--which remained Manichean, seeing it as between an entirely illegitimate colonialism (Zionism) and an anti-colonialist Arab resistance movement.

Emblematic of the absence of a real revolution in thinking in the PLO was the failure throughout the greater part of the 1990s to abrogate the clauses in the PLO's founding documents--the Palestine National Covenant and Charter--which called for Israel's destruction. Despite entreaties from both Israel and the United States, this was not undertaken in any form until 1996.

Following U.S. and Israeli pressure, the Palestine National Council met in the first week of May 1996 and declared that "The Palestinian National Charter is hereby

amended by cancelling the articles that are contrary to the letters exchanged between the P.L.O and the Government of Israel 9-10 September 1993." In addition the PNC's legal committee was assigned “the task of redrafting the Palestinian National Charter in order to present it to the first session of the Palestinian central council.” The statement did not mention which articles had been amended. On May 5, 1996, then Head of the Legal Committee Faysal Husayni announced that within three months, a new, revised covenant would be submitted. No new covenant was ever submitted, and Husayni himself later clarified that “There has been a decision to change the covenant. The change has not yet been carried out.” To deflect pressure, PLO Chairman Arafat sent a letter to then President Clinton reaffirming the commitment to amend the charter and to remove the offending articles.

During Clinton's visit to Gaza in December 1998, the PNC was assembled and voted to approve Arafat's letter to Clinton. This was hailed by the world media at the time as constituting the final amendment of those elements of the Palestine National Covenant that called for Israel's destruction and the expulsion of the Jews. It was not. This is made clear by reference to the following fact: The Covenant itself, in article 33, outlined the only means by which it may legally be amended, namely “This Charter shall not be amended save by [vote of] a majority of two-thirds of the total membership of the National Congress of the Palestine Liberation Organization [taken] at a special session convened for that purpose.” No such vote ever took place. Rather, vague commitments to the eventual holding of such a vote were put on paper and voted on.²⁰

Today, the PLO is a fragmented, nearly irrelevant body. The Palestinian Authority too has fragmented into two, with the Gaza Strip now under control of Hamas. The PA remains officially committed to the Oslo process and a two-state outcome to the conflict. Within Fatah, however, one may identify many open supporters of the one state idea, including very prominent individuals such as Faruk Kaddumi.

Senior PA officials have made the argument that unless Israel is willing to accede to the PA's demands on borders for the Palestinian state and Jerusalem, the two-state solution cannot be made a reality.²¹ At a certain point, therefore, the Palestinians may decide to abandon the search for a two-state solution and adopt the one-state idea.

THE RETURN OF THE ONE STATE IDEA

In the period since the collapse of the peace process in late 2000, the "one-state solution" has begun to re-emerge to prominence in Palestinian nationalist thinking.

The one state idea did not disappear during the peace process years of the 1990s. During that period, organizations committed to various versions of it (Hamas, the PFLP, and others) were instrumental in attempts to undermine moves toward a two-state "solution." It also remained the solution of choice among large sections of Fatah.²² In its earlier incarnation, however, the one-state solution had found little echo in the West. To some degree this changed in the post-2000 period, with the one state idea becoming the preferred outcome of a section of intellectuals in Western Europe and to a lesser extent in North America.²³ The more recent advocacy of the one-state idea appears to differ from earlier examples in a number of other important ways.

In the past, the idea was presented as representing a just outcome, regardless of the difficulty in achieving it, because of what its advocates regarded as the inherently unjust and illegitimate nature of Israeli nationhood. The more recent advocacy on behalf of the "one-state solution," however, has characterized it as a reluctant response to reality rather than an ideal position. According to this view, which is repeated frequently in literature promoting this option, the Palestinian national movement is being forced to abandon a sincere and long-held commitment to a two-state outcome to the conflict because of Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza (or the West Bank

alone after 2005). The idea promoted is that Israel's desire to retain settlements in the West Bank, or the cost--financial and political--of removing them renders any realistic possibility of Israeli withdrawal unfeasible.²⁴

The advocates of the one-state solution then maintain that since Israel has chosen to sabotage the possibility of partition, there is no longer any possibility for the realization of this, and since Israeli settlement activity has de facto created a single entity west of the Jordan River, the appropriate--or perhaps sole possible--response of the Palestinian national movement is to accept this *fait accompli* and to begin a campaign for integration of the entire population of this area into a single state framework. This case has been made in myriad publications in a variety of languages over the previous half decade.²⁵ It is hard to find mention of the fact that this position was in fact the PLO's official stance until 1988. Rather, the impression given is that after a long period of commitment to partition, the Palestinians and the international community must now abandon this position, because Israel's actions have made it an impossibility.

ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND THE ONE-STATE SOLUTION

The one-state solution, as has been shown, is a return to the policy advocated by the PLO from the late 1960s, once it moved beyond openly politicidal ambitions regarding the Israeli Jews. As with the original idea of the "non-sectarian, democratic" state, there is a certain, rather obvious discrepancy between the slogan and the very probable reality that its realization would usher in. That is, while the slogan may appear to be advocating the creation of a state such as the United States or post-apartheid South Africa, this advocacy is being made on behalf of an Arab nationalist movement, steeped in a specifically Arab and Muslim cultural context,²⁶ in an area in which the creation of democratic, non-ethnic, and non-religious state has not been the norm.

In order to answer in advance the claim that the foundation of such a single state framework would surely usher in disaster for

the remaining Israeli Jewish minority, advocates of the “one-state solution” have been concerned to restate the older Palestinian and broader Arab claims as to why Israel should not be included in the normal category of nations and states deserving of existence. In this regard, arguments have been raised regarding the supposedly unique (and uniquely harmful) nature of the state of Israel and of Israeli nationhood. Thus, Virginia Tilley, an advocate of the “one-state solution,” writes that the existence of Israel has been “flawed from the start, resting on the discredited idea, on which political Zionism stakes all its moral authority, that any ethnic group can legitimately claim permanent formal dominion over a territorial state.”²⁷

This argument requires the listener to accept that there is a single state in the world that is based on the idea of the nation state as the realization of the national rights of a particular ethnic national group, and that state is Israel, and such a unique anomaly can therefore not claim the normal, unambiguous right to survival that is usually afforded states.²⁸ The claim, however, that Israel is an anomaly in this regard is unsustainable. Both Egypt and Syria describe themselves as “Arab republics”. The Egyptian Constitution stipulates in Article 2, Chapter 1 that “Islam is the State religion, Arabic is the official language and the principles of Islamic Shari’a is the principal source of legislation.”²⁹ Both Egypt and Syria require that their president be a Muslim. The Syrian Constitution of 1973 also cites Islamic jurisprudence as the main source of legislation.³⁰ Saudi Arabia and Pakistan base their entire legitimacy and identity on their Muslim nature. The Palestinian Authority also in its constitution describes the Palestinian people in ethnic and religious terms as “part of the Arab and Islamic nations,” declares Islam as the official religion of the Palestinian state, and cites Islamic Shari’a law as a “major source for legislation.”³¹ The world is filled with states that derive their legitimacy and identity from the idea of themselves as the expression of the tradition and national rights of the group that makes up the majority of the population. This

type of argument, therefore, cannot coherently explain why “one-state” advocates believe that the disappearance of Israel and the nullification of the right of Israelis to self-determination are acceptable and even preferable outcomes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

THE “ONE-STATE” IDEA AND THE NOTION OF THE ARTIFICIALITY OF ISRAELI AND JEWISH NATIONHOOD

If the conflict between Israeli Jews and their Palestinian/Arab enemies is seen as a clash between two authentic, historically and culturally rooted national groups, then it is intuitive that a solution to it must rest on the partial realization of the claims of each side, and subsequent coexistence between them. There are two reasons for this: The first reason is because it is a general axiom that the destruction of the sovereignty of a legitimate national entity would be an event of tragic proportions that ought to be prevented. The second, more pragmatic reason is because historic evidence suggests that when a multiplicity of historically hostile national entities are forced to live together in a single state framework, the almost inevitable result will be strife.

Advocates of the “one-state solution” in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however, assume that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is or ought to be exempt from these considerations. They assume that Israeli Jews either will not, or ought not, resist attempts to strip them of statehood. Why is this assumption made when it seems to contradict both available historical evidence and international norms?

Long embedded in Arab and Palestinian nationalism has been the notion that Zionist and Israeli Jewish identity is analogous not to that of other “legitimate” nations--such as Palestinian Arabs, British, French, and so on--but rather to illegitimate communities born of European colonialism, who have not in the post-1945 period generally been seen as laying legitimate claim to the self-determination to be afforded to genuine “nations.” Examples of this kind of community would be the British

settlers of “Rhodesia” in southern Africa, and the French settlers (known as “pieds noirs”) in Algeria. In both these cases, the settlers, once faced down by the reality of local, indigenous resistance, made a rational accounting of their own interests and either acquiesced to rule by the indigenous people or departed whence they came. Palestinian nationalism has long viewed Israeli Jews as analogous to these communities. No reconsidering of this characterization took place during the period of the peace process of the 1990s. Due to the geographical proximity, the example of the Algerian “pieds noirs” has been that most commonly cited.³² The “pieds noirs” have been of particular interest to Palestinian nationalists because of their large number and more or less complete departure from Algeria back to France following the granting of independence to Algeria.

The view of Israeli Jews as analogous to the “pieds noirs” and others like them--i.e., the view of Zionism as merely a movement of European colonialism--has never undergone revision among Palestinian nationalists. It is a view shared by the most moderate and the most radical circles within this trend.³³ Certain adherents to this view decided on pragmatic grounds in the 1990s that the one-state solution should be abandoned because of prevailing political realities. The essential rightness and justice of the one-state idea, however, was never questioned. The short period of acceptance of the “two-state solution,” therefore, can to a certain extent be seen as a departure by Palestinian nationalism from its more natural stance, and the current trend of return to the “one-state” option is a return to a position more in keeping with the deep view of the conflict held by this trend.

The problem with this outlook is that Israeli Jews have refused to play the role allotted them. One of the notable characteristics of both Palestinian nationalism and broader Arab analysis of Israel has been the tendency to engage in gloomy predictions for Zionism and Israel. Ever since the 1960s, prophecies suggesting that the divide between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, or the “artificiality” of Israeli culture, or the religious-secular divide,

or fear induced in “settlers” by Palestinian “resistance” would soon lead to the collapse of Zionism have abounded. Israel, in the meantime, has absorbed immigrants and developed--not without problems, to be sure, but generally successfully.

This, however, has not led to a fundamental rethink of the nature of the adversary. The intellectual tools surely exist for such a rethink, and engaging in it need not necessarily imply sympathy or agreement with Zionism or the Jewish national project. Were Palestinian nationalism, for example, to factor into its understanding of Zionism not only those aspects involving settlement and colonization but also such elements as the presence of Jewish sovereignty in the area in antiquity, the unbroken link via Jewish tradition felt by Jews with that ancient sovereignty, the many--sometimes successful--attempts in pre-modernity of Jews to re-establish communities in the area in question, the terrible suffering of Jews in the Diaspora and the notion in Jewish tradition of the “return to Zion” and the centrality of Jerusalem, this might make possible a better understanding of the durability and nature of Jewish and Israeli nationhood. This, in turn, might make the deepening of a more pragmatic outlook more feasible. As yet, however, there are no signs of this happening.

Rather, the conceptualization among secular Palestinian nationalists of Zionism as a colonization movement par excellence and nothing else continues to hold sway. The return to the idea of the “one-state solution” reflects the continued strength of this characterization. The growth alongside Palestinian nationalism of a newer, Islamist competitor whose very different outlook leads it also to a similar strategy of negation of the opposing side is perhaps the most important development in Palestinian politics over the last two decades. In the current situation, legitimacy in Palestinian politics continues to be judged according to fealty to an idea of the complete defeat of the enemy, and the most potent growing political force is a religious movement committed to this ideal. Against this backdrop, secular Palestinian nationalism

appears to be retreating back down the road it traveled in the 1990s, to the point at which its journey began in the late 1960s. The growing resonance of the old-new idea of the “one-state solution” is the most notable evidence of this process.

NOTES

¹ See Michael Terazi, “Why Not Two Peoples, One State?,” *New York Times*, October 25, 2004.

² Tony Judt, “Israel: The Alternative,” *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 50, No. 16, (October 23, 2003).

³ See the Hamas Charter, August 18, 1988, [Uhttp://www.mideastweb.org](http://www.mideastweb.org)U.

⁴ Alain Gresh, *The PLO: The Struggle Within* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1988), p. 49.

⁵ Palestinian National Covenant, 1964, Article 7, [Uhttp://www.un.int](http://www.un.int)U.

⁶ Yehoshafat Harkabi, “Commentary on the Palestinian National Covenant,” attachment to letter from Israeli Ambassador to the UN Chaim Herzog to the President of the Security Council, January 14, 1976, [Uhttp://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF](http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF)U.

⁷ See Gresh, *The PLO*, pp. 49-50, for a discussion of the common but mistaken use of the word “secular” in describing the kind of state sought at this time by the PLO. Arafat himself denied that this term was ever used by the Palestinians.

⁸ Hamas Charter, Article 11.

⁹ Palestinian National Charter, 1968, Article 22, [Uhttp://www.yale.edu](http://www.yale.edu)U.

¹⁰ Palestinian National Charter, 1968, Article 21.

¹¹ Palestinian National Charter, 1968, Article 15.

¹² Palestinian National Charter, 1968, Article 20.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Palestinian National Charter, 1968, Article 12.

¹⁵ See Gresh, *The PLO*, pp. 34-51 for details on the debate in the PLO in the early 1970s

before the adoption of the “Democratic state” formula.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 49.

¹⁷ Uri Avnery, “The Struggle for Land,” *Palestine-Israel Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1997), [Uhttp://www.pij.org](http://www.pij.org)U.

¹⁸ Gresh, *The PLO*, p. 168.

¹⁹ See Avnery, “The Struggle for Land,” for an exposition of this point of view.

²⁰ “Kaddumi Reports That PLO Charter Never Recognized Israel,” *Bicom Weekend Brief*, April 26, 2004.

²¹ “Qurei: Palestinians Might Demand Citizenship,” *Jerusalem Post*, August 11, 2008, [Uhttp://www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)U.

²² “Kaddumi Reports.”

²³ For a variety of articles advocating the “one-state solution,” see [Uhttp://www.one-state.net](http://www.one-state.net)U.

²⁴ See, for example, Ahmad Samih Khalidi, “A One State Solution: A Unitary Arab-Jewish Homeland Could Bring Lasting Peace to the Middle East,” *The Guardian*, September 29, 2003.

²⁵ Visit [Uhttp://www.one-state.net](http://www.one-state.net)U for archive of articles advocating this option in the period up to 2007.

²⁶ See Palestinian National Charter for evidence of the specifically Arab ethno-national nature of the Palestinian nationalist ideology.

²⁷ Virginia Tilley, *The One State Solution: A Breakthrough for Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Deadlock* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), p. 132.

²⁸ In many examples, Israel is not considered unique, but is classed with a very small group of other aberrant states, such as Nazi Germany, imperial Japan, and apartheid South Africa. See interview with British journalist Jonathan Cook for an example of these comparisons,

[Uhttp://vineyardsaker.blogspot.com](http://vineyardsaker.blogspot.com)U.

Virginia Tilley herself considers Israel an example of “ethnic nationalism,” which she considers also once pertained in South Africa and Northern Ireland but has since been defeated. Her criteria for defining what this

ideology consists of are unfortunately never clarified.

²⁹ Nabil Malek, *Reviewing the Promotion and Practical Realization of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities at the National Level: A Country Situation: The Coptic Minority of Egypt*, Commission on Human Rights, Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Fifty-seventh session, Working Group on Minorities, Eleventh session, May 30-June 3, 2005.

³⁰ Constitution of Syria (1973), Jurist Legal Intelligence, U<http://jurist.law.pitt.edu>U.

³¹ Constitution of the state of Palestine, Third Draft, March 25, 2003, U<http://www.jmcc.org>U.

³² See for example, PLO Leader Yasir Arafat's speech to the UN General Assembly in 1974, which he opened by recalling UN support for the Algerian struggle for independence before going on to cite Zionism as an example of Western colonialism. Speech of Yasir Arafat before the UN General Assembly, November 13, 1974, U<http://www.mideastweb.org>U.

³³ See, for example, the statements made by moderate Palestinian figure Professor Sari Nusseibeh in Akiva Eldar, "We Are Running Out of Time for a Two-state Solution," *Haaretz*, August 16, 2008. U<http://www.haaretz.com>U.