

# A history of Anti-partitionist Perspectives in Palestine 1915-1988

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## Abstract

The diplomatic and political deadlock in what has come to be known as the Palestine/Israel conflict, has led to the re-emergence of an anti-partition discourse that draws its arguments from the reality on the ground and/or from anti-Zionism. Why such a re-emergence? Actually, anti-partitionism as an antagonism depends on its corollary, partitionism, and as such, they have existed for the same period of time. Furthermore, the debate between anti-partitionists and pro-partitionists – nowadays often referred to as a debate between the one-state and the two-state solution – is not peculiar to the period around 2000. It echoes the situation in the late 1910s when the British were settling in Palestine and authorising the Zionist settler colonial movement to build a Jewish homeland thus introducing the seeds of partition and arousing expressions of anti-partitionism.

This dissertation aims to articulate a political history of the anti-partitionist perspectives against the backdrop of an increasing acceptance of Palestine's partition as a solution. This account runs from 1915 and the first partition – that of the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire – to 1988 and the Palestinian recognition of the principle of partition. Thus, I argue that the anti-partitionist perspectives have persisted throughout history.

Such a historical perspective enabled me to consider the acceptance of partition as the result of a shift from a “national and territorial liberation” strategy to the search for “sovereignty and national independence”, a shift that was operated in the Palestinian national movement as well as in the Zionist movement, and which made statehood the main objective.

In this regard, the Palestinian acceptance of the principle of partition and of a two-state solution may be regarded as a legitimisation of the Israeli colonial settler state.

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## List of Acronyms

AHC	Arab Higher Committee
ALC	Arab League Council
ALF	Arab Liberation Front
ANM	Arab Nationalists Movement
CUP	committee of Union and Progress
DOP	Declaration of Principles
DPFLP	Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
Fatah	Palestine National Liberation Movement (Reverse acronym of <i>Harakat al-Taḥrīr al-Waṭani al-Filasṭīni</i> )
GUPS	General Union of the Palestinian Students
LON	League of Nations
PA	Palestinian Authority
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestinian National Council
OETA	Occupied Enemy Territories Administrations
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
SNC	Syrian National Congress
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSCOP	United Nations Special Committee on Palestine
UNR	United Nations Resolution
WBGS	West Bank and Gaza Strip
WZO	World Zionist Organization



# Introduction: The Road to partition

## A. Objectives and context of the study

### **Objectives**

This dissertation aims to highlight the persistence of the anti-partitionist perspectives in Palestine from World War One to the Palestine Liberation Organisation's decision in 1988 to accept the principle of the partition of Palestine and to embrace the dominant two-state discourse. For that purpose, I aim to articulate the history of the anti-partition perspective as a vector of Unitarian solutions to the *Palestine question* against the backdrop of the gradual acceptance of partition. I will study the anti-partition perspective and the alternatives it proposes during that period.

We have seen a strong resurgence of anti-partitionism in the form of one-statism or bi-nationalism since Oslo and especially at the turn of the Century. This thesis argues that anti-partitionism has existed for a long time but that it has never been dominant in the decision-making circles. Indeed, the debate between anti-partitionists and pro-partitionists, often characterised in contemporary literature as the debate between the one-state and two-state solutions, is not recent or peculiar to the period around 2000, but rather echoes and reminds us of the situation in the late 1910s: the division of the Arab territories under Ottoman rule, the partition of Syria and the establishment of the British mandate in Palestine, a mandate which authorised and supported the installation of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. With the Balfour Declaration and the mandate, the British authorities were introducing the seeds of separation and indeed the seeds of partition.

The last fifteen years have seen a proliferation of studies on the "one-state solution". However, these usually focus on one anti-partitionist organisation and/or one specific moment in the rise of anti-partitionism. Moreover, they mostly deal with anti-partitionism within the ranks of one of the

factions on the Palestine scene and/or on one moment of anti-partitionist history. Indeed, they usually concentrate on the discourse of bi-nationalist groups present in the Zionist movement during the mandate, or on the Arab anti-partitionist position as one of refusal but rarely on the Unitarian propositions whether before the UN partition plan or after. Indeed, what I propose here is a focus on those anti-partitionist proposals with a unitarian programme. The precision is important as anti-partition was a position common to all actors in Palestine even pro-Zionist British members of the Parliament and Zionist maximalists who pursued the goal of a Jewish Palestine with a separate or better absent indigenous population.

So, most of the work on the subject has focused either on *Brit Shalom* and/or the *Ihud*<sup>1</sup>, or on resolution 181, or on the PLO and its strategies and objectives. I will return to the existing studies in detail in the literature review<sup>2</sup> below.

Just as there seems to exist no study covering the diverse actors who have proposed an anti-partitionist approach – within the ranks of the British authorities (the colonial power), the Zionist movement and Israel or the Palestinian Arabs. Neither does there seem to be any study – narrative or comparative - that aims to present a wider historical approach and understand why anti-partitionism, with its roots in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, has never ceased to exist and has even seen remarkable resurgences over the decades. Indeed, most of the works tend to analyse the diverse Unitarian propositions as moments in history despite the fact that there is continuity. This means that even the works on anti-partition tend to partition the issue and isolate the various attempts.

What I propose, is to adopt a historical perspective to understand the shift from the demand for national liberation and independence to the demand for political sovereignty, even if it means accepting partition. Indeed, at some point, the attitude towards partition changed in both movements – the Zionist movement as well as the Palestinian resistance movement – and we can see that this shift was taking place in the late 1930s for the Zionist movement and in

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<sup>1</sup> Brit Shalom and the Ihud are two Zionist groups that advocated bi-nationalism under the British mandate and they will be the object of Chapter Five.

<sup>2</sup> Here is a short account of the existing works: Among the works we could cite Shalom Ratzabi's *The Radical circle in Brith Shalom*; Joseph Heller's *From Brith Shalom to Ihud, Judah Leib Magnes and the struggle for a binational state in Palestine*; Tamar Hermann's "The binational idea in Israel/Palestine: Past and present", *Nations and Nationalism* 11 (3), July 2005etc...

the 1980s for the Palestinian resistance movement. This shift, I argue, is in fact a shift from an idealist programme to a pragmatic acknowledgement of the situation, from “national and territorial liberation” to a strategy of gaining “sovereignty and national independence”.

### **Context of the study**

*“The PLO will seek a comprehensive settlement among the parties concerned in the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the State of Palestine, Israel, and other neighbours, within the framework of the international conference for peace in the Middle East on the basis of resolutions 242 and 338 and so as to guarantee equality and the balance of interests, especially our people’s rights, in freedom, national independence, and respect the right to exist in peace and security for all”<sup>3</sup>.*

These words were pronounced by Yasser Arafat, in his speech to the United Nations (UN) in Geneva during the Intifada, on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1988. He was then the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of all Palestinians – those living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), those living in Israel and all the refugees dispersed around the world. 1988 constitutes a turning point in the history of the Palestinian liberation movement as it marked the PLO's recognition of UN resolutions 242 and 338. UN resolution 242 was adopted in 1967 and it called for the withdrawal of Israel's army from territories<sup>4</sup> occupied during the *six days war* and “the respect and acknowledgement” of all the states of the region. Chairman Arafat's speech meant recognition of the principle of resolution 181, the UN partition plan of 1947, that is to say the acceptance of the partition of Palestine. As for resolution 338, it was adopted in 1973 to call for the end of the war, reiterate the need to apply resolution 242 and called for “immediate negotiations”.

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpt from Yasser Arafat's speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations in Geneva, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1988. The text of the speech is available on the English page of *Le Monde Diplomatique*: <http://mondediplo.com/focus/mideast/arafat88-en>.

<sup>4</sup> The text of the resolution said territories without the article and as such it stayed vague as to which territories it referred to whereas the French version stated “les territoires”, suggesting all the territories occupied in 1967.

And indeed, Chairman Arafat's speech opened the way for future diplomatic contacts. In 1991, the Americans convened a meeting in Madrid with the Israelis, Jordanians, Syrians and Palestinians to discuss the steps towards peace. These and other secret negotiations led to the Oslo agreements with the signature of the *Declaration of Principles* in Washington on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1993. These agreements eventually prefigure the acceptance of the two-state scenario as a solution for the conflict.

*“The Government of the State of Israel and the PLO team (in the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to the Middle East Peace Conference - the "Palestinian Delegation"), representing the Palestinian people, agree that it is time to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, recognise their mutual legitimate and political rights, and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process”<sup>5</sup>.*

The Oslo agreements and the Declaration of Principles' signify the recognition of the PLO by Israel and the United States, as well as the recognition of the state of Israel by the Palestinians. Nevertheless, these agreements were elaborated as interim agreements and were supposed to be followed by other discussions about the final status and, eventually, to lead to the creation of a Palestinian state within five years. However, in 1998, five years after the signature of the Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel, no agreement about the final status was reached. Moreover, Israel had been expanding the building of settlements and the occupation and colonisation of Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Meron Benvenisti the former Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem and political scientist analyses the Oslo Agreement results as follows:

*“The Oslo framework, which ostensibly was aimed at creating the conditions for separation and establishment of a Palestinian state, was nothing more than a bi-national regime, in which there was defined division of authority and responsibility between the dominant Israeli element and the PA. The latter was controlled indirectly while Israel was allowed to continue its integration of the territories, turning the entire Mandatory Palestine into an indivisible geopolitical entity”<sup>6</sup>.*

<sup>5</sup> Excerpt of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_depth/middle\\_east/israel\\_and\\_the\\_palestinians/key\\_documents/1682727.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/middle_east/israel_and_the_palestinians/key_documents/1682727.stm)

<sup>6</sup> Benvenisti, Meron, “The Binational option”, *Haaretz*, November 2, 2002: <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/the-binational-option-1.29032> .

Whereas the reality on the ground was undergoing dramatic changes, the terms of negotiations did not take these into account and remained as they had been at the beginning of the process. So when, in July 2000, the Palestinians met the Israelis and the Americans around the negotiating table, the latter still based their demands and conditions on the pre-Oslo situation. Two months later, in September 2000, the second Intifada broke out and this time the harsh repression was extended to the Palestinian population in Israel; the Israeli authorities increased their control over the Occupied Territories, re-creating and inter-weaving this control at all levels – geographic, demographic, political, administrative, economical and social, leading to a bi-national reality as described, in 2007, by Meron Benvenisti.

*“One must therefore seek a different paradigm to describe the state of affairs more than forty years after Israel/Palestine became one geopolitical unit again, after nineteen years of partition. The term 'de facto bi-national regime' is preferable to the occupier/occupied paradigm, because it describes the mutual dependence of both societies, as well as the physical, economic, symbolic and cultural ties that cannot be severed without an intolerable cost. Describing the situation as de facto bi-national does not indicate parity between Israelis and Palestinians – on the contrary, it stresses the total dominance of the Jewish-Israeli nation, which controls a Palestinian nation that is fragmented both territorially and socially. No paradigm of military occupation can reflect the Bantustans created in the occupied territories, which separate a free and flourishing population with a gross domestic product of almost 30 thousand dollars per capita from a dominated population unable to shape its own future with a GDP of \$1,500 per capita. No paradigm of military occupation can explain how half the occupied areas ("area C") have essentially been annexed, leaving the occupied population with disconnected lands and no viable existence. Only a strategy of annexation and permanent rule can explain the vast settlement scheme and the enormous investment in housing and infrastructure, estimated at US\$100 million”.*

The changing situation on the ground and the lack of progress in the negotiations has led firstly, to the diplomatic milieu reinforcing their support for partition and asserting the urgency of implementing a two-state solution<sup>8</sup> and,

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Meron Benvenisti was in charge of the planning programme within the municipality of Jerusalem.

<sup>7</sup> Benvenisti, Meron, “The inevitable bi-national regime”, *Haaretz*, January 22, 2010, translated from the Hebrew by Zalman Amit and Daphna Levitt for *The American Task Force*: [http://www.americantaskforce.org/daily\\_news\\_article/2010/01/22/1264136400\\_13](http://www.americantaskforce.org/daily_news_article/2010/01/22/1264136400_13)

<sup>8</sup> As shown in President Georges W. Bush's speech on the occasion of the UN Security Council Resolution 1397, adopted on March 12, 2002. The text of the resolution is available at:

secondly, to the resurgence of an anti-partitionist discourse – which had been marginalised and dismissed for decades due to the dominance of the two-state discourse.

This has also led to two phenomena – first, many observers, both Palestinians and Israelis, who were in favour of the partition and its corollary – the two-state solution – have started to adhere to the anti-partitionist discourse on the basis of the changing reality on the ground. This is the case of personalities such as the former president of the Israeli parliament, Avraham Burg. In fact, the continuous colonisation of the West Bank has been progressively fragmenting the geographical and demographical dimensions, leading to a situation whereby the spaces and populations are so intermingled that partition would not be possible without a massive transfer of population. Second, those who advocated anti-partition on the basis of anti-Zionism were provided with new arguments such as the facts on the ground.

Anti-partitionism finds its expression in two main perspectives, the one geopolitical and “realistic”, the other an anti-Zionist perspective. It is noteworthy that Edward Said made the link between the two when he strongly criticised the Oslo Agreement from its inception. He addressed the impossibility of finding a solution to the Palestine question as long as Zionism prevails and advocated the development of the concept and the practice of citizenship as it is “the main vehicle for coexistence”<sup>9</sup>. This is generally a position shared by Palestinians advocating the end of the two-state solution. The geopolitical perspective is based on an approach that defines itself as the one drawing its arguments from reality. Among its proponents, some adhere to the analysis of the Israeli regime being an ethocracy and others, using facts on the ground, assess the

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<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3d5281714.html>

It reads as follows: “ *The Security Council, recalling all its previous relevant resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), affirming a vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognised borders*”.

Then, on June 4, 2009, President of the United States Barack Obama reiterated the US commitment to a two-states solution in a speech he delivered in Cairo: "For decades, there has been a stalemate: two peoples with legitimate aspirations, each with a painful history that makes compromise elusive. It is easy to point fingers – for Palestinians to point to the displacement brought by Israel’s founding, and for Israelis to point to the constant hostility and attacks throughout its history from within its borders as well as beyond. But if we see this conflict only from one side or the other, then we will be blind to the truth: the only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security." The text of the speech is available at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/)

<sup>9</sup> Said, Edward, “The One-state solution”, *The New York Times*, January 10, 1999. His arguments would find echoes by Azmi Bishara, Omar Barghouti, Leila Farsakh and numerous others.



irreversibility of the situation and arrive at the conclusion that the prevailing bi-national situation as acknowledged by Meron Benvenisti should be translated at the level of political representation<sup>10</sup>.

The Jewish perspective, if one can call it that, advocates the de-colonisation and de-Zionisation of Judaism and the development of an anti-Zionist bi-national vision as well as the return to the roots of the conflict – in opposition to those who consider the 1967 occupation as the central historical point of departure— – and to the “Question of Palestine”<sup>11</sup>.

## **B. Conceptual framework and literature review**

### ***Conceptual framework***

The purpose of this study being to highlight the persistence of the anti-partitionist discourses and perspectives in Palestine from 1915 to 1988, it is necessary to discuss the concepts of partition and anti-partition.

Like all antagonisms, anti-partitionist discourse only exists when there is a dominant partitionist discourse and vision. According to Thomas G. Fraser, it was only during the eighteenth century with the partition of Poland that the term partition came to “assume a political meaning” and entered the political lexicon<sup>12</sup>. Despite the difficulty of defining the term, both Irish researchers, Brendan O'Leary and Joe Cleary, analysing partition, defined it in their works. The former announced:

*“A partition should be understood as an externally proposed and imposed fresh border cutting through a least one community’s national homeland, creating at least two separate units under different*

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<sup>10</sup> Oren Yiftachel and Meron Benvenisti can be considered as the principal proponents of this perspective.

<sup>11</sup> This perspective finds supporters such as Amnon Raz Krakotzkin, Azmi Bishara, As'ad Ghanem, Ilan Pappé and most Arab supporters of a “one-state solution” in Palestine-Israel.

<sup>12</sup> Fraser, Thomas G., *Partition in Ireland, India and Palestine. Theory and practice*, New York 1984; KJ Rankin, “Theoretical concepts of partition and the partitioning of Ireland”, *IBIS Working Paper N°67*, Institute for British-Irish Studies, University College Dublin, 2006, 25pp.

sovereigns and authorities (original emphasis).”<sup>13</sup>

As for Cleary, he borrows Robert Schaeffer's definition:

“Partition can be said to have occurred when two or more new states are created out of what had previously been a single (administrative) entity and when at least one of the new units claims a direct link with the prior state”<sup>14</sup>.

Just as there is antagonism, there is also a debate about the relevance of partition as a solution to ethnic and nationalist conflicts which, quite surprisingly, is relatively recent. On that subject, it is noteworthy that the question of partition and anti-partition has always provoked a debate within the societies subjected to a partition plan whereas the theory of partition and academic debate around the question of partition as a relevant tool to end ethno-nationalist competitions has been timidly developing since the fall of the Soviet Union. From then on, it has raised more interest, notably among South Eastern Asians and Irish scholars. This interest reached its paroxysm just after the Dayton Peace Agreement for former Yugoslavia, drafted in 1995. One of the main contributions in the field is Thomas G. Fraser's 1984 study on the partitions of Ireland, India and Palestine as part of the sphere of control and/or influence of the United Kingdom: *Partition in Ireland, India and Palestine, theory and practice*<sup>15</sup>. His work itself acknowledged the profusion of studies on those three countries but the lack of major studies on the question of partition. Thomas G. Fraser introduces his study by stating that: “where partition has been implemented in the twentieth century, it has never been separable from controversy”. Although as John Coakley points out in an article on the Irish experience of partition<sup>16</sup>, whilst there are numerous dissimilarities between the examples Fraser chose to focus on, there is an important common factor. As a matter of fact, according to him, what makes those three entities similar is that they were all part of the “British system”<sup>17</sup>. “But the crucial point of similarity”,

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<sup>13</sup> O'Leary, Brendan, Ian S. Lustick & Thomas Callaghy (eds.), *Right-sizing the state: the politics of moving borders*, Oxford 2001, p.54.

<sup>14</sup> Cleary, Joe, *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State, Culture and conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine*, Cambridge 2002, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Fraser, Thomas G., *Partition in Ireland, India and Palestine. Theory and practice*, New York 1984.

<sup>16</sup> Coakley, John, “Ethnic conflict and the two-state solution: the Irish experience of partition”, *IBIS Working Paper N°42*, Institute for British-Irish Studies, University College Dublin, 2004, 21pp.

<sup>17</sup> Fraser, Thomas G., *Partition in Ireland, India and Palestine. Theory and practice*, *op.cit.*, p. 2

Fraser continues, “is that in each case partition became the 'problem-solving' device adopted in an attempt to meet the claims of conflicting political aspirations” as indeed, partition is also often closely linked to nationalism, and more precisely to the expression within a single territory of competing nationalisms.

### *Settler colonialism, a vector of exclusion*

A few scholars, such as Radha Kumar and Joe Cleary, have since started to study political partition as a major issue in its own right – as opposed to as a minor issue dealt with in succinctly in the context of nationalism. They observe that partition has not occurred in all competing ethno-nationalist conflicts but usually in areas that have known colonisation and that are subject to ethno-nationalist conflicts. This observation leads them to consider that partition does not find its roots directly and solely from the strength of ethnic nationalism but is intrinsically bound to colonisation and more specifically colonisation by settlement. And indeed, as far as Palestine is concerned, colonialism and more specifically settler colonialism was involved. The question of whether Zionism is a settler colonial movement has been one of the major focal points in the debate over Zionism and continues to be strongly controversial. This is, as maintained by Maxime Rodinson, mainly due to general assumptions linked with colonialism, colonisation and its product, the colony. Indeed, it is generally assumed and supported by the definitions available in various dictionaries that a colony is necessarily a territory linked to and depending on a metropole or a capital<sup>18</sup>. This has been used by the Zionist movement to dismiss comments about its colonial character, indeed, whilst it acknowledged the fact that colonisation was part of the Zionist project, Zionist leaders and scholars would refuse to acknowledge the Zionist movement as a colonial movement<sup>19</sup>.

This has however been deconstructed by a number of scholars who have come to study settler colonialism as a global and distinct phenomenon: distinct

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<sup>18</sup> Rodinson, Maxime, “Israël, fait colonial?”, in *Peuple juif ou problème juif?*, Paris 1981, p. 233.

<sup>19</sup> On this subject read Massad, Joseph, “The 'post-colonial' colony, time, space and bodies in Palestine/Israel”, in *The Persistence of the Palestinian question, essays on Zionism and the Palestinians*, London 2006, pp. 13-40.

from metropole colonialism<sup>20</sup>. David Fieldhouse, one of the leading historians of the British Empire identified a typology based on four kinds of colonies: occupation (involving the control of strategic territories mostly for economic interests), mixed settlement (involving the presence of settlers who, by means of coercion, obtain a native work force), plantation (characterised by the acquisition of land by the settlers who will import the labour force from outside the colony) and pure settlement (involves the development of a separate economy and the elimination of the native population). However, in analytical terms, plantation, mixed settlement and pure settlement colonies are subcategories of settlement colonies<sup>21</sup>. This typology is augmented by another kind introduced by Gershon Shafir, the ethnic plantation colony.

Patrick Wolfe cited by Gabriel Piterberg, would define settler colonies as follows:

*“settler colonies were not primarily established to extract surplus value from indigenous labour. Rather, they are premised on displacing indigenes from (or replacing them on) the land [...] it is difficult to speak of an articulation between coloniser and native since the determinate articulation is not to a society but directly to the land, a precondition of social organisation”<sup>22</sup>.*

In the lineage of Maxime Rodinson, these scholars have come to identify Zionism as a form of settler colonialism and to acknowledge the exclusionist potential of settler colonialisms and *a fortiori* of Zionism. For Patrick Wolfe, the process of exclusion is inherent to that form of colonialism, he even goes further and evokes a process of elimination, he however specifies: “Settler colonialism is inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal”. For him, “destroy to replace” is what best characterises settler colonialism<sup>23</sup>. Gershon Shafir, working on the specific case of Zionism and Israel, focused on the relationship

<sup>20</sup> Scholars who have concentrated their works on settler colonialism usually analyse it through five clusters. First, the environmental and geopolitical one which covers “the potential or actual wealth of a given territory”, second, demography, third, the relationship between land and labour which also dictates the “race relations and policies”, fourth, the race and finally, “the issues pertaining to the political history of the triangle formed by the indigenous people/the settlers. This short presentation largely relies on Gabriel Piterberg’s account included in his *The returns of Zionism. Myths, politics and scholarship in Israel*, London 2008, pp. 54-62.

<sup>21</sup> Piterberg, Gabriel, *The returns of Zionism. Myths, politics and scholarship in Israel*, op.cit., p.59; Shafir, Gershon, “Zionism and colonialism. A comparative approach”, in Pappe, Ilan (ed.), *The Israel/Palestine question*, London 1999, pp. 81-96.

<sup>22</sup> Piterberg, Gabriel, *The returns of Zionism. Myths, politics and scholarship in Israel*, op.cit., p.61.

<sup>23</sup> Wolfe, Patrick, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native”, *Journal of Genocide Research* 8(4), 2006, pp. 387-409.

between land and labour in Zionist doctrine and in the Jewish community in Palestine, then constructing a materialist analysis of the development of the *Yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine). For Shafir, this development simultaneously depended on and promoted the “massive exclusion of less-expensive indigenous Arab labour from employment in all segments of the Jewish sector of the local economy”<sup>24</sup>. He goes even further and argues that this economic separatism was essential in the construction of an autonomous and homogeneous settler society and eventually in the acceptance of partition.

Zionism being a settler colonial movement, Shafir argues that Israeli colonization could only be exercised in two ways: “maximalist territorial exclusivism, the logical conclusion of which is the removal of the Palestinian Arabs; and the territorial partition of Eretz Israel/Palestine, leading to separate Israeli and Palestinian national development”<sup>25</sup>. However, Zionism as a settler colonial movement – without a metropole – would have been unable to settle in Palestine without the support of a colonial super-power<sup>26</sup>, so it was to push for an alliance with an Imperial Power, Great Britain, an alliance that produced the Balfour Declaration, the establishment of the British mandate and the introduction by right of the Zionist settlers into Palestine.

#### *In search of a superpower: the alliance with Imperialism*

Radha Kumar, states: “historically, ethnic partitions have occurred either under a colonial policy of divide and rule or in the context of colonial transfer of power”<sup>27</sup>. Joe Cleary, for his part, further explains that:

*“Ireland, India, Palestine and Cyprus were British colonies; at the end of World War II, Korea was Japanese and Vietnam a French colony. The situations in Germany and China were in most respects quite different from these, but much of China had been annexed by Japan or was under Japanese rule in the period leading up to its division, and Germany was occupied by four military powers when it was sundered.*

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<sup>24</sup> Lockman, Zachary, “Land, labor and the logic of Zionism: a critical engagement with Gershon Shafir”, *Settler Colonial Studies* 2(1), 2012, pp.9-38.

<sup>25</sup> Ram, Uri, “The colonization perspective in Israeli sociology”, in Pappé, Ilan (ed.), *The Israel/Palestine question*, *op.cit.*, pp.55-80.

<sup>26</sup> Hilal, Jamil, “Imperialism and settler colonialism in West Asia: Israel and the Arab Palestinian struggle”, *Utafiti* 1(1), 1976, *Journal of the faculty of Arts and Social Sciences*, University of Dar Es Salam, pp.52-69

<sup>27</sup> Kumar, Radha, “The partition debate”, *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 7(1), Winter/Spring 2000, pp.3-11.

*As a general rule, then, it would seem that partitions are most likely to occur where – as a consequence of colonial rule or of total military collapse in times of war – societies have lost control over their own political destinies and are vulnerable to the wills of external superpowers”<sup>28</sup>.*

This is particularly relevant in the Palestinian case; indeed, the Zionist movement – as briefly mentioned above – has been, since its inception, in search of support from a super-power. First, its leadership tried to obtain back-up from the Ottoman Empire authorities, and then, when the latter was on the eve of collapse, the Zionist leadership turned to the United Kingdom. There, it has been arguing that a Jewish entity in Palestine would be in the interest of Western powers. And after many negotiations, the movement secured a positive statement on Zionism – the Balfour Declaration.

When referring to Irish Unionists’ and Zionists’ affiliation with British Imperialism, Cleary writes:

*“Both perceived themselves as frontier peoples of empire, as chosen peoples who had already made or who would make the wilderness regions they inherited bloom; both were also consistently anxious about their demographic insufficiency vis-à-vis what they deemed as backward civilisations, majority communities that inhabited the same territory. [...] Interestingly, despite their close ties with and considerable dependence on the British establishment, both Northern Irish Unionists and Zionists showed them themselves willing to go to war with the British rather than to chance their fortunes in independent states controlled by the majority communities in the respective colonial units”<sup>29</sup>.*

The alliance with the British Empire pursued by the Zionist leadership was to constitute the official policy of the *Yishuv* as long as the colonial power supported its activities and objectives. As a matter of fact, this was later to be reversed when dissensions among the different British agencies rose up and pushed the British authorities to control Jewish immigration in Palestine.

This is best expressed by the Palestinian-American scholar Joseph Massad:

*“The Zionist movement was and presented its project of creating a Jewish State through colonization as part of the European colonizing world, while “socialist” variants of it were presenting the Zionist project as one assisting in combating imperialism and the world capitalist order.*

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<sup>28</sup> Cleary, Joe, *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State, Culture and conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine, op.cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5

*Later, the Zionist establishment itself, which had initially presented its project as colonial, was presenting itself as a movement of national liberation constituting its project as anti-colonial in nature, albeit one established through colonization but not colonialism!”<sup>30</sup>*

Partition was evoked for the first time in an official public report by the Palestine Royal Commission. The commission’s recommendations are based on the incompatibility of the Arab and Jewish aspirations:

*“An irrepressible conflict has arisen between two national communities within the narrow bounds of one small country. There is no common ground between them. Their national aspirations are incompatible. The Arabs desire to revive the traditions of the Arab golden age. The Jews desire to show what they can achieve when returned to the land in which the Jewish nation was born. Neither of the two national ideals permits a combination in the service of a single State. [...] Partition seems to offer at least a chance of ultimate peace. We can see none in any other plan.”<sup>31</sup>*

As a matter of fact, most partitions have been imposed according to a number of assumptions, among which the argument of the lesser evil and the belief that the nationalist demands of the competing ethnic groups are inextricable. However, within the Zionist movement, there were indeed groups that were cautious towards the British authorities and heavily criticised the alliance between the Zionist Movement and European imperialism. An important faction of the Zionist movement fought partition, the majority of them on the basis of their aspiration to a Jewish State over the whole of Palestine and another smaller group on the grounds that the Jews – represented by the Zionist movement – and the Arabs could find a way to cooperate towards a bi-national society.

The philosopher Martin Buber, who left many writings on the Palestine question, expressed his worries on the alliance with imperialism as follows:

*“The loyalty of our movement [Zionism] and our settlement [in Palestine] to the League of Nations and its agents is understandable. We must, however, make it clear that we have nothing to do with its present system of values, with imperialism masquerading as humanitarianism. We must therefore abstain from all “foreign policy” except for those steps and actions which are necessary for the achievement of a lasting and amicable agreement with the Arabs in all aspects of public life;*

<sup>30</sup> Massad, Joseph, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, New York 2006, p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/270, *Report of the Palestine Royal Commission*, July 1937, Summary of the report of the Palestine Royal Commission: Chapter XX, “The force of circumstances”, p. 18.

*indeed, only those steps which would bring about and sustain an all-embracing fraternal solidarity with the Arabs*".<sup>32</sup>

However, the Zionist movement, just like the Irish Unionists, did not intend to live with the majority but separately, and partition in the frame of a demand for self-determination could only lead to a transfer of population<sup>33</sup>. Nevertheless, argue the advocates of partition, transfer is unavoidable in situations of ethno-nationalist conflicts and partitions avoid wars by permitting a smooth transfer of populations.

### *Partition vs anti-partition: circumstances and justifications*

Partitions however depend on specific circumstances, but they also seem to respond to a "common structural logic" or set of justifications.

In "*Debating partition: Justification and critiques*", the political scientist Brendan O'Leary<sup>34</sup> offers a comprehensive analysis of the justifications and critiques of partition as a solution to national, ethnic and communal conflicts. He presents the main arguments in favour of and against the principle of partition, arguments collected through a critical reading of works in political science and history on the cases of political partitions such as Ireland, India and Palestine.

The main arguments in favour of partition generally point out the irreversibility of certain situations and view partition as the most realistic solution – in terms of consequences and benefits. He goes on to argue that, generally speaking, the partitionists are either proceduralists, or paternalists or both. Proceduralists tend to establish rules to which reasonable partitions should conform and to obtain the involvement of the concerned parties. As for the paternalists, they consider the concerned parties not fit to decide for themselves, and as such, they advocate that the decision should lie in the hands of a third party. According to O'Leary, the proceduralist British Empire and the pro-partition belligerents in Ireland, Palestine and India used the "cost-

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<sup>32</sup> Buber, Martin, "Avant la décision (1919)", in Mendes Flohr, Paul (ed.), Buber, Martin, *Une terre et deux peuples*, Paris 1985, pp.59-60.

<sup>33</sup> The transfer of population was indeed envisaged by the Royal Commission to secure partition. See Brendan O'Leary, "Debating partition: justifications and critiques", *IBIS Working Paper N°78*, Institute for British-Irish Studies, University College Dublin, 2006, 35pp.; Chaim Kaufmann, "When all else fails: ethnic population transfers and partitions in the twentieth century", *International Security* 23(2), Fall 1998, p. 120-56.

<sup>34</sup> O'Leary, Brendan, "Debating partition: justifications and critiques", *IBIS Working Paper N°78*, Institute for British-Irish Studies, University College Dublin, 2006, 35pp.



benefit argument” to enable the partition of these countries. Concerning Palestine, he states that “Among Zionists, the tactical judgement was that partition would help the formation of a Jewish state, and need not preclude the formal abandon of the ambition of eventual control of all of 'Eretz Israel’”<sup>35</sup>.

In *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus and Sri Lanka*, the professor of International and Comparative Politics and specialist in the study of ethnic and national conflicts and their management, Sumantra Bose, portrays five ethno-national conflicts implying competing claims to territories and tries to find out how peace can be reached in each case. Attempting to show a realistic point of view, S. Bose makes an account of the historical roots of the conflicts and then presents elements of the peace negotiations. He argues that, first, “the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be defused only by the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel”; second, to reach peace a third party is necessary and third, that these steps have to be fulfilled quickly to avoid the “spoilers” such as “extremists” and unilateral steps<sup>36</sup>. Usually very critical of the partitionist discourse – which, according to him, is becoming obsolete and rarely “provides the basis for a satisfactory, let alone desirable solution”<sup>37</sup> - Sumantra Bose justifies partition in the Palestinian-Israeli case. Nevertheless, Bose is neither a proceduralist nor a paternalist but he considers that after decades of “conflict”, the sole solution is partition.

In the face of this discourse, which is mainly based on arguments that intend to be realistic, we find the anti-partition discourse, which according to B. O'Leary, can be the prerogative of multi-nationalists as well as nationalists. He then identifies seven major arguments against partition:

- the “rejection of the rupturing of national unity”;
- the existence of “possibilities of constructive bi- and multi-nationalism”;
- the “practical impossibility of just partitions”;
- the “high likelihood of worsening rather than reducing violence”;
- the “possible mirage of homogenisation”;
- the “damage that partitions cause to the successor states”;

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Bose, Sumantra, *Contested Lands. Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka*, Cambridge 2007, pp.297-298.

<sup>37</sup> Bose, Sumantra, “The partition evasion”, *Open Democracy*, August 23, 2007: [http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/conflicts/india\\_pakistan/partition\\_peoples](http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/conflicts/india_pakistan/partition_peoples)

- the “failure to make a clean cut”<sup>38</sup>.

## ***Literature review***

The literature review presented here is divided into two sections, the first aims at introducing critically a sample of the literature dealing with partition in the context of Palestine, and the second for its part presents works focused on anti-partitionism in Palestine.

Brendan O'Leary, as we have seen, argues that most of the partitionists are proceduralists and paternalists – in this respect, the Israeli historian Benny Morris, whose essay *The Birth Of The Palestinian Refugee Problem*<sup>39</sup> has been classified amongst the most comprehensive works on the 1948 Arab-Israeli war – gives us the most striking example of partitionist discourse and arguments in his *One state-two states, resolving the Israel/Palestine conflict*<sup>40</sup>. Indeed, at the risk of signing a semi-academic work, semi-pamphlet, he depicts the one-state solution as both impracticable and unwanted. At best, he and other authors who positioned in favour of partition, see the idea as a utopia but most of the time, they see it as a dangerous proposition that would signify the end of Zionism and indeed the end of Israel as a Jewish state.

Whereas the author proposes to critically analyse the diverse one-state and two-state proposals, in reality, he is far more strongly critical of the advocates of a one-state solution than he is of the idea itself. Indeed, he simply dismisses the idea by painting it as no more than a fantasy that could not find ground because – amongst other things – of the unwillingness of the Arabs and their anti-Semitism. Benny Morris does not then re-visit to the two-state solution, and call for the establishment of a Palestinian state but rather proposes the re-annexation of the West-Bank by Jordan. That proposition is as old as the conflict itself; moreover and above all, he thus re-defines the borders of Palestine and, in doing so not only does this deny the existence of a particular Palestinian identity and nation, in the pure tradition of revisionist Zionism, it also denies the right of that nation to sovereignty.

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<sup>38</sup> O'Leary, Brendan, “Debating partition: justifications and critiques”, *op.cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Morris, Benny, *The Birth of the Palestinian refugee problem*, Cambridge 1989.

<sup>40</sup> Morris, Benny, *One state, two states*, New Haven and London 2009.

Partition is a pure product of the Zionist tradition, as both authors Itzhak Galnoor and Joseph Heller show. They tackle the politics and internal debates of the Zionist movement. Galnoor draws the history of the partition of Palestine and uses mainly secondary sources to look at the principal “internal decisions of the pre-1948 Zionist movement on the question of territory and boundaries and the arguments and positions underlying these decisions”<sup>41</sup> and, as J. Heller demonstrates, Ben Gurion, who was head of the Zionist executive power, had his own ideas on the future of Zionism. Indeed, even if he was conscious that the Palestinians would not renounce their rights<sup>42</sup>, yearning for a Jewish State, he succeeded in manoeuvring in favour of partition<sup>43</sup>. Avi Shlaim, using primary sources, shows that the Zionists were not the only ones to praise pragmatism as he reveals the role of King Abdullah of Transjordan – a role however, that should not be over-estimated<sup>44</sup> – in the partition and the outcome of the 1948 war<sup>45</sup>.

Regarding the works and positions cited above, it is interesting to question the road taken by the PLO which, after calling for the liberation of Palestine, then for a democratic and secular state, decided out of pragmatism – as it has acknowledged – to adopt the *phased programme* or plan in 1974, a programme according to which the PLO would establish a Palestinian authority in any liberated territory of the *Watan*<sup>46</sup>. It was later to recognise resolution 242 – a resolution that appeals for the withdrawal of Israel from the Occupied Territories and calls for the institution of peace – in 1988:

*“The situation in our Palestinian homeland can bear no more waiting [...] For this reason, the Palestine National Council, taking into consideration the circumstances of the Palestinians and the Israelis and the need for a spirit of tolerance between them, built its resolutions on foundations of realism”<sup>47</sup>.*

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<sup>41</sup> Galnoor, Itzhak, *The Partition of Palestine. Decision crossroads in the Zionist Movement*, New York 1995, p.2.

<sup>42</sup> Cited in Edward Said, "There is no example in history, of a people saying we agree to renounce our country, let another people come and settle here and outnumber us."

<sup>43</sup> As we will see in Chapter III.

<sup>44</sup> Avi Shlaim was criticised for over-estimating the role of the King of Transjordan and by doing so minimising the other factors that led to the partition, namely the political context created by the British in Palestine. See Simha Flapan and Ilan Pappé.

<sup>45</sup> Shlaim, Avi, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionists and the partition of Palestine*, New York 1988; *The Politics of Partition. King Abdullah, the Zionists and Palestine 1921-1951*, Abridged Ed. New York/Oxford 1990.

<sup>46</sup> Gresh, Alain, *L'OLP, histoire et stratégie*, Paris 1983.

<sup>47</sup> Excerpt from Yasser Arafat's speech at the United Nations General Assembly in Geneva, on the 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1988.

It was later to explicitly accept the UN partition resolution and the two-state solution, with the Oslo Agreement in 1993.

Focusing only on those anti-partitionist discourses that propose Unitarian solutions in the framework of the Palestine question, we see that most of the arguments against partition that have been identified by the scholars working on partition processes, have been used within the framework of the Palestine question by the anti-partitionists. This is the case whether among the ranks of anti-partitionists within the British authorities, or in the bi-nationalist circles within the Zionist movement or the Arab Palestinian resistance movement during the mandate era and later, in a more constructive fashion, in the late 1960s and early 1970s .

Both Susan Lee Hattis and Shalom Ratzabi focused their works on examples of anti-partitionist discourses and propositions within the Zionist movement. Susan Lee Hattis wrote her doctoral dissertation on the bi-national idea during the British mandate. Her work was published in 1970, at a moment when a secular and democratic state was the official objective of the PLO. She concentrated her study on the different Jewish groups advocating a bi-national solution but also on the *Yishuv's* policy towards the partition proposals. S. Lee Hattis argues that pragmatism was a guiding principle in their thoughts. Her study provides an interesting and well-furnished documentation –based essentially on archives and correspondence – that is quite extensive, choosing to focus on telling the story without any critical analysis<sup>48</sup>.

More than twenty years later, in 2002, in the heart of the second Intifada, the historian Shalom Ratzabi, published what was to be the first of a series of writings on the Zionist anti-partitionist groups – *Brit Shalom* and *Ihud*. Having himself found the idea of a bi-national entity as unrealistic, he wrote on what he defines as the “radical circle” in *Brit Shalom*, which was the first Zionist association to advocate a bi-national society in 1925. Ratzabi offers a remarkable analysis of the roots of the bi-national idea – namely eastern European nationalisms, and romanticism – and of the political and philosophical

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<sup>48</sup> Lee Hattis, Susan, *The Bi-national idea in Palestine during mandatory times*, Haifa 1970.

debates within the association<sup>49</sup>. As they advocated a humanistic universalism, they rejected the nation-state model and the *realpolitik* that was at the core of the Zionist movement's policy.

Focusing on the actors of Zionist internal opposition to the partition plan, and particularly on Gershom Scholem, Walter Benyamin and Hannah Arendt, the Israeli historian of Jewish thought Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin argues the possibility of a “constructive bi-nationalism” and introduces the idea of bi-nationalism as an element of the de-colonisation of Judaism from Zionism; by doing so, he may have written the most comprehensive book on Jewish bi-national thought. He indeed thinks outside the box and through his approach, he places the concepts of the *negation of exile* and the *return to history* at the core of Zionist thought as they serve to nationalise Judaism. He recalls that exile is a pillar of Judaism and that the idea that the Jews are outside history is a Christian protestant one. He then argues that bi-nationalism is an alternative intellectual frame, which he considers closer to Judaism than messianic politics – i.e. Zionism. Bi-nationalism is the only “future-oriented vision” and the only alternative that “enables one to consider oppressed people in an egalitarian orientation”<sup>50</sup>. Raz-Krakotzkin agrees with Hannah Arendt, who supported the bi-national alternative proposed by the anti-partitionist Zionists in the 1940s. In her fundamental article *Zionism Reconsidered* published in 1944, first she strongly criticised what she called the assimilation of Zionism, that is to say the adoption by the Zionist movement of values that led to the exclusion of the Jews from their countries, and second, the nation-state as a model that contained the seeds of exclusion and was soon to be out-dated and replaced by confederations<sup>51</sup>.

As mentioned above, since the late 1990s, there have been many works, debates and conferences<sup>52</sup> and above all hundreds of articles that share the distinction of presenting an anti-partitionist position. Among these, we could cite:

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<sup>49</sup> Ratzabi, Shalom, *Between Judaism and Zionism, the radical circle in Brit Shalom*, Leyden 2002.

<sup>50</sup> Raz-Krakotzkin, Amnon, *Exil et souveraineté. Judaïsme, sionisme et pensée binationale*, Paris 2007, p. 219.

<sup>51</sup> Arendt, Hannah, “Zionism Reconsidered”, in Kohn, Jerome and Ron H. Feldman (eds.), *The Jewish writings, Hannah Arendt*, New York 2007, pp. 343-374. On Hannah Arendt's analysis of the nation-state, read Kupiec, Anne, Martine Leibovici, Géraldine Muhlmann and Etienne Tassin (dir.), *Hannah Arendt, crises de l'État -nation*, Paris 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Jaffa–Tel Aviv (1996, 2008, 2009), Basel (1997), Bethlehem(2003), Bilbao (2003, 2004), Nazareth (2005), Geneva (2006), Bil'in (2007), Madrid (2007), London (2007), Haifa (2008, 2009), Toronto (2009), Boston (2009, 2010), Dimona (2010).

Ghada Karmi's *Married to another man*<sup>53</sup>; Ali Abunimah's *One Country, a bold proposal to end the Israeli-Palestinian impasse*<sup>54</sup> or Virginia Tiley's *The one-state solution: a breakthrough for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock*<sup>55</sup>... Most of them present the conflict through a historical perspective, analyse the current situation and finish up finding that the traditionally invoked two-state solution has either become inapplicable because of the facts on the ground or does not represent a just resolution of the conflict whilst not questioning the Israeli colonial and discriminatory policy<sup>56</sup>.

To sum up, numerous works exist on the strategies of the Zionist movement to reach partition, on the Arab and Palestinian refusal of partition and resistance to the British authorities and to the Zionist movement, others on the Unitarian alternative propositions and even works starting from the anti-partitionist perspective; however, there is no articulated history of the anti-partitionist perspectives within the framework of the Palestine question. Such a comparative study of the history of anti-partitionism is what enables us to identify the passage from Homeland to Statehood. In effect, there seems to be no work that tackles the question of the passage from a strategy of liberation involving a Unitarian discourse to the demand of sovereignty and national independence in a given territory through the anti-partitionist discourses that implicate the Zionist movement, the British authorities and the Arab-Palestinian milieu as well as the Palestinian liberation movement all together.

### **C. Methodology, sources and structure**

#### *Methodology*

Whereas numerous works have been written on the Arab and Palestinian

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<sup>53</sup> Karmi, Ghada, *Married to another man*, London 2007.

<sup>54</sup> Abunimah, Ali, *One Country, A bold proposal to end the Israeli-Palestinian impasse*, New York 2006.

<sup>55</sup> Tiley, Virginia, *The one-state solution: A breakthrough for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock*, Ann Arbor 2005.

<sup>56</sup> We could cite among others, Ilan Pappé's contribution in *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against the Palestinians*; Ghada Karmi's *Married to another man*; Ali Abunimah's *One Country, a bold proposal to end the Israeli-Palestinian impasse* or Virginia Tiley's *The one-state solution: a breakthrough for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock*...

rejection of partition and of the creation of the State of Israel, only a few focus on the alternatives proposed by the Arabs and the Palestinians. An exception would be Alain Gresh who dedicated a chapter to the democratic and secular state advocated by the PLO in the late 1960s and early 1970s when analysing the strategies of the PLO<sup>57</sup>. In fact, we find ourselves, on the one hand, with Arabic works which are scarcely used as references - an example is the work of Kamal Al-Khalidi who wrote a history of the bi-national idea among the Arab Palestinians and tackled the idea within the Zionist movement, and is one of the rare attempts to discuss bi-nationalism and/or the one-state solution<sup>58</sup>; and, on the other hand, with sources that are studied in Western scholarship from an angle that does not reveal their anti-partitionist dimension. Once again, we encounter separation, only this time it is between Arab and Western scholarships as well as a rupture in history.

Continuing in this direction, I have decided to focus on sources emanating from the ranks of the three main actors in Palestine at the time of the Balfour Declaration. Firstly, the British authorities – the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office and above all the Cabinet as the seat of decision-making – who issued the Balfour Declaration and were then granted the mandate over Palestine. It was the British who promised recognition of independence to the Arabs and a Jewish national home to the Jews (through the Zionist movement) and who were the first to propose partition. They introduced division in the Ottoman Empire and the principle of partition in the Arab territories of the Empire to eventually separate Palestine from the rest of the Arabs.

Secondly, the bi-nationalists within the Zionist movement, which claimed Palestine in order to establish Jewish National autonomy and then a Jewish state. These, as we will see, were among the sole Zionists to acknowledge the existence and rights of the Arab Palestinians and aimed at establishing a bi-national society – Jewish and Arab-Palestinian.

Thirdly, the Palestinian Arab leaders and those in the resistance movement, who, as members and representatives of the indigenous population in Palestine, opposed partition in all its forms.

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<sup>57</sup> Gresh, Alain, *OLP histoire et stratégies. Vers l'État palestinien*, Paris 1983.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Khalidi, Kamal, *The Palestinian-Israeli conflict... what perspective?*, Beirut 1998. (Arabic)

As for the sources, Zionism, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are among the most documented subjects and this in various fields of research, history, political sciences, sociology, anthropology and so forth. The history of the region is also, however, the subject of competitive narratives. In their will to expand the debate over the question of Palestine and to open it up to the Jewish Zionist and non-Zionist circles in Europe and the United States, the anti-partitionists have written mostly in English, so that today one can say that the corpus is essentially in English. The rare key documents that were not translated into English are some of those treating internal debates within the Palestinian national movement – but reading Arabic, these are accessible to me – and some documents in Hebrew for which I have the logistics necessary for their analysis.

As outlined above, the purpose of this study is to point out the persistence of the anti-partitionist perspectives. To be able to bring this study to a successful conclusion, I have taken the acceptance of partition as a historical point of reference, and then researched and focused on the anti-partitionist discursive moments on the road to the acceptance of partition. Secondly, I have researched those places where there has been a debate about partition leading to Unitarian propositions.

This study therefore, begins in 1915, when the separation of Palestine from the rest of the Arab territories that were part of the Ottoman Empire was first mentioned by the British. It ends in 1988, when the PLO finally accepted the principle of partition. After thirty years of British direct implication in the Middle Eastern arena, the finding is that the partitionists within the British authorities and the Zionist movement succeeded in imposing their views. The British quit their responsibilities in 1947, handed over their mandate to the United Nations and decided to accept any decision it might make. And indeed, the UN was to decide on the partition of Palestine at the end of that year, and the British left in 1948. The Zionists succeeded in overcoming the anti-partitionist voices and accepted partition, eventually proclaiming the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, which however, included part of what was supposed to be the Arab state and this after massive ethnic cleansing. As for the Palestinians, they rejected the partition plan and continued to struggle for the



liberation of all of Palestine until 1988, when Yasser Arafat made his speech in Algiers, a speech that was to be followed by another at the United Nations General Assembly that took place the same year in Geneva and was referred to as the Historical compromise. Arafat, in the name of the PLO, recognised in a semi-explicit way the state of Israel and the partition<sup>59</sup>.

This is why I have chosen to structure the following dissertation into six thematic chapters dealing with the roots of partition and separation; the international perspective and its evolution across time and alliances – from a unitarian vision to a partitionist one; the Zionist drive to partition; the Palestinian perspective towards partition; the bi-nationalist perspective in the Zionist camp and finally the rise and demise of the democratic and secular state proposal in the Palestinian camp.

### Sources

The chapters (chapters I, II, III and parts of chapters IV and V) covering the anti-partitionist perspectives and the Unitarian propositions during the period of the British mandate are supported firstly by British official documents – mainly from the Cabinet – and the correspondence dealing with the Hussein-MacMahon agreements, the Balfour Declaration, the partition and the Unitarian propositions made by the Zionist opposition and the Arab and Palestinian leaderships. Secondly, besides these archives, there are personal biographies, published and non-published correspondence – some of which is classified in the Zionist Archives – and political programmes emanating from Zionist bi-nationalist groups and personalities<sup>60</sup>. Third, there also are numerous secondary sources on Zionism, Palestinian nationalism and British policy in Palestine.

The chapters devoted to the anti-partitionist perspective after the United Nations resolution 181, are covered by studies analysing the political strategies of the Palestinian leadership, political groups and the Palestine Liberation

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<sup>59</sup> Muslih, Muhammad, “Towards coexistence: An analysis of the resolutions of the Palestine National Council”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 19(4), Summer 1990, pp.3-29.

<sup>60</sup> The members of *Brith Shalom* and the *Ihud* left numerous documents and correspondence, this is notably the case of Martin Buber whose texts on the “Arab question” were translated and edited by Paul Mendes Flohr; or Judah Leon Magnes whose correspondence was edited under the title of *Dissenter in Zion* by Arthur Goren.

Organisation as well as the political programmes of different Palestinian political parties and groups – the Charter and memorandums of the PLO, the Fatah, PFLP, PDFLP – since their inception. The Palestinians have also had a few encounters with Israeli anti-colonialists – most of them members of *Matzpen*<sup>61</sup>, the Socialist Organisation in Israel, a prominent but very marginal Israeli Marxist organisation; this is why I will also look into the documents that emanated from these meetings to assess the extent of the discussions and the role of *Matzpen*.

As to the conclusion, which deals with a more contemporary period, it is useful to stress that writings referring to alternatives to the two-state solution have flourished since the late 1990's. Many position papers and analyses of the situation in Israel/Palestine by both Israelis and Palestinians are available on the Internet. These documents are opinion pieces will be considered as primary sources. I will also use a set of interviews of Palestinian and Israeli scholars and community organisers in favour of a one-state solution, conducted by the filmmaker and Reader at the University of East London, Eyal Sivan in the framework of a project on the "Common State".

## *Structure*

The first chapter argues that three major documents have contributed to seal the future of Palestine (the McMahon-Husseini correspondence, the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Balfour Declaration). We find out first, that the seeds of partition in the Middle East were contained in the text of these three documents and that the McMahon-Husseini correspondence already introduced separation of Palestine and Lebanon from the rest of the region. Second, the Balfour Declaration did definitely plant the separation principle in the region and officially introduce it in Palestine, moreover, it established the partition of Syria.

Chapter Two argues that the mandate for Palestine which on the one hand re-affirmed the Balfour Declaration and on the other hand was officially aimed at preparing the Arabs of Palestine for self-determination, sanctioned the

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<sup>61</sup> *Matzpen* literally means the Compass. *Matzpen* was an anti-capitalist and anti-Zionist organisation, founded in Israel in 1962 and stayed active until the 1980s. *Matzpen* was also the name of the monthly publication of the Organisation. The documents and writings of *Matzpen* can be found on the website of the Organisation: <http://98.130.214.177/index.asp?p=100>

partition of Syria. Furthermore, the British simultaneously implemented policies leading to (the emergence of the conditions for) the partition of Palestine and advocated a unitary state. Torn between partition and a unitary state as solutions, they appealed to the Americans and the international instances that finally advocated territorial partition – but economic union – on ground of the incompatibility of the nationalist demands in presence. From then on, the United States would replace G.B on the Middle East scene and they would contribute to the imposition of partition as the only solution that could bring in peace.

Chapter Three argues that separation has been a guiding principle in Zionist ideology and that this has contributed to the emergence of partition as a solution to the Palestine question. Though the leading idea had always been to establish a Jewish State in all of Palestine (officially voiced in the Biltmore programme in 1942 through the demand of a unitary state), pragmatism and tactics pushed the Zionist leadership to accept partition. However, we find out first, that nominal acceptance of partition has not led to its implementation and second, that the debate over Greater Israel would re-emerge in the official discourse notably with the 1967 war. The latter would then be challenged by the two-state movement among the Zionist left-wing which developed a discourse of peace through separation.

Chapter Four shows that the Palestinians have been torn between Qawmiyya and Wataniyya but had to adapt to the *de facto* partition of the Middle East by espousing Wataniyya as a way to struggle against the foreign powers. It argues that the Palestinians have been consistent in their rejection of the partition of Syria first, then of Palestine to the point that they were ready to establish a unitary state (based on proportionality provided Jewish immigration and purchase of land would cease) including the Jews.

The Palestinians later rejected the UN Partition plan but consented – thanks to an effort by some UN members – to offer a unitary state in Palestine. In vain, as Israel was created in May 1948 leading the Palestinian leadership in exile to proclaim the Government of All Palestine.

Chapter Five presents the bi-national idea as it was developed by the advocates of spiritual Zionism. It argues that immediately after the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, an opposition has grown within the Zionist movement, an opposition that rejected separatism and the dialectics of majority/minority as

developed by mainstream Zionists and advocated cooperation with the Arabs in order to establish a bi-national society and state. We find out that this opposition based its thought on Jewish morals and as such their discourse provides a new anti-partitionist argument. However, the bi-nationalists' failure to acknowledge Zionism as a settler colonial movement compromised their chance of an agreement with the Palestinians. Furthermore, once Israel was born the bi-nationalist option declined.

Chapter 6 shows that even after the adoption of the two-state solution by the United Nations and the Nakba, the Palestinians continued to reject the partition of Palestine notably through the development of the debate over the Kiyat. I then argue that, recognising the facts on the ground, notably the existence of an Israeli Jewish community and inspired by the revolutionary processes in the Third World, the Palestinians elaborated a one-statist solution under the slogan "democratic state". In this shift in their position, the Palestinians also called the Israeli Jews to join them in their struggle and moved closer with some small Israeli anti-Zionist groups such as Matzpen. However, the facts on the ground and the evolution of the Palestine Question at the international level led the PLO to adopt a phased programme with the immediate objective of establishing a Palestinian national autonomy and then state over part of Palestine. Then, the temporary became permanent in 1988 when the PLO made its "historic compromise".

The conclusion examines the outcome of the PLO's acceptance of partition and the two-state solution. It also shows that the reluctance of Israel to recognise national rights to the Palestinians translated into an exacerbated colonisation policy and occupation, to the point that it created an inextricable situation of extreme intermingling of the territories and populations making unviable any Palestinian national sovereignty impossible to achieve.

Then, I argue first, that partition could never be a valid solution for the Palestine question. Indeed, the colonial fact has come to invalidate the geographical criteria and contributed to bring back the Palestine Question (with the right of return, the question of the Palestinians in Israel at the centre of the questioning). Second, that this situation had led to the resurgence of an anti-partitionist discourse, which highlights the persistence of anti-partitionism in Palestine/Israel.





## **Chapter One: The Origins of partition and separation in Palestine 1882-1918**

Palestine, within the borders drawn by the British and the French between 1916 and 1922 – from the Jordan River in the east, to the Mediterranean in the west, had been a province of the Ottoman Empire for four centuries. However, in 1922, the League of Nations would not only sanction the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire but also the division of the Arab territories and above all the partition of Syria. The latter was to leave space for four Arab countries under western influence: Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Palestine. Some fifteen years later, invoking partition as a “problem-solving device”, Great Britain would propose the partition of Palestine into two states, a Jewish one and an Arab one. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the process of division of the Arab Ottoman world and the partition of Greater Syria, and it argues that in these events lie the seeds of separation, division and ultimately partition.

And indeed, we can observe three moments that were to lead to the partition of Syria, which will punctuate this chapter. Firstly the dismantlement followed by the installation of Western zones of interest according to artificial boundaries, secondly, the partition of Syria against the will of the indigenous people and thirdly, the introduction of a separatist settler movement into Palestine, leading to the extreme polarisation of the two communities (Zionists and Arabs).

These moments find their significance in three major events. Firstly, the McMahon-Hussein correspondence and British pledges to the Arabs. Secondly, the French-British reorganisation of the Arab territories that were part of the Ottoman Empire and their self-attribution of zones of influence. Last but not least, the Balfour Declaration and the British pledge to the Zionist movement that was to leave space for a new actor on the Arab Palestinian scene.

## A. Arabism and Zionism

The nineteenth century introduced political, economic and social developments all over the world and the Ottoman Empire would not come through it unscathed. The Ottoman government would also implement liberal reforms – the *Tanzimat*<sup>1</sup> – aiming at the “modernisation” of the empire. With the *Tanzimat*, the Ottoman government introduced decentralisation as well as new landowning laws, which enhanced the role and consequently the powers of the notables in the Ottoman provinces. At the same time, western influence was growing in the Levant and more generally in the territories of the Empire, this influence showed itself in the development of missionary schools and the use of foreign languages particularly French<sup>2</sup>.

The measures taken also favoured the development of ethnicity and indeed distinctions between Arabs, and other ethnic groups of the Empire, and the Turks. Whilst one could note the growth of an ethnic consciousness, there was, strictly speaking, still no sign of Arab nationalism and even less of separatism. These distinctions became dissensions with the arrival of the Young Turks – who had overthrown Sultan Abdul Hamid – and their unilateral will for re-centralisation, unification and secularisation of the Empire<sup>3</sup>. In concrete terms, the Young Turks government established a policy of preferential treatment for the Turks. The latter was part of a process identified as “Turkification” by some scholars of the field<sup>4</sup>. As part of the Turkification policy, the new government decided to use the Turkish language in diplomatic and administrative fields and to replace all Arabs in governmental positions across the Empire with Turks.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stands for “reorganisation”, this reorganisation process started in 1839 and ended in 1876 with the adoption of the constitution. One of the first measures was the establishment of equality for Muslims and non-Muslims alike before the law. The reorganisation concerned sectors as different as finance, justice, military, education etc...

<sup>2</sup> Laurens, Henry, *L'Orient arabe. Arabisme et Islamisme de 1798 à 1945*, Paris 2000, p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> Khader, Bishara, *L'Europe et la Palestine des croisades à nos jours*, Louvain la neuve 1999, p.99.

<sup>4</sup> This Turkish nationalist move was, according to scholars Muhammad Muslih and Sukru Hanioglu, already present in the Young Turks circles long before their empowerment, as the private correspondence of some of the leaders shows. Muslih, Muhammad, “The rise of local nationalism in the Arab East”, pp. 167-188 & Sukru Hanioglu, “The Young Turks and the Arabs before the revolution of 1908”, pp. 31-49, in Khalidi, Rashid, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva S.Simon (eds.), *The Origins of Arab nationalism*, New York 1991.

<sup>5</sup> The reader should know that there are polemics over the term of Turkification, the latter is for example not used by the scholar Ernest Dawn.



As a result of the Turkification policy, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, movements demanding the autonomy of the Arab provinces emerged. The “earliest significant manifestation of political Arabism”<sup>6</sup> was the Ottoman Arab Brotherhood, based in Constantinople, which was soon suppressed by the Ottoman authorities. However, other movements and newspapers were set up and they were followed by the introduction of texts in schoolbooks that started disseminating Arab nationalist ideas<sup>7</sup>. Even though the Young Turks outlawed autonomist Arab groups and associations, on the eve of World War I, the official position of the Arab nationalists within the Ottoman Empire was to continue considering the Ottoman Empire as the political unified framework within which they longed for equal rights and duties.

An event, however, introduced a qualitative change. An organisation based in Egypt, the Ottoman Decentralisation Organisation (ODO), convened a meeting in Paris on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1913<sup>8</sup>. This meeting was the occasion for Arab nationalists to consider the need for reforms within the Ottoman empire and demand 1) equal rights with the Turks and as such to exercise their political rights and participate in the central administration, 2) the recognition of the Arabic language in the Ottoman parliament, 3) the implementation of military duty within the region of the candidates for military service. They also expressed sympathy for the demands of the Ottoman Armenian reformists<sup>9</sup>. Their position was not only motivated by Arabism, but they also demonstrated a nationalist vision as a general political principle. However, even then, they were still demanding equal rights within the framework of the Ottoman Empire

The discourse on equal rights rapidly showed its limits, and was replaced by a far more radical one when Turkish repression increased in 1914, and when the Ottoman Empire entered into war as a German Ally. This discourse was theorised and implemented by secret societies amongst which the most significant were *Al-Fatat* (the Young Arab Society), founded around 1911 in Paris by Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinians students and *Al-'Ahd* (the Covenant

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<sup>6</sup> Dawn, Ernest, “The rise of Arabism in Syria”, *Middle East Journal* 16(2), Spring 1962, pp. 145-168.

<sup>7</sup> Dawn, Ernest, “The formation of pan-Arab ideology in the Inter-war years”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20(1), February 1988, pp. 87-91.

<sup>8</sup> Muslih, Muhammad, “The rise of local nationalism in the Arab east”, in Khalidi, Rashid, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva S.Simon (eds.), *The Origins of Arab nationalism*, *op.cit.*, p. 168.

<sup>9</sup> Carré, Olivier, *Le mouvement national palestinien*, Paris 1977, pp. 16-17.

Society mostly composed of army officers). Both societies were later to play a significant role in the establishment of the first Arab government in Damascus<sup>10</sup>. All the changes depicted above, together with the war, shook the nature of the government as well as the loyalty of the different ethnic and religious groups that made up the Empire. And even though it is clear that most Arabs remained loyal to the Empire during the war<sup>11</sup>, this situation would eventually lead to the demand of autonomy as a first step towards independence. No concept, neither that of nationhood, nor that of sovereignty as applied at the Ottoman empire level – in the sense of a sovereign Ottoman nation – could prevent the coming dismemberment<sup>12</sup>.

Parallel to that, in Eastern Europe, in the late 1890's and early 1900's nationalism was emerging amongst minorities. As a matter of fact, following the emergence of nationalism(s) in Eastern Europe and drawing inspiration from them, Zionism emerged as the Jewish nationalism. It was first advanced and theorised by intellectuals<sup>13</sup> and was far from raising a consensus within the Jewish populations of Europe. Indeed, this movement, which sought a solution to the “Jewish question” (anti-Semitism), and which, it was thought, would put a stop to the feared assimilation of Jews in ‘host countries’, was seen with rather a suspicious eye.

However, the Zionist movement was starting to organise and in 1897, the First Zionist Congress took place, giving an official stamp to Zionism and appealing for the establishment of a home in Palestine. The congress founded the Zionist Organisation (which was later to become the World Zionist Organisation) and adopted the Basel programme:

*“Zionism aims at establishing for the Jewish people a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine. For the attainment of this purpose, the Congress considers the following means serviceable:*

*1. The promotion of the settlement of Jewish agriculturists, artisans, and tradesmen in Palestine.*

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<sup>10</sup> Dawn, Ernest, “The rise of Arabism in Syria”, *op.cit.*, pp.145-168; Muslih, Muhammad, “The rise of local nationalism in the Arab east”, *op.cit.*, pp. 167-188.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Muslih, Muhammad, “Arab politics and the rise of Palestinian nationalism”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16(4), Summer 1987, pp. 77-94.

This dismemberment was not only due to internal threats, on the contrary, one should not dismiss the “external threats” and the role of the Western Colonial Powers in the decline of the Ottoman Empire. On that subject read: Fieldhouse, D.K, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958*, *op.cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Following the constant developed by Miroslav Hroch in his essay: “From national movement to the fully formed nation: the nation-building process in Europe”, in Balakrishnan, Gopal (ed.), *Mapping the nation*, London 1999, pp. 78-97.

2. *The federation of all Jews into local or general groups, according to the laws of the various countries.*
3. *The strengthening of the Jewish feeling and consciousness.*
4. *Preparatory steps for the attainment of those governmental grants which are necessary to the achievement of the Zionist purpose*<sup>14</sup>.

Zionism and its programme raised polemics and anxiety among many Jews, especially orthodox and socialist Jews. Zionism sought not only to represent all Jews, but it would erase their historical significance and Jewish explanations. Secular Jews who provided an example for the socialist group, the Bund<sup>15</sup>, rejected Zionism as a solution to the “Jewish question”. As in the case of Arabs who consider the Christians and the Muslims as part of the same national group, the Bundists refused to establish a dichotomy between the Jews and the non-Jews and preferred fighting for their rights as a national minority within their countries. In that, the Bund emerged as an anti-separatist movement and for that purpose, they proposed to integrate the paradigm of cultural autonomy in diaspora instead of territoriality, which they refused, as it would create an ethnic and territorial separation – while minimizing the class struggle. The Bundists also argued that Zionism, which by essence is inseparable from the territory, would only recreate in Palestine the same models of exploitation that existed everywhere else.

As for orthodox Jews, large parts of them saw Zionism as false messianism and, as such, as a threat to their redemption. In fact, the idea of a Jewish colonisation of Palestine was not very popular among the Jewish communities and, whilst appeals for immigration to Palestine were indeed made, these were rarely followed. Moreover, the majority of the Jews already present in Palestine had come there for religious purposes. And members of the Jewish community in Palestine were themselves rather wary.

*“The Neturei Karta, a Hassidic sect whose men wear the traditional long beards and ear ringlets, were the first Jews to move outside the walls of Jerusalem in the 19th century. Like the Arabs, they viewed the first aliyah (wave) of Jewish immigrants in the 1880's with suspicion”*<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> The Basel Programme can be found on the Jewish Virtual Library:

[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/First\\_Cong\\_&\\_Basel\\_Program.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/First_Cong_&_Basel_Program.html)

<sup>15</sup> *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lyte, Poyln un Russland* in Yiddish the language used by most of the Jewish workers in Western Europe and the Russian Empire. The General Jewish Labour Bund of Lithuania, Poland and Russia was a secular Jewish socialist party in the Russian Empire, active between 1897 and 1920.

<sup>16</sup> Glass, Charles, “Jews against Zion: Israeli-Jewish anti-Zionism”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 5(1/2), Autumn 1975 – Winter 1976, pp. 56-81.

Anti-Semitism and the pogroms in Russia brought further support however, to the Zionist movement. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and under the influence of Moses Hess, Léon Pinsker, Bernard Lazare and Theodor Herzl, Zionism developed into a national political and settlement project<sup>17</sup>. In *Der Judenstaat - The State of the Jews* – published in 1896, Theodor Herzl developed his idea of Zionism and formulated a programme with the aim of gaining political sovereignty for the Jews.

From then on, Zionism was to launch its offensive and appeal to traditional colonial powers for support, such as Great Britain and France but also the Sultan. However, the latter refused to support the Zionist enterprise<sup>18</sup>. More than a national Homeland, the Zionist movement held as an objective the establishment of a state as argued by Avi Shlaim : “from the Basel congress onward the clear and consistent aim of the Zionist movement is to create a state in Palestine for the Jewish People”<sup>19</sup>. And indeed, creating their own institutions or a state in the state was part of the strategy developed by the Zionist movement as the basis for its control over Palestine. At the turn of the century, the World Zionist Organisation had founded three bodies that were to form the basis of the future state and contribute to its development from its inception. First, the Jüdische Kolonial Bank – the Jewish Colonial Bank – in 1899, that was to become *Bank Leumi Lelsrael (Israel National Bank)*. Second, the *Keren Kayemet Lelsrael* – the Jewish National Fund – in 1901, whose role was, and still is, to “purchase, take on lease, or in exchange, or receive on lease or otherwise lands” in Palestine and the surrounding areas for the purpose of “settling Jews on such lands”<sup>20</sup>. Finally, the *Keren Hayesod* – the Reconstruction Fund - which is in charge of the nationalisation of real estate<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Zionism marked a break in history and in Jewish tradition. It developed parallel to nationalisms in Eastern Europe and it took inspiration from them. Among its objectives lied the modernisation and secularisation of Judaism, even the term “Israel” was to be emptied of its traditional sense, from a congregation, it became the name of the country.

<sup>18</sup> Benbassa, Esther, “Le sionisme dans l'empire ottoman à l'aube du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Vingtième siècle, revue d'histoire* 24, Oct-Dec 1989, pp.69-80.

<sup>19</sup> Shlaim, Avi, *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World*, London 2001, p.3; Bose, Sumantra, *Contested Lands, op.cit.*, p.212.

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<sup>21</sup> Catherine, Lucas, *Palestine. La dernière colonie?*, Berchem 2003, p. 34.

## **B. Ottoman and Arab reactions to the Zionist settlement enterprise**

Despite its efforts, the Zionist movement did not succeed in creating a mass movement. Nevertheless, Ottoman administrations had been trying since the early 1880s to ban the immigration of foreign Jewish entrepreneurs to Palestine – and to encourage them to immigrate to other provinces of the Ottoman Empire and become Ottoman subjects – however, as the newcomers kept their nationality, and by virtue of capitulations, this legislation was difficult to implement<sup>22</sup>. As for the Palestinian notables, they looked unfavourably on the new Zionist immigrants whom they saw as competing with them on an economic and social level. Palestinians complained to the Ottoman authorities<sup>23</sup>, and the Governor of Nazareth for example considered the newly immigrating Jews as having separatist tendencies. However, the authorities proved to be inefficient in their struggle against Zionist immigration<sup>24</sup>. This lack of efficiency attracted further grievances against the Ottoman administration, as well as distrust and hostility.

Muhammad Muslih traces the first acts of violence between Palestinian Arabs and Jews to 1886, in *Petah Tikva* where Palestinian peasants and villagers were prevented grazing access “to the neighbouring Muslim village of *Al Yahudiyya*”<sup>25</sup>. At the same time, there were attempts to stop Jewish immigration and land sales. In 1897, Muhammad Tahir al-Hussayni<sup>26</sup>, the mufti of Jerusalem, put in place a commission whose role was to be vigilant regarding land sales and prevent as many as possible.

Nevertheless, the second wave of immigration started moving into villages and functioning in closed exclusively Jewish circles<sup>27</sup>. Thus, it became clear that the immigrants were no longer pilgrims or Jews immigrating for personal reasons and willing to be part of the Empire, so from then on, the

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<sup>22</sup> Benbassa, Esther, “Le sionisme dans l'empire ottoman à l'aube du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *op.cit.*, pp.69-80.

<sup>23</sup> Caplan, Neil, *Futile diplomacy. Early Arab-Zionist negotiations attempts, 1913-1931*, London 1983, p 14.

<sup>24</sup> Carré, Olivier, *Le mouvement national palestinien*, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Muslih, Muhammad, *The Origins of Palestinian nationalism*, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> Father of Kamel and Amin al-Hussayni.

<sup>27</sup> This has been identified as being one of the main characteristics of the second wave of Zionist immigration between 1903 and 1914.

Ottoman administration, as well as the Arabs, became hostile to Jewish immigration.

The political “instability” of the Empire internally made it unable to face external factors such as British and French colonial ambitions and Zionist aspirations at the same time. In 1913, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) took power over the Empire and their attitude to Zionist efforts in Palestine was marked with indifference<sup>28</sup>. Facing more important threats, such as western seizures of the empire's territories, the CUP was considering various responses. Hence, they even made arrangements with the Zionist movement aimed at abolishing the immigration laws and shutting down three anti-Zionist newspapers – *al-Karmil* in Haifa, *Filastin* in Jaffa, and *al-Muqtabas* in Damascus – in exchange for money.

No organised protest movement against Zionism emerged in the late 1890's and early 1900's, however, Zionism was not unnoticed and resistance quickly developed. Indeed, it first started with resistance against land purchase by Jews. On June 24<sup>th</sup> 1891, a group of notables from Jerusalem sent a letter of protest to the Ottoman Government in Istanbul requesting that the Russian Jews be banned from purchasing Palestinian land and immigrating to Palestine as they “behave like real settlers”<sup>29</sup>.

In *Le réveil de la nation arabe* in 1905, Najib Azuri, a Christian Arab, made a quite premonitory observation:

*“the awakening of the Arab nation, and the latent effort of the Jews to reconstitute, on a very large scale, the ancient kingdom of Israel. These two movements are destined to fight continually until one is victorious over the other. The fate of the entire world will hinge on the final outcome of this struggle between two peoples representing contradictory principles”*<sup>30</sup>.

Numerous examples of protests against Zionist activities exist, many pointing to the Zionists' communitarian ways. A significant account can be found in a letter written by the governor of Nazareth in 1910, in which he remarks that the Jews tend to live apart and possess their own banks, “ in each village, they have their

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<sup>28</sup> Muslih, Muhammad, *The Origins of Palestinian nationalism, op.cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>29</sup> Catherine, Lucas, *Palestine. La dernière colonie?*, *op.cit.*, p. 32; Carré, Olivier, *Le mouvement national palestinien, op.cit.*, p.18.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Neil Caplan, *Futile diplomacy. Early Arab-Zionist negotiations attempts*, p. 12; Muslih, Muhammad, *The Origins of Palestinian nationalism, op.cit.*, pp. 77-78, Carré, Olivier, *Le mouvement national Palestinien, op.cit.*, pp.19-20.

own administration and school. They have their own flag and deceive the Ottoman administration concerning their true intentions”<sup>31</sup>.

The reaction among Arab intellectuals was inconsistent. Some thought that the Zionist movement was targeting economic sectors other than agriculture, on which Palestine essentially relied, and that they would be unsuccessful. Others thought that it would bring tools permitting the development of Palestine and enable the region to enter the modern world. Others again foresaw a real economic and political danger for the empire and the Arab nation. The latter usually based their arguments on the Jews' lack of loyalty to the Empire and/or were fed by Arabism, Palestinian patriotism or religion<sup>32</sup>.

These views were conveyed in books and local or national newspapers such as *Al-Ahram* in Cairo, or later in *al Karmil*, in Haifa and *Filastin* in Jaffa, and they sometimes showed real perspicacity<sup>33</sup>, at least when they were not shut down by the Ottoman authorities.

The years preceding the First World War witnessed the deepening of the Turkish/Arab antagonism and the exercise of a severe repression towards the Arab nationalists. The willingness of the Ottoman government to depose Sayyed Hussein bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca, only made the gap between the Hashemites and the Turks wider. Parallel to this growing hostility, a more sound opposition to Zionism and its settlement policy also started to develop.

### **C. The First World War and the McMahon-Hussein correspondence**

In February 1914, Sharif Hussein's son, Abdullah, stopped in Cairo and

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<sup>31</sup> Catherine, Lucas, *Palestine. La dernière colonie?*, *op.cit.*, p.32

<sup>32</sup> Muslih, Muhammad, *The Origins of Palestinian nationalism*, *op.cit.*

<sup>33</sup> In his study on Palestinian identity, Rashid Khalidi shows quite exhaustively the impact of Zionism in the Arabic press and in the intellectual milieu. As we have seen above, commentators did not show a united position towards Zionism, some of them praising the movement for its achievements and level of development others noticing the danger in it.

on that occasion, paid a visit to Horatio Herbert Kitchener, a British agent<sup>34</sup>. The discussion broached the subject of the Arab-Turkish relations and Abdullah confided in Kitchener and Ronald Storrs, who was the Oriental Secretary in Cairo, about the troubled relations and the eventuality of an Arab revolt in the Hejaz. He then tried to enquire about the position of the British Government regarding a possible Arab revolt against the Ottoman authorities. Kitchener's first response was dictated by caution and was at first negative. Indeed, the British were still willing to continue cordial relations with the Ottoman authorities. However, the Ottomans' rallying to Germany during the First World War gave the British the pretext to break away and consider supporting an Arab revolt in order to help defeat Germany and its allies.

Besides opening the way to the Arab war effort on the side of the allies, Abdullah's discussion with British officials in Cairo would introduce the Western powers on the Middle Eastern scene and provide them with a pre-eminent role on that same scene. Thus, it would pave the way to the reconfiguration of the Arab territory previously under Ottoman Rule.

This section examines the occurrence of the partition principle in the McMahon-Hussein correspondence and its corollary anti-partition in the Sharif's discourse about Arab unity.

The Ottoman government, allied to Germany, was expecting the Arab tribes to join them and declare their participation in the conflict as part of the Ottoman war effort and most of them did. However, Sharif Hussein was avoiding taking sides as long as he could and he sent his son, Faisal, to Istanbul to confront the Grand Vizir. On that occasion, while he was staying in Damascus, the latter became acquainted with the secret societies *al-Fatat* and *al-'Ahd*. They held numerous discussions about the situation of the Arabs and the possibilities of organising a revolt to gain independence but also about their lack of confidence towards the Imperial powers.

Indeed, Europe had become more present in the region as a confirmed colonial power (North Africa had been amputated from the Ottoman Empire through the establishment of protectorates, mandates or simply by colonisation)

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<sup>34</sup> Lord Kitchener was an officer of the British Army. He had been appointed Consul General in Egypt from 1911 to 1914, at which date he became member of the Cabinet as the Secretary of State for War, until his death in 1916. As a member of the Royal Engineers, he had been assigned to a mapping-survey of Palestine in the early 1870s.



and through economic and cultural penetration – this had in a way been facilitated by the reforms implemented by the Turks. The French and British had already started to develop their influence through education – numerous schools were opened, which were mostly attended by Christians – and through the development of literary circles, and societies<sup>35</sup>. Moreover, the French and the British had been discussing the possibility of an Ottoman collapse, in which case they would seize the opportunity to expand their respective empires and secure their interests in the area, notably the route through Palestine to the Suez Canal for the British<sup>36</sup>.

During the encounters with Faisal, they found out from him about the contacts made by Sharif Hussein with the British Government's envoy in Cairo. Faisal shared with them his reservations and doubts concerning British intentions. This piece of news allowed the members of the two societies to come up with the basis on which an agreement with the British Government could be made. For them, if such an agreement was concluded, the Arabs had to get the highest level of guarantees from British authorities. They were well aware that the British – as well as other imperial powers such as France and Russia – were keen to set foot in the Middle East and expand their empires or at least their zone of influence and they were conscious that the principle obstacle for them was the Ottoman Empire. Whilst wanting to gain independence, they were also unwilling to become pawns in the hands of other powers. Following that encounter, *al-Fatat* and *al-'Ahd* drafted a document that was later to be known as the Damascus Protocol and they presented it to Faisal on his way back from Constantinople. The text made clear the borders of the Arab territory then under Ottoman rule :

*“The recognition by Great Britain of the independence of the Arab countries lying within the following frontiers:*

*North: The Line Mersin-Adana to parallel 37N. Thence along the line Birejek-Urfa-Mardin-Midiat-Jazirat (Ibn 'Unear)-Amadia to the Persian frontier;*

*East: The Persian frontier down to the Persian Gulf;*

*South: The Indian Ocean (with the exclusion of Aden, whose status was to be maintained).*

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<sup>35</sup> Laurens, Henry, *L'Orient arabe. Arabisme et Islamisme de 1798 à 1945*, *op.cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>36</sup> Fieldhouse, D.K, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958*, *op.cit.*, pp. 45-47.

Plans were being elaborated since 1912 which viewed new configuration for the Middle East, however, there was still no discussion about the spoils. Pappé, Ilan, *A history of modern Palestine: one land two peoples*, Cambridge 2004, p. 65.

*West: The Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea back to Mersin.  
The abolition of all exceptional privileges granted to foreigners under  
the Capitulations.  
The conclusion of a defensive alliance between Great Britain and the  
future independent Arab State.  
The grant of economic preference to Great Britain*<sup>37</sup>.

This document was drafted while the Ottoman government was launching a harsh repression against the Arab nationalist leaders, some of whom were even executed.

After Kitchener's return to England, Henry McMahon was appointed High Commissioner in Egypt in January 1915. From then on, the negotiations that had started between the Hashemites and Kitchener continued with McMahon in the form of a correspondence. Sharif Hussein sent his first letter to McMahon in July 14, 1915. It made the terms of the agreement quite clear: England was to acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries. Then, it gave a rather precise idea of the territories that would be concerned by the agreement – these were the exact same boundaries as those proposed in the Damascus Protocol.

According to the terms of Sharif Hussein, the Arabs – the whole of the Arab nation – were longing to gain independence and sought the support of the British Empire in this matter as well as recognition of future Arab independence.

Britain had a month to reply to his letter, otherwise, Sharif Hussein would not be bound by previous exchanges and the Arabs would proceed as they saw fit:

*“if this period should lapse before they receive an answer, they reserve for themselves complete freedom of action. Moreover we (the Sharif's family) will consider ourselves free in word and deed from the bonds of our previous declaration which we made through Ali Eff.”*<sup>38</sup>.

However, Britain was not willing to tie its hands, and so, in his answer on August 30<sup>th</sup> 1915, Henry McMahon tried to postpone the discussion about borders. Instead, he chose to gratify the Sharif with pompous titles and to put him in his place by suggesting that the Sharif did not represent all the Arabs

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<sup>37</sup> Quoted in: Antonius, Georges, *The Arab Awakening*, Beirut 1938,/London 1985, pp. 157-158. It is noteworthy to stress that George Antonius was a Greek Orthodox Christian who had been educated at the King's College in Cambridge. During WWI, he acted as a press censor and was in contact with British Intelligence.

<sup>38</sup> National Archives, CAB 24/89, “Copy of letter from Lord Curzon to Colonel Cornwallis, covering copies of correspondence between the Sherif of Mecca and Sir H. McMahon for communication to H.H Emir Feisal”, Memorandum by the War Cabinet, 28 September 1919.

from the areas covered by the agreement.

*“With regard to the questions of limits, frontiers and boundaries, it would appear to be premature to waste our time in discussing such details in the heat of war, and while, in many of its regions, the Turks are for the moment in effective occupation; especially as we have learnt, with surprise and regret, that some of the Arabs in those areas mentioned, far from assisting us, are neglecting this, their supreme opportunity, and are lending their arms to the German and the Turks, to the new despoiler and the old oppressor”<sup>39</sup>.*

This letter and its “ambiguity” distressed the Sharif who took only nine days – on September 9, 1915 – to reply by putting things in order. First, he was not negotiating on his own behalf but was representing the Arabs, second, the question of the frontiers was not a secondary matter quite the opposite, that was the “essential point”. Moreover, he stressed that the Arabs were a united front when claiming these borders.

*“[...] your Excellency will pardon me and permit me to say clearly that the coldness and hesitation which you have displayed in the question of the limits and boundaries, by saying that the discussion of this subject at present is of no use and is a loss of time, and that they are still in the hands of the Government which is ruling them, and this might be taken to infer an estrangement or something of the sort. As these limits and boundaries demanded are not those of one person whom we should satisfy, and with whom we should discuss them after the war is over, but our peoples have seen that the life of their new proposal is bound at least by these limits, and their word is united on this”<sup>40</sup>.*

It took nearly a month and a half for McMahon to answer. Indeed, this time the British government had to make a statement on the territory claimed by the Arabs and it required extended consultation and caution. In the meantime, a deserting Arab Ottoman officer – Muhammad Farouqi – had reached Cairo and there, he met with McMahon and made an (exaggerated) account of the nationalist groups operating in Syria<sup>41</sup>. Thus the raging war, the contacts with the Sharif of Mecca and the meeting with Muhammad Sharif al Farouqi were reasons enough to engage in a discussion regarding the boundaries of the Arab territories. However, the British government would not commit themselves without reservations and conditions, so, in McMahon’s reply dated October 24,

<sup>39</sup> National Archives, CAB 24/89, “Copy of letter from Lord Curzon to Colonel Cornwallis, covering copies of correspondence between the Sherif of Mecca and Sir H. McMahon for communication to H.H Emir Feisal”, Memorandum by the War Cabinet, 28 September 1919.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Laurens, Henry, *L'Orient arabe. Arabisme et Islamisme de 1798 à 1945, op.cit.*, p. 109.

1915, they demanded the exclusion of the territories to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs and Aleppo, from the Arab claims. Of even greater significance, was the reason why they considered these territories could not be recognised in due course under Arab sovereignty: they were not “purely Arab”. These exclusions aside, the British were ready to accept the limits and boundaries proposed by the Sharif.

*“With the above modification and without prejudice to our existing treaties concluded with Arab Chiefs, we accept these limits and boundaries, and in regard to the territories therein in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to interests of her ally France [...] Subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs within the territories in the limits and boundaries proposed by the Sharif of Mecca”<sup>42</sup>.*

The not “purely Arab” territories were ones that were home to large Christian minorities such as Lebanon, which was also under the jurisdiction of France. As for Palestine, and without entering the polemics concerning McMahon's will and intentions, it was not mentioned as such and geographically speaking, lay to the south-west of the districts mentioned. However, even with these exceptions, McMahon left no doubt as to the British government's willingness to “recognise” and “support” the independence of the Arabs. This letter reveals the ethnic dimension behind the partition of Syria and its translation on the ground that would serve as the basis for a partition with a double dimension: geographical and demographical. Secondly, the British government placed itself in the position of negotiating territories lying outside of its scope.

To the surprise of the British government, the Sharif replied promptly – on November 5<sup>th</sup> – to facilitate the discussions by excluding the vilayets of Mersina and Adana from the Arab Kingdom, but, above all to make clear that there was no difference between Christians and Muslims and that all the peoples residing in the areas they claimed were Arabs.

*“ But the provinces of Aleppo and Beirut and their sea-coasts are purely Arab provinces, and there is no difference between a Moslem and a*

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<sup>42</sup> National Archives, CAB 24/89, “Copy of letter from Lord Curzon to Colonel Cornwallis, covering copies of correspondence between the Sherif of Mecca and Sir H. McMahon for communication to H.H Emir Feisal”, Memorandum by the War Cabinet, 28 September 1919.

*Christian Arab; they are both descendants of one forefather. We Moslems will follow the footsteps of the Commander of the Faithful, Omar Ibn Khattab, and other Khalifs succeeding him, who ordained in the laws of the Moslem faith that Moslems should treat the Christians as they treat themselves. He, Omar, declared, in reference to the Christians, "they will have the same privileges and submit to the same duties as ourselves." They will thus enjoy their civic rights in as much as it accords with the general interest of the whole nation".*

Approaching the question of Iraq, Sharif Hussein made sure to explain that whatever the interests of the British government, Iraq was by definition part of the Arab territory and that no independence could be complete without it. He did, however, suggest that a consensual solution including a short period of British administration could be reached<sup>43</sup>.

It is on this note that the discussions over the "essential point" ended by mid-1916, they were then to be followed by a more practical correspondence on strategic moves on the ground and material needed to conduct the revolt.

McMahon's promises were considered by the Sharif of Mecca and his followers, as a formal agreement between the Arabs – he claimed to represent – and the United Kingdom. And it is on the basis of that understanding that they established a military force under the command of Sharif Hussein's son, Faisal. The war started on July 28<sup>th</sup> on the Western front and later that year on the eastern front. The Arabs participated in the capture of Aqaba and the severing of the Hejaz railway, a vital strategic link through the Arab peninsula, which ran from Damascus to Medina. These Arab interventions enabled the British forces to advance and reach Palestine and Syria. A decisive battle was fought in Meggiddo in September 1918 and Turkey capitulated on October 31<sup>st</sup> of that same year.

Britain, however, did not lend the same importance to the agreement, and furthermore, McMahon had been wise enough to subject the agreement to the condition of respecting the "interests of her (UK's) ally France", interests that rested specifically on the partition of the Arab territories for colonial purposes. As a matter of fact, it was rather seen as a strategic move and this is best shown in a memo written in January 1916, by Thomas Edward Lawrence, best

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<sup>43</sup> National Archives, CAB 24/89. "Copy of letter from Lord Curzon to Colonel Cornwallis, covering copies of correspondence between the Sherif of Mecca and Sir H. McMahon for communication to H.H Emir Feisal", Memorandum by the War Cabinet, 28 September 1919.

known as Lawrence of Arabia, who held several functions; a British archaeologist, writer, army officer but, above all, a spy for her Majesty's government. In this memo, he explained his view of the revolt in an Orientalist tone, calling it a "beneficial event" for the British authorities.

*"because it marches with our immediate aims, the break up of the Islamic 'bloc' and the defeat and disruption of the Ottoman Empire, and because the states [Sharif Hussein] would set up to succeed the Turks would be ... harmless to ourselves... The Arabs are even less stable than the Turks. If properly handled they would remain in a state of political mosaic, a tissue of small jealous principalities incapable of cohesion"*<sup>44</sup>

#### **D. The Sykes-Picot agreements – phase two of the partition process**

In 1916, expecting the imminent collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and to expand their spheres of influence in the Middle East, the United Kingdom and France concluded a secret agreement with the assent of Tsarist Russia<sup>45</sup>. This accord known as the Sykes-Picot agreement, the names of the negotiators, François Georges-Picot<sup>46</sup> and Sir Mark Sykes<sup>47</sup>, defined the partition and dismemberment of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire and the future zones of control of each country.

The agreement was signed on May 16, 1916, and it allocated the control of south-eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, Syria and Lebanon to France and the coastal strip between the sea and the Jordan River (Palestine), today's Jordan, southern Iraq, Egypt and a small area including the ports of Haifa and Acre, to the United Kingdom – Jerusalem was intended to become an international zone<sup>48</sup>.

*"It is accordingly understood between the French and British governments: That France and Great Britain are prepared to recognise*

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<sup>44</sup> Quoted in: Dreyfuss, Robert, *Devil's game: How the United States helped unleash fundamentalist Islam*, New York 2005, p.41.

<sup>45</sup> After the revolution of October 1917, the Bolsheviks were to expose the agreement.

<sup>46</sup> François Georges-Picot (1870-1951), Diplomat, he was the French Consul in Beirut before WWI and was to continue his activities in Cairo as soon as the War started. Member of the French Colonial Party, he was an advocate of the "Syrie intégrale" or Greater Syria but under French Colonial Power.

<sup>47</sup> Mark Sykes (1879-1919), Traveller, he was also a diplomatic adviser and member of the British Conservative Party.

<sup>48</sup> Catherine, Lucas, *Palestine. La dernière colonie?*, *op.cit.*, p.35.

*and protect an independent Arab state or a confederation of Arab states (a) and (b) marked on the annexed map, under the suzerainty of an Arab chief. That in area (a) France, and in area (b) Great Britain, shall have priority of right of enterprise and local loans. That in area (a) France, and in area (b) Great Britain, shall alone supply advisers or foreign functionaries at the request of the Arab state or confederation of Arab states*<sup>49</sup>.

Whereas the terms of Sharif Hussein seemed clear concerning the Arab territory, which he considered as a whole, the Sykes – Picot agreement envisaged the dividing up and the partition of that territory even if it was to lead eventually – as stated in the text – to the independence of the Arabs.

These agreements could hardly mask the British government's bad faith in its negotiation with the Arabs and above all its colonial aims in the Middle East. The question about the incompatibility of the Hussein-McMahon correspondence and the Sykes-Picot agreement has been raised by numerous scholars and the debate it has provoked is far from over. Seen from the Arab perspective, these secret agreements were inconsistent with the McMahon-Hussein correspondence. As indeed, the Arabs had no idea that Britain had been in discussions with France regarding the Ottoman Empire's territories since the 1900s, British officials, however, maintained that there was no contradiction between the two agreements, at least in their public communications. Nevertheless, this inconsistency was raised and used among the British government as soon as the Sykes-Picot Agreement was signed, as attested by a note written by William Ormsby Gore in the Eastern Report dated May 31<sup>st</sup> 1917 :

*“French intentions in Syria are surely incompatible with the war aims of the Allies as defined by the Russian Government. If self-determination of nationalities is to be the principle, the interference of France in the selection of advisers by the Arab Government and the suggestion by France of the Emirs to be selected by the Arabs in Mosul, Aleppo, and Damascus would seem utterly incompatible with our ideas of liberating the Arab nation and of establishing a free and independent Arab State. The British Government, in authorising the letters despatched to King Hussein before the outbreak of the revolt by Sir Henry McMahon, would seem to raise a doubt as to whether our pledges to King Hussein as head of the Arab nation are consistent with French intentions to make not only Syria but Upper Mesopotamia another Tunis. If our support of King Hussein and the other Arabian leaders of less distinguished origin*

<sup>49</sup> The text of the Sykes-Picot agreement is available at:  
<http://www.britishonlinearchives.co.uk/9781851171507.php>

*and prestige mean anything, it means that we are prepared to recognise the full sovereign independence of the Arabs of Arabia and Syria. It seems to be the moment to acquaint the French Government of our detailed pledges to King Hussein, and to make it clear to the latter whether he or someone else is to be the ruler of Damascus, which is the only possible capital for an Arab State, which could command the obedience of the other Arabian Emirs*<sup>50</sup>.

Whether the British government really believed the pledges to be incompatible and contrary to the self-determination principle or whether Gore's comment was mainly aimed at finding a tool to disregard the agreement with the French is not an essential question to our study. However, what it says is that there was sufficient doubt, right from their inception.

The Arabs, for their part, were not aware of the Sykes-Picot agreements until December 1917 through the Turkish Government, which received the information from the newly empowered Soviet government. So, whereas the Hashemites and Arab nationalist groups based in Syria were fighting for their future independence in a unified territory, Britain and France were partitioning the non-Turkish areas of the Ottoman Empire and granting themselves these territories. This was, however, not the end of the matter; indeed, at the same time discussions were taking place within the offices of the British government about possible official support for the Zionist movement in its claim to a national home in Palestine.

Many reasons have been evoked to explain the choice of Great Britain to endorse the Zionist movement's demands. Indeed, having on the one hand promised to acknowledge Arab independence and on the other hand worked out an agreement with the French, granting them parts of the Ottoman territories, why would they introduce a fourth actor? This question has been the subject of numerous – and sometimes contradictory – analyses that I will not develop in detail here<sup>51</sup>. However, it seems that there was not one single reason but rather conflicting factors that can help us understand the eventual endorsement of such a document.

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<sup>50</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/143, “Eastern Report N°XVIII”, 31 May 1917.

<sup>51</sup> On that subject, read Stein, Leonard, *The Balfour Declaration*. New York 1961, p.470 ; Friedman, Isaiah, *Palestine, a Twice-promised Land?: The British, the Arabs & Zionism*, 1915-1920, New Jersey 2000, p.171.



First, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, messianism and the concomitant idea of the return of the Jewish people to Palestine which had existed since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, was growing in Great Britain, especially because of a convenient religious environment and through literary circles<sup>52</sup>. Indeed, one could expect the return of ideas of the re-conquest of Palestine, whether directly by Christians or indirectly by the Jews<sup>53</sup>. According to protestant millenarianism, the *return* of the Jews to Palestine is supposed to represent the accomplishment of prophecies. This messianism was particularly expressed in the literary production during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and one of the most striking examples of this millenarian enthusiasm and “idealisation of the Jews” is to be found in Georges Eliot's novel, *Daniel Deronda*<sup>54</sup>.

Second, and it may be linked with the first, it was thought that the Jews had some influence in Russia and in the United States, and that they could help Britain to get those two countries' support in the war effort. This vision undoubtedly rested on the anti-Semitic idea of Jewish financial and political power.

Third, the British government had engaged in the Sykes-Picot Agreements, which divided the Arab territories into areas of control for each of the contracting powers. However, Britain was seeking to gain control of Palestine in order to secure its economic interests in Egypt – the Suez Canal. A pro-British Zionist implementation was then seen as a tool to assure Britain's control<sup>55</sup>.

Last but not least, one cannot dismiss the work of the Zionist movement's leaders, including Haim Weizmann<sup>56</sup>. Zionist interests had already been discussed a number of times during the previous decade and a half by members of the British Government. One has to recall the discussions between Theodor Herzl and Joseph Chamberlain – then Colonial Secretary – in the early

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<sup>52</sup> Friedman, Isaiah, *The Question of Palestine, British-Jewish-Arab relations 1914-1918*, New Jersey, 1992. The author dedicated the introduction of this second Edition to the “British schemes for the Restoration of Jews to Palestine, 1840-1880”.

<sup>53</sup> Catherine, Lucas, *Palestine. La dernière colonie?*, *op.cit.*, p.35.

<sup>54</sup> Eliot, George, *Daniel Deronda*, London 1876.

<sup>55</sup> Catherine, Lucas, *Palestine. La dernière colonie?*, *op.cit.*, p.35.

<sup>56</sup> Haim Azriel Weizmann (1874-1952), Born in the Russian Empire in what is now known as the Belarus, Weizmann was a chemist and in 1904, he took a position of chemistry lecturer at the University of Manchester. He was later to become one of the leaders of the British Zionists. At that time in Manchester, Arthur Balfour was a Conservative MP representing the district, as well as Prime Minister, and the two met during one of Balfour's electoral campaigns. President of the World Zionist Organisation from 1920 to 1931 and for a second mandate from 1935 to 1946, he became the first president of the state of Israel and stayed in office until his death.

1900s about the possibility of the implementation of Jewish settlements in Uganda – which was then part of the British Empire. The Uganda option was rejected by the sixth Zionist Congress in 1905 but by 1906, Arthur Balfour – former Prime Minister and Head of the Opposition – and Winston Churchill – then Liberal MP for North-West Manchester constituency – continued to express their support for Haim Weizmann and a “settled Home” for the Jews. Churchill then adopted the idea of a “strong, free Jewish State astride the bridge between Europe and Africa” in Palestine (Jerusalem being the goal in the text)<sup>57</sup>. A few years later, Weizmann made contact with Lord Balfour and he seems to have had constant contact with members of the British government, notably David Lloyd George who was Prime Minister from December 7<sup>th</sup> 1916 to October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1922. According to Charles D. Smith<sup>58</sup>, if one cannot underestimate the role of Weizmann and above all his skill in “keeping British statesmen apprised of Zionist concerns and Zionism's supposed value to the war effort”<sup>59</sup>, the turning point was indeed the formation of David Lloyd George's cabinet.

## **E. The Balfour Declaration and the British internal critics**

Contacts between the Zionist leadership and British officials, which had started at the beginning of the century, escalated as WWI began. On October 31, 1917, the British government adopted a declaration supporting the aims of the Zionist movement that was addressed, on November 2, 1917, by Arthur James Balfour to Lord Rothschild in the following terms:

*“Dear Lord Rothschild,  
I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations, which have been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:  
'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly*

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<sup>57</sup> Friedmann, Isaiah, *The Question of Palestine, British-Jewish-Arab relations: 1914-1918*, New Jersey 1992, pp.6-7.

<sup>58</sup> Smith, Charles D., *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. A history with documents*, Boston 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Smith, Charles D., “The historiography of World War I and the emergence of the contemporary Middle East”, in Gershoni, Israel, Amy Singer & Y. Hakan Erdem (eds.), *Middle East historiographies, narrating the twentieth century*, Seattle 2006, pp. 39-69.

*understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country'. I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist federation.*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
*Arthur James Balfour*<sup>60</sup>

This section examines the process that led to the adoption of the Balfour Declaration and the arguments raised by the opposition to a British support to Zionism. The Declaration intended to provide the Jews with a national home as well as secure British control over Palestine – which was in the area put under international jurisdiction by the Sykes-Picot agreement<sup>61</sup>. Moreover, it did finalise the partition of Syria by linking Palestine to the Jews and separating the fate of Palestine from the rest of Syria. I do argue that the British and non-Zionist Jewish opponents to the declaration had foreseen the dangers of such a policy and tried to shed light on the separatist and exclusionary tendencies and real motive of the Zionist movement, namely Jewish dominance and sovereignty and thus, provide strong anti-separatist arguments which would serve as a basis for anti-partitionism.

As we have seen, the climate had been favourable to the Zionist aspirations, however, although there had been contacts over a long period, the time taken to review the terms of the declaration and the consultations prior to its release were rather short. The exact and immediate origins of the Balfour Declaration are difficult to trace and there seems to be no trace of the exchanges that preceded the Declaration<sup>62</sup>.

Nevertheless, when the first text was drafted, it was circulated among the Government members. Edwin Montagu – then Secretary of State for India and member of the War Cabinet – received it on August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1917. The draft was

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<sup>60</sup> Litvinoff, Barnett (ed.), *The letters and papers of Chaim Weizmann, August 1898 – July 1931*, Volume I, New York 1983, pp. 165-166.

<sup>61</sup> Laurens, Henry, “L’identité palestinienne d’hier à aujourd’hui”, in Heacock, Roger (dir.), *Temps et espaces en Palestine. Flux et résistances identitaires*, ”, Beirut 2009, pp.43-54

<sup>62</sup> National Archives, CAB/23/4/, “Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Thursday, 4 October 1917”.

*“Upon the origins of the Declaration, little exists in the way of official records; indeed, little is known of how the policy represented by the Declaration was first given form. Four, or perhaps five, men were chiefly concerned in the labour—the Earl of Balfour, the late Sir Mark Sykes, and Messrs. Weizmann and Sokolov, with perhaps Lord Rothschild as a figure in the background. Negotiations seem to have been mainly oral and by means of private notes and memoranda, of which only the scantiest records are available, even if more exist”.*

only a few lines long and made no mention of Palestine's Arabs who represented the overwhelming majority of the country's population – more than 95%. Of course, as the British authorities never recognised that Palestine was part of the territory claimed by the Arabs in the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, the text reflecting that view alone:

*“His Majesty's Government accept the principle that Palestine should be reconstituted as the national home of the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to secure the achievement of this object, and will be ready to consider any suggestions on the subject which the Zionist Organisation may desire to lay before them”<sup>63</sup>.*

Edwin Montagu was shocked by the text and moved by a sense of urgency, he immediately replied<sup>64</sup>. Depicting Zionism as a “mischievous political creed, untenable by any patriotic citizen of the United Kingdom”, Montagu feared that by supporting the Zionist Movement, British policy would fuel anti-Semitism. Making his case against Zionism, he first fought the idea that there existed a distinct Jewish nation:

*“I assert that there is not a Jewish nation. The members of my family, for instance, who have been in this country for generations, have no sort or kind of community of view or of desire with any Jewish family in any other country beyond the fact that they profess to a greater or less degree the same religion, It is no more true to say that a Jewish Englishman and a Jewish Moor are of the same nation than it is to say that a Christian Englishman and a Christian Frenchman are of the same nation: of the same race, perhaps, traced back through the centuries - through centuries of the history of a peculiarly adaptable race”.*

Second, he argued that the declaration was a potential vector of exclusion. As a matter of fact, declaring that the Jewish national home was in Palestine would give anti-Semites all over the world an argument to preach their exclusion of the Jews as non-nationals in their countries.

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<sup>63</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/4, “Memorandum on the Zionist movement by the War Cabinet”, October 17, 1917.

<sup>64</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/24/, “The Anti-Semitism of the present Government”, circulated by the Secretary of State for India, August 23, 1917.

*“Lord Rothschild's letter is dated July 18<sup>th</sup> and Mr. Balfour's answer was dated August 1917.- I fear that my protest comes too late, and it may well be that the Government was practically committed when Lord Rothschild wrote and before I became a member of the Government, for there has obviously been some correspondence or conversation before this letter”.*

*“When the Jews are told that Palestine is their national home, every country will immediately desire to get rid of its Jewish citizens, and you will find a population in Palestine driving out its present inhabitants, taking all the best in the country, drawn from all quarters of the globe, speaking every language on the face of the earth, and incapable of communicating with one another except by means of an interpreter. [...] I claim that the lives that British Jews have led, that the aims they have had before them, that the part that they have played in our public life and our public institutions, have entitled them to be regarded, not as British Jews, but as Jewish Britons. I would willingly disfranchise every Zionist. I would be almost tempted to proscribe the Zionist organisation as illegal and against national interest. But I would ask of a British Government sufficient tolerance to refuse to endorse a conclusion which makes aliens and foreigners by implication, if not by law, of all their Jewish fellow citizens”.*

On that occasion, he also criticised Zionism as false messianism:

*“I have always understood, by the Jews before Zionism was invented, that to bring the Jews back to form a nation in the country from which they were dispersed would require a Divine leadership. I have never heard it suggested, even by their most fervent admirers, that either Mr. Balfour or Lord Rothschild would prove to be the Messiah”.*

Third, considering that Palestine represented as much for the Jews as it represents for the Christians and Muslims, he denied the Jews any right over Palestine.

Finally, he expressed his worries that the Government may become the “instrument of a Zionist organisation largely run by men [...] (who) have dealt a severe blow to the liberties, position and opportunities of service of their Jewish fellow-countrymen”. In response to Mr Rothschild and the Zionist organisation, he proposed that the Government should engage itself simply “to do everything in their power to obtain for Jews in Palestine complete liberty of settlement and life on an equality with the inhabitants of that country who profess other religious beliefs. I would ask that the Government should go no further”.

E. Montagu's memorandum was not the first expression against Zionism, indeed, Jewish circles in Great Britain had expressed their rejection of Zionism in the press. However, E. Montagu's call for discussions on the opportunity and the content of a declaration sympathetic to the Zionist aims was raised during the War Cabinet of September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1917 (two months before the Declaration was

issued). That meeting was an opportunity for the pro and anti-declaration factions to debate and develop their cases. Arthur Balfour made his case in favour of the declaration by arguing firstly, that the German government was doing its best to attract the sympathies of the Zionist movement. Secondly, Balfour purported that although the Zionist movement was “opposed by many wealthy Jews in England”, it enjoyed the support of a majority of Jews at least in Russia and the United-States, and thirdly, that the movement was based upon the "intense national consciousness" of the Jews, who "regarded themselves as one of the great historic races of the world, and who had "a passionate longing to regain once more their ancient national home in Palestine”<sup>65</sup>.

However, Arthur Balfour's arguments were mostly based on myths and fantasy tainted with anti-Semitism. Indeed, as Edwin Montagu was to argue in a later memorandum on Zionism, which he wrote to the Minister of the blockade, Robert Cecil, no poll had been made of the Jews regarding Zionism and that as such no one could claim to know what the majority of the British Jews' thought of the question<sup>66</sup>. Moreover, major studies on Zionism show on the contrary that Zionism was a minority movement. Thus, the third argument presents a mixture of ethnic policy and nationalism well known and used by A. Balfour as he was well aware of the situation in Ireland. It should be emphasised that the concept of nation, which was quite new at the time, is used here in a fundamental sense to refer to an ancient situation – “namely, the ancient national home in Palestine”. In his task, Balfour was aided by France's and the United States' positions as both the French government and President Wilson had declared themselves in favour of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.

The subject was discussed further during the War Cabinet of October 4, 1917. It was another opportunity for Edwin Montagu to express once again his position and to advance other arguments such as the origins of the Zionist movement and its incompatibility with the situation of the “Jewish Britons”.

*“He specially urged that the only trial of strength between Zionists and anti-Zionists in England had resulted in a very narrow majority for the Zionists, namely, 56 to 51 of the representatives of Angle-Jewry on the Conjoint Committee. He also pointed out that most English-born Jews were opposed to Zionism, while it was supported by foreign-born Jews,*

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<sup>65</sup> National Archives, CAB/ 23/4, “Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet on September 3<sup>rd</sup>” ; and “Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet on October 4<sup>th</sup> 1917”.

<sup>66</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/27/, “Edwin Montagu to Lord Robert Cecil”, September 14, 1917.

*such as Dr. Caster and Dr. Herz, the two Grand Rabbis, who had been born in Romania and Austria respectively, and Dr. Weizmann, President of the English Zionist Federation, who was born in Russia. He submitted that the Cabinet's first duty was to English Jews, and that Colonel House had declared that President Wilson is opposed to a declaration now*<sup>67</sup>.

Montagu was backed by George Curzon, then a member of the War Cabinet, as Leader of the House of Lords, who presented two major arguments against the Zionist movement. First, having had significant first hand experience of colonial policy and partition processes<sup>68</sup>, he reasoned in terms of interests for the British government and as such, he considered that it would have grave implications. Second, G. Curzon was aware of the significance of such a decision and he was actually among the only ones to consider the future of the existing Arab population of Palestine. For him the Balfour Declaration opened the way to the replacement of the Arab population by a Jewish one:

*“How did they propose to get rid of the existing majority of Muslim inhabitants and to introduce the Jews in their place? How many would be willing to return and what pursuits would they engage in? To secure for the Jews already in Palestine equal civil and religious rights seemed to him a better policy than to aim at repatriation on a large scale. He regarded the latter as sentimental idealism, which would never be realised, and that His Majesty's Government should have nothing to do with it”*<sup>69</sup>.

Following the discussion, Lord Milner proposed an alternative draft taking into account some of the points that Lord Montagu and Lord Curzon had stressed:

*“His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish Race, and will use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object; it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed in any other country by such Jews who are fully contented with their existing nationality and citizenship”*<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> National Archives, CAB/23/4/, “Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. on Thursday, 4 October 1917”.

<sup>68</sup> George Nathaniel Curzon was a British Conservative statesman who was Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905 and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from October 23, 1919 to January 22, 1924. As Viceroy of India, he took part in the partition of Bengal – between the West with its Hindu majority and the East with its Muslim majority – in 1905. That partition finally ended six years later in 1911 as a result of anti-partition protests on the side of Bengali Hindu. See Fraser, Thomas, *op.cit.*, p. 13;

<sup>69</sup> National Archives, CAB/23/4/, “Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. on Thursday, 4 October 1917”.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

It was then also decided that before making any decision, the Cabinet should seek President Wilson's opinion and hear the arguments of the leaders of the Zionist movement, and of the representatives of the "anti-Zionist Anglo-Jewry"<sup>71</sup>, thus excluding any consultation with the Arabs. Palestine became from then on a Zionist-Jewish matter and on that account, and without saying as such, they extracted Palestine from its environment as well as from its inhabitants, laying the foundations of the coming partition.

As requested by the Cabinet, the draft was sent to nine "Jewish personalities", including Lord Montagu, to obtain their comments. The latter were Minister of Parliament Herbert Samuel, the Chief Rabbi, Lord Rothschild, Sir Stuart Samuel Bart (Chairman of the Jewish Board of Deputies), Haim Weizmann (Chairman of the World Zionist Organisation), Nahum Sokolow (Chairman of the London section of the World Zionist Organisation), Minister of Parliament Philip Magnus, C.G. Montefiore (President of the Anglo-Jewish Association), L.L. Cohen (Jewish Board of Guardians), and Secretary of State for India Lord Montagu.

The first six expressed themselves in favour of the spirit of the declaration, on the basis that it met the beliefs and demands of the majority of the Jews in the world and in Great Britain, even though, themselves, they were not planning on moving to Palestine.

The three others expressed themselves against the declaration, on the basis of two main arguments. First, Jews do not constitute a distinct nation. Second, considering them as a nation is inaccurate and creates the ground for anti-Semitism. They argued that such a declaration as the one proposed would have negative consequences on Jews in their current countries of residence as well as in the Ottoman Empire and more particularly in Palestine. They all refused the separation that this postulate infers as shown in their memorandums:

*"I do not gather that I am expected to distinguish my views as a Jew from those I hold as a British subject. Indeed, it is not necessary, even if it were possible. For I agree with the late Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hermann Adler, that "ever since the conquest of Palestine by the Romans, we have ceased to be a body politic"; that "the great bond that unites Israel is not one of race but the bond of a common religion"; and that we have no national aspirations apart from those of the country of our birth. [...] I cannot agree that the Jews regard themselves as a nation, and the term "national" as applied to a community of Jews in Palestine or elsewhere seems to me to beg the question between Zionists and their*

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*



*opponents, and should, I suggest, be withdrawn from the proposed formula. Indeed, the inclusion in the terms of the declaration of the words "a national home for the Jewish race" seems to me both undesirable and inferentially inaccurate."*<sup>72</sup>.

*"I deprecate the expression "a national home". For it assumes that the Jewish race constitutes a "nation," or might profitably become a nation, both which propositions I deny. The phrase "a national home for the Jewish race" appears to assume and imply that the Jews generally constitute a nationality. Such an implication is extremely prejudicial to Jewish interests, as it is intensely obnoxious to an enormous number of Jews"*<sup>73</sup>.

As for L. Cohen,

*"The establishment of a "national home for the Jewish race" in Palestine, presupposes that the Jews are a nation, which I deny, and that they are homeless, which implies that, in the countries where they enjoy religious liberty and the full rights of citizenship, they are separate entities, unidentified with the interests of the nations of which they form parts, an implication which I repudiate".*

Philip Magnus and Leonard Cohen went further and stressed the fact that if a declaration had to be issued, this should not confer the Jews privileges that would not be shared by all the citizens of Palestine.

*"On the other hand, a statement to the effect that the British Government would take steps to secure to the Jews now or hereafter resident in Palestine freedom to develop their religious culture and to observe their religious rites would be welcomed by the Jews and would be consistent with the traditional policy of the British Government. It is essential, however, as stated in the proposed formula, that any privileges granted to the Jews should be shared by their fellow-citizens of other creeds"*<sup>74</sup>.

Moreover, Philip Magnus expressed his worries as to the "rumours" circulating on the objectives of the Government concerning Palestine. Acknowledging the fact that Great Britain had interests in Palestine, he also recalled the declarations made by the Government according to which the "existing inhabitants" had to be consulted. However, it should be pointed out that whilst they were to be consulted there was no question of them governing themselves, rather they would choose which power would govern them.

*"I know not what may be the real objective of the War Cabinet's military operations in Palestine. It is, however, rumoured in Zionist circles that*

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<sup>72</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/4, "Memorandum on the Zionist movement", October 17<sup>th</sup> 1917, Response made by Sir Philip Magnus, Minister of Parliament.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, Response made by Claude Montefiore.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, Response made by M.P Philip Magnus.

*the conquest of Palestine by Great Britain is desired in order that Palestine may become an independent buffer State between Turkey and Egypt; and that having regard to the declared policy of the Allies to annex no new territories, the country would be restored to the Jews under a British protectorate. Whether this be so or not, I feel sure that our Government, in accordance with repeated declarations, would deem it necessary to consult the existing inhabitants of Palestine as to the ruling power under which they would desire to live; and, in all probability, they would elect to be governed by Great Britain or by one of our Allies, who would hold the balance fairly between the Christian, Jewish, and Mahomedan communities”.*

These were not the only opponents to Zionism; the Conjoint Committee<sup>75</sup> – made up of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association<sup>76</sup> had been among the first critics of Zionism and had been very active during the years 1916 and 1917. Its activities had contributed to a pitched battle between the Zionists and their opponents on many fronts. First, on the diplomatic front, both groups had taken their case to the British authorities. Then, on the media front, both the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association had shared their positions in numerous newspapers such as the *Times*.

Nevertheless, neither the arguments of E. Montagu and G. Curzon, who were members of the Cabinet, nor the arguments raised by the asked anti-Zionist personalities , could reverse the momentum. The anti-Zionists would not stand a chance against the Prime Minister Lloyd George, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs Arthur Balfour and Lord Milner, all of whom energetically supported the declaration. Indeed, Lloyd Georges was rather sympathetic to the aspirations of the Zionist movement, probably because he despised the Arabs. Some twenty years later, he would explain his engagement in favour of Zionism as an alliance of interest with a very influential political organisation<sup>77</sup>.

So all the anti-Zionists managed to obtain was a sentence on the protection of the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish communities in Palestine and another on the rights of the Jews in countries other than Palestine.

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<sup>75</sup> Lucien Wolf, a journalist, served as Foreign Secretary of the Conjoint Committee and he was a fierce opponent of Zionism.

<sup>76</sup> The Anglo-Jewish Association was presided by Claude Montefiore.

<sup>77</sup> Shlaim, Avi, “The Balfour declaration and its consequences”, in Wm. Roger Louis,(ed.), *Yet More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain*, London 2005, pp. 251-270.

This simple letter, sent by A.J. Balfour, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to Lord Rothschild, constituted the first official public statement of support for Zionist aspirations by a nation-state and this was to provoke dramatic consequences on the future of Palestine, the Middle East and the World. The Arabs were notably absent during the entire process, confirming the expropriation of the Palestinian Arabs and the separation of Palestine from the rest of the Arab area according to territorial as well as demographic lines, and also, consecrating the separation and antagonism of the Jews and the Arabs. Moreover, from then on, the Zionist leaders would consider the declaration as a founding act that would justify their rights to Palestine.

However, far from ending the internal polemics, the publication of the Declaration inflamed the debate, which continued to develop and was later reinvigorated during the drafting of the mandate.

Soon after the release of the Declaration, on December 9<sup>th</sup> 1917, British imperial forces, led by General Allenby, arrived in Jerusalem and prepared to occupy the city. Thereafter, the Zionist movement was permitted to organise Jewish immigration in Palestine, to purchase land, develop agriculture, and establish industries and banks, in short, to construct the infrastructure necessary for an autonomous and independent existence. Tom Segev commented the declaration as follows:

*“The British allowed them to set up hundreds of new settlements, including several towns. They created a school system and an army; they had a political leadership and elected institutions; and with the help of all these they in the end defeated the Arabs, all under British sponsorship, all in the wake of that promise of 1917. Contrary to the widely held belief of Britain's pro-Arabism, British actions considerably favoured the Zionist enterprise”<sup>78</sup>.*

## **F. Conclusion:**

When in the middle of WWI, the Sharif of Mecca and his sons agreed to revolt against the Turks in coordination with the British, they believed that out of this alliance, the Arabs would gain independence from the Ottoman system. Joining forces with the Arab nationalists essentially based in Syria, Sharif

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<sup>78</sup> Segev, Tom, *One Palestine, complete*, New York 2000, p. 5

Hussein and his sons were, however, far from understanding Western interests and intentions in the Middle East, or the connexion with Zionism. So, in exchange, the latter were ready to grant privileges and powers to those who would help them in their battle. Moreover, they were ready to grant a special status for Lebanon, respect the *status quo* for Aden and find a formula for Iraq thus enabling the seeds of a separation to be planted. What mattered was the ultimate goal, namely independence for the Arab territories that had been for four centuries part of the Ottoman Empire, either within the framework of a grand Arab state or of a confederation of states. Believing in the Wilsonian ideals and thinking they had secured the principle of their independence they went to war with confidence.

However, as we have seen, other alliances were made, each involving the British Government deeper in Arab matters and territories. The first concerned the French with whom the British were dividing the Ottoman Empire into zones of influence so as to preserve their respective economic interests. And, whilst this agreement would not be completely respected later on, the principle of partition it introduced would be. The second was contracted with the Zionist movement to whom it promised a Jewish National Home in Palestine, which was then part of the Ottoman Empire and claimed by the Arab nationalists as part of Syria. Although the Balfour Declaration did not include nor even tackle partition in its terms, it consecrated the separation of the fate of Palestine and introduced the Jews as by right in Palestine thus opening the way for the coming conflict.

The consequences of these multiple pledges while not fully acknowledged and apprehended by the British Government, were however the subject of numerous debates and met with opposition from within its ranks, from the Arabs but also from the non-Zionist Jewish personalities who were consulted.

The news of the Sykes Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration raised strong oppositions among the Arabs who understood they questioned and threatened their own agreement. From then on, the Arabs started to organise themselves in order to be more efficient. Reiterating their 'natural' right over the Arab territories and McMahon's promises, they also called on the Wilsonian principles to oppose and reject the French presence and the Balfour Declaration. They presented numerous petitions to the Occupied Enemy

Territories Administrations (OETA), sent memoranda to the sessions of the Peace Conference and organised demonstrations and riots. Although they were organising a forceful and coherent political voice, they eventually had to acknowledge the political and military presence of both the British and the French. This led them to organise through local organs and, in a tactical move, they integrated local patriotism to the growing Arabism and adapted to the de facto partition of Syria imposed by the French and the British. The fragmentation of their struggle eventually contributed to open the way for the territorial fragmentation and partition. Partition that was to be later sanctioned by the League of Nations as a result of the discussions and conclusions of the Peace Conference.

Parallel to that, heated debates took place in the ranks of the British Government as well as among the non and anti-Zionist Jewish British leaders. Three main arguments emerged to oppose the Balfour Declaration. First, an alliance with Zionism was counter-productive and lacked any interest for the British Empire. Second, the Balfour declaration, as well as the implementation of the Sykes-Picot agreement, were contrary to the principle of self-determination to which they had committed themselves. Third, Zionism was developed on the false postulate that the Jews were a nation and for the British Government to support the Zionist movement was to acknowledge that postulate and all the consequences that could result from it: the exclusion of Jews as non-nationals and the growth of anti-Semitism leading to separation and violence. Many members of the British Government also saw the separatist tendencies of Zionism and predicted an inextricable situation that only eviction could eventually solve.

It is clear therefore, that whilst the partition of Palestine was not yet relevant, the opponents to the Balfour Declaration foresaw the separatist potential of the Zionist movement as attested by the arguments raised by both E. Montagu and G. Curzon, but also the Jewish opponents to Zionism and of course the Arabs. Unable to correctly estimate the dangers and the force of Zionism and anti-Semitism or philo-Semitism, the opponents to the Balfour Declaration were also unable to present a united opposition front.

So, despite all oppositions, the British Government continued in its policy, which was to be endorsed by the international institutions.

Within only five years, the Middle East had been redrawn by the traditional colonial powers, who besides establishing an artificial territorial partition, introduced settler colonialism, thus providing the conditions for the polarisation of both communities: by treating the Zionist movement as a partner in enterprise, by authorizing it to establish its own institutions, and by failing to stop separate development. Indeed, the arguments raised later by the British Government in proposing the partition of Palestine were already taking root during the years leading up to 1922. As we have seen, separate economic, educational and social development was favoured by British policy.



## **Chapter Two: The International Perspectives on partition: 1917-1988**

World War One introduced dramatic changes at numerous levels and in various areas that relate directly to our subject. First, the Ottoman Empire was dismantled and its territories left under foreign Western control. Then the United States, which had been involved in the war, introduced the principle of self-determination on the international political scene. A principle which was to be first applied during the Versailles Peace Conference. And finally, the Balfour declaration, which was a mere promise made by the British to the Zionist movement, was endorsed by all the Great Powers during the Peace Conference.

So there were already conflicting promises and decisions, as the people of Palestine, who had now theoretically obtained their right to self-determination, opposed Zionism, which had been endorsed by the powers in control of Palestine. Moreover, self-determination had a price and the Peace Conference had also decided that some peoples were not mature enough to exercise political control over their territories and needed to be prepared to self-rule. Having opposed colonization, the United States could not possibly advocate such a regime for the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire, so, colonies being obsolete in view of the principle of self-determination, they were replaced with a mandate system in June 1919. Contrary to the colonies, the mandates officially aimed at preparing peoples for independence and self-rule. As a consequence, Palestine and Syria were placed respectively under British and French mandates in the early 1920s.

This chapter examines the international positions towards Palestine and the solutions to the situation that were created by the implementation of the Balfour Declaration, namely separation and partition.

Firstly, I will present and analyse the process that led to the final text of the mandate being to Zionist advantage. How the mandate contributed to separate the fate of Palestine from that of Syria and thus impose a correlation between



Zionism and Palestine.

Secondly, I will examine how the interpretation of the Balfour Declaration and the administration of Palestine, particularly the Arab population, through a typically colonial mode has produced such a gulf between the Arabs and the Zionists and a competition for nationhood, that they were unable to administer Palestine as unitary state any more, leading them to propose partition as a solution.

Partition having been eventually abandoned, the persistence of the political status quo made it even more difficult to continue the mandate. As a consequence, Great Britain would appeal to the United States as a partner to solve the Palestine Question. So, thirdly, I will examine British-American collaboration on a scheme presenting itself as one that would avoid distorting the terms of the mandate.

After World War II, the United States, which was to play a major role in the United Nations General Assembly's (UNGA's) decision, would replace the United Kingdom on the Middle East scene. It would contribute to the imposition of partition as the only solution that could bring in peace becoming the all dominant discourse. A discourse that would not be followed by any concrete action in the sense that the United States would prove to be an unswerving ally for Israel.

### **A. The mandate for Palestine: partition or one-state?**

In 1918 and 1919, the Peace Conference had aimed at establishing a settlement according to the principle of self-determination as developed by President Wilson. It started on January 18<sup>th</sup> 1919 and Faisal was invited by Britain to take part as the Arab delegate and the Zionist Movement was also invited to make its views known – namely to support Britain's claims. On that occasion, Britain had been keen to encourage a rapprochement between the Amir Faisal and the Zionist leadership, this briefly occurred but once Faisal understood that he could not obtain what he was seeking, he annulled the agreement.

The Paris Peace Conference finally ended without having ruled on the Arab and

Palestine questions, however, the hearings that were held served as a basis for future deliberations that were to take place at the San Remo conference in April 1920.

Meanwhile, the organizing powers of the Paris peace conference – France, Great Britain, Italy and the United States, had agreed to appoint a commission of inquiry in the region to investigate and ascertain the wishes of the populations. However, France and Britain knew that the Arab populations aspired to independence and were hostile to them, rejecting the Zionist position. This risked threatening Franco-British accession to the statute of mandate powers in the region and could compromise their interests. So, France, Great Britain and Italy finally decided not to send representatives in the Peace conference commission of inquiry and only the United States appointed members – Henry King, President of Oberlin College and Charles Crane, a philanthropist with an experience of the region. The commission of inquiry, also known as the King-Crane Commission, arrived in Jaffa on June 10<sup>th</sup> 1919 and visited the region during six weeks<sup>1</sup>. It organised hearings and was presented with numerous petitions most of which made a case for Arab independence, Syrian unity and, according to the members of the commission, more than seventy two percent of these petitions “were directed against the Zionist programme”<sup>2</sup>. In Jaffa, they indeed met with representatives of the Syrian National Congress (SNC) but also with the Arab Muslim-Christian Association. Furthermore, the Commission was also presented nineteen petitions by the Zionist movement – a relatively small number in comparison with the number of petitions handed over by the Arabs. “Six of the nineteen pro-Zionist petitions asked for a separate Palestine”, although the commission's members considered separation was implied in the other thirteen<sup>3</sup>. By August, they were back in Paris where they handed in their report on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

The report argued against the continuation of the Zionist programme as it had been defined by the Zionist Organisation. As a matter of fact, the commission considered the Zionist programme as extreme and feared that if it was carried out, it would lead to a Jewish State which was contrary to the indigenous

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<sup>1</sup> Stannard Baker, Ray, “Against Palestine as a Jewish State”, first publication of the report by the American Commission to Palestine and Syria – would include Holy Land in a United Syria. America and the World Peace, *New York Times*, August 20, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Crane, Charles R., and Henry C. King, *Report of the King-Crane Commission*, August 28, 1919.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

population's desire as well as to the principles underlined on the eve of WWI<sup>4</sup>. Thereafter, it also recommended that “the unity of Syria (with the inclusion of Palestine) be preserved” and that “Iraq be treated as one country”.

*“We recommend, as most important of all, and in strict harmony with our Instructions, that whatever foreign administration (whether of one or more Powers) is brought into Syria, should come in not at all as a colonising Power; in the old sense of that term, but as a Mandatory under the League of Nations with a clear consciousness that “the well-being and development,” of the Syrian people form for it a “sacred trust. [...] We recommend, in the second, that the unity of Syria be preserved, in accordance with the earnest petition of the great majority of the people of Syria.*

*[...] There would then be no reason why Palestine could not be included in a united Syrian State, just as other portions of the country, the holy places being cared for by an international and inter-religious commission, somewhat as at present under the oversight and approval of the Mandatory and of the League of Nations. The Jews, of course, would have representation upon this Commission. <sup>5</sup>”*

As expected, these conclusions were acclaimed by Faisal and the Arab nationalists. However, this was not to alter Wilson's support for the Balfour Declaration and for the Zionist movement<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, the report was not sent to the Peace Conference and it was not taken into account during the deliberations that followed. It was made public only two years after being issued<sup>7</sup>. In the meanwhile, the San Remo International Conference, which took place from April 19<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> 1920 in Italy, dealing with the dispositions and future of the Ottoman Empire, had already stated and recommended the attribution of a mandate over Palestine to the United Kingdom – thus deciding to respond to the Zionist and British demands – and a mandate over the rest of Syria to France, meaning that the Balfour Declaration and the principle of colonial division called for by the Sykes-Picot agreement had been internationally sanctioned. These decisions were reaffirmed by the signature of the Treaty of Sèvres, and in 1921, British policy in Palestine was again asserted at the Cairo Conference<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> UNISPAL, “Recommendations of the King-Crane Commission with regard to Syria-Palestine and Iraq”, August 29, 1919.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Christison, Kathleen, “U.S policy and the Palestinians: bound by a frame of reference”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26(4), Summer 1997, pp.46-59.

<sup>7</sup> Stannard Baker, Ray, “Against Palestine as a Jewish State”, *op.cit.*, August 20, 1922.

<sup>8</sup> A conference during which Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs laid out his ambitions for Britain's role in the Arab world for the following generations.

## *Drafting the mandate*

Whilst the political decision had been made, it still remained to formulate the mandate, a task for the mandatory power itself, which was soon confronted with the fate of Palestine's Arab inhabitants<sup>9</sup>. But, at this stage, despite the partition of Syria for Britain's and Jewish interests, there was still no hint of a partition plan for Palestine. On the contrary, both the British government and the Zionist movement considered Palestine as an undivided territorial unit and they drew their policies from that premise.

It took a long and arduous struggle and numerous drafts to finalise the text of the mandate and obtain the League of Nations' ratification<sup>10</sup>. Several months of renewed controversy ensued within the British administration on the subject of the Balfour Declaration and its compatibility with the rights of the indigenous population, but also with the prior engagements of the British government with King Hussein, Sharif of Mecca. However, besides the internal pressures, the British government had to deal with constant pressure from the Zionist Organization which participated in the drafting process as attests a note by Lord Curzon :

*"Weizmann comes to see me every other day and says that he has a right to do this, that or the other in Palestine! I won't have it!"<sup>11</sup>.*

A few months after the drafting of the mandate began, Lord Curzon had become Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs<sup>12</sup>. As we know, he had been one of the main opponents to the Balfour Declaration and he was generally unsympathetic to the Zionist movement and its aims in the Middle East. Considering that the British government had made many mistakes in its prior engagements, G. Curzon was determined to make adjustments by writing a general draft and avoid making any promise that would provide the Zionist movement with a means of claiming sovereignty over Palestine.

However, the Zionist Organization was far-sighted; by December 1918, it had

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<sup>9</sup> SEE Chapter I.

<sup>10</sup> McTague, John J., "Zionist-British negotiations over the draft mandate for Palestine, 1920", *Jewish Social Studies* 42(3-4), Summer/Autumn 1980, pp.281-292.

<sup>11</sup> Shlaim, Avi, "The Balfour Declaration and its consequences", *op.cit.*, pp. 251-270.

<sup>12</sup> He became Secretary of Foreign Affairs in the Autumn of 1919.

already produced a draft constitution in anticipation of its appearance before the Versailles Peace Conference. This draft stressed the necessity for the “historic title” of the Jewish People in Palestine to be recognized, as well as “the right of the Jews to reconstitute in Palestine their National Home”. It also supported the British in their pursuit of the mandate and the constitution of a government. The draft was presented to the Peace conference but was discussed later, in April, within the Foreign Office. The latter then proposed some changes. One of the expressions that was causing problems was the "historic title" of the Jews to Palestine; actually, the Foreign Office proposed to modify it with "historic connection". They also proposed to replace the "right of the Jews" to establish their National home with "the claim which [their historical title] gives them" to establish a National home.

In July 1919, discussions with the Zionist Organisation over the wording of the text continued through Eric Forbes-Adam, the Foreign Office Junior Clerk attached to the political section of the British Empire Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference at the time. The draft produced by the Foreign Office did not satisfy the Zionist leadership who made counter-proposals<sup>13</sup>. First, the latter insisted on recognition in the preamble, of the Jews' claim "to reconstitute Palestine as their national home"<sup>14</sup>. Second, they required the establishment of an "appropriate Jewish Agency" to advise and cooperate with the government in all matters concerning the National Home, and the recognition of the Zionist Organization as the Jewish Agency in question. Third, they enumerated a series of specific privileges for the Zionists among which:

*“the right of consultation before beginning any projects for the development of resources; acceptance of the principle that the growth of the National Home would be made the chief objective of all governmental projects; designation of the Zionist Organization as responsible for Jewish education; and recognition by the Mandatory of the Sabbath and all Jewish holidays”<sup>15</sup>.*

In order to push for these demands to be integrated into the mandate, the Zionist Organization appointed Benjamin Cohen – an American attorney who had served as a counsellor for the Zionist Organisation in 1919 – to deal with

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<sup>13</sup> Mentioned in McTague, John J., “Zionist-British negotiations over the draft mandate for Palestine, 1920”, *op.cit.*, pp.281-292.

<sup>14</sup> SEE the text of the Balfour Declaration in Chapter I, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Shlaim, Avi, “The Balfour Declaration and its consequences”, *op.cit.*, pp. 251-270.

these matters. The discussions were pursued with Forbes-Adam as well as a legal adviser from the Foreign Office in Paris in December of that same year. After a few meetings, the three of them finally agreed to redraft the text according to the changes proposed by the Zionist Organization.

Despite being Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Curzon was then isolated in his position vis-à-vis the Zionist movement and the Balfour Declaration. However, the draft was too pro-Zionist for Curzon who rejected it. He understood that it called for a Jewish State under the terminology “a self-governing commonwealth” and that was “the very thing they accept and we disallow”<sup>16</sup>. He distrusted H. Weizmann, whom he thought used a double standard:

*“I feel tolerably sure ... that while Weizmann may say one thing to you, or while you may mean one thing by a national home, he is out for something quite different. He contemplates a Jewish state, a Jewish nation, a subordinate population of Arabs etc. ruled by Jews; the Jews in possession of the fat of the land, and directing the Administration. He is trying to affect this behind the screen and under the shelter of British trusteeship”<sup>17</sup>.*

However, he was even more critical vis-à-vis his government's lack of consistency and honesty concerning its policy in Palestine. He feared the Government was indeed formulating the text of the mandate so that it would provide Jews the right to eventually establish a Jewish State in Palestine. Ironically, he stated: “Seeing as we do not mean Arab or Syrian Commonwealth - why not be honest and come right out and say Jewish Commonwealth?”

Indeed, maybe the main interest in Curzon's criticism was that he was one of the sole members of the government to approach the Arab dimension of the Palestine question and refer to the Palestinians as a major given:

*“Here is a country with 500,000 Arabs and 30,000 or is it 60,000 Jews (by no means all Zionists). Acting upon the noble principles of self-determination and ending with a splendid appeal to the League of Nations, we then proceed to draw up a document, which reeks of Judaism in every paragraph and is an avowed constitution for a Jewish State. ... It is quite clear that this mandate has been drawn up by someone reeling under the fumes of Zionism. If we are all to submit to that intoxicant, this draft is all right”.*

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<sup>16</sup> McTague, John J., “Zionist-British negotiations over the draft mandate for Palestine, 1920”, *op.cit.*, pp.281-292.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in David Gilmour, “The unregarded prophet: Lord Curzon and the Palestine question”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25(3), Spring 1996, pp.60-68.

He was persuaded that the Zionist movement was aiming for a Jewish State on all of Palestine and that it considered the Balfour Declaration as giving them the right to do so. He was also well aware of the separatist tendency of the Zionist movement as well as its will to dominate. He even tried to draw the attention of other members of the Government to the issue and to raise their awareness of the fact that in pursuing this direction, they faced with the inevitable establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, but his alerts remained in vain.

*“The Zionists are after a Jewish State with the Arabs as hewers of wood and drawers of water. ... I want the Arabs to have a chance and I don't want a Hebrew State”.*

Willing to put Britain's commitments to the Zionist movement in another perspective, G. Curzon asked for a new version on June 10th, when he was presented with a draft that finally met his approval. The preamble removed any mention of a Jewish “title to”, “connection to” or “rights to” Palestine, however, it still contained the pledges of the Balfour Declaration. Then, the terms “self-governing Commonwealth” were replaced by “self-governing institutions” which he considered more neutral. In this version, the Arabs were no more mentioned as the “present non Jewish population” but as the “native population”<sup>18</sup>. Finally, some of the privileges attributed to the Zionist movement in previous drafts, such as the right of prior consultation, were removed. However, , the Zionist Organization was still paradoxically being consulted in the drafting of the mandate.

The draft was eventually presented to the Zionist Organization, which was highly unsatisfied to find out that the changes questioned and removed their historic title to Palestine<sup>19</sup>. So, a new round of negotiations started, involving the French government<sup>20</sup>. The latter, considering the draft too favourable to the Zionist Organisation, expressed its hostility. A new draft was produced that whilst suppressing all the privileges proper to the Zionist Organization, re-

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<sup>18</sup> This change is due to Sir John Tilley, secretary to Lord Curzon, who remarked that the reference to the Arabs underlined that the Arabs were a minority. However, this was not to figure in the final draft where the Arab Palestinians were referred to as “the existing non-Jewish population”.

<sup>19</sup> The programme of the Zionist Organization stressing the “historical title to Palestine” was presented in 1919 during the Peace Conference and it is available at: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/zoparis.html>

<sup>20</sup> French involvement was through the intervention of Robert Vansittart who then acted as the British envoy in Paris, dealing in affairs concerning negotiations in the Middle East.

integrated the mention of the historical rights of the Jews in Palestine, to “water down the mandate”<sup>21</sup>. When presented with the draft, Weizmann's dissatisfaction to see that their privileges were once again reduced was counterbalanced by the restoration of the controversial phrase of the preamble on the historical ties with Palestine. Finally, to accelerate the implementation of the mandates, an Interdepartmental Committee on Mandates was created with the task of finalising the draft. By doing so, the latter added the recognition of the Zionist Organization as the Administration's partner “so long as its organisation and constitution are in the same opinion as the Mandatory”. The Committee also retained the phrase about historical ties in the preamble but deleted mention of the right it gave them to “reconstitute their national home”, a sentence that Lord Curzon, for procedural reasons, chose to re-integrate<sup>22</sup>. Lord Curzon was isolated in the government and Zionism gained the support of Prime Minister Lloyd George for the inclusion of this phrase in the preamble of the mandate. Arthur Balfour, who had become Lord President of the Council, and thus no longer dealt directly with Palestine, did however propose a sort of compromise, which still was in the Zionist movement's interest. Two of the most influential personalities had once more supported the Zionist Organization in its claims. The amendment proposed by Lord Balfour ultimately constituted the version of the preamble that was adopted by the cabinet and then approved by the League of Nations in July 1922. The mandate was ratified under the Treaty of Lausanne in autumn 1923, and if there were a few minor changes in the text<sup>23</sup>, it contained the full reaffirmation of the Balfour Declaration in its preamble:

*“Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have also agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2nd 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish*

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<sup>21</sup> McTague, John J., “Zionist-British negotiations over the draft mandate for Palestine, 1920”, *op.cit.*, pp.281-292.

<sup>22</sup> It made no sense for him to remove it if the first part of the sentence remained intact.

<sup>23</sup> “It was also embodied verbatim in the draft Mandate for Palestine which was submitted to the League of Nations in December 1920. The terms of the draft Mandate were eventually approved with some modifications (not affecting the policy of the Declaration) by the Council of the League of Nations in July 1922”. Quoted in National Archives, CAB/24/159/, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies,” February 17<sup>th</sup> 1923.



*communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country [...]*"

The Zionist Organisation had put such pressure on the various parties involved in the drafting process that eventually, the text of the mandate, went even further than the text of the Declaration, as it stated a historical connexion between the "Jewish people" and Palestine which entitled the Jews to reconstitute their national home in Palestine<sup>24</sup>.

Not only did the League of Nations agree to the mandate of Palestine, but it also conferred the right of the mandatory powers to draw the frontiers of Palestine. The mandate also called for the establishment of a Jewish Agency to assist in the governance of the country but it made no mention of any connexion of the Arabs to Palestine, or their right to sovereignty nor did it call for the formation of a Palestinian Arab political organ.

## **B. British Policy Between Partition and a Unitary State**

Whilst they were drafting the mandate, Britain tried to implement the Balfour Declaration while soothing the Palestinian Arabs. Nevertheless, the problems in Palestine were not the sole source of concern for the government which had to face renewed controversy about previous pledges. And part of the government's strategy to resolve these problems, was to appear consistent in its policy. Having to juggle with various pledges, the British government decided to minimize the meaning of the Hussein-McMahon correspondence: Palestine had, according to them, always been excluded from the British pledges, which meant that it could not be part of Greater Syria. This is well expressed in the White Paper of June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1922.

*"It is not the case, as has been represented by the Arab Delegation that during the war His Majesty's Government took efforts for an independent national government to be established at once, in Palestine. This representation mainly rests upon a letter dated October 24th 1915, from Sir Henry McMahon, then His Majesty's High*

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<sup>24</sup> UNISPAL, *League of Nations: Mandate for Palestine*, August 12, 1922.

*Commissioner in Egypt, to the Sharif of Mecca, the present King Hussein of the Kingdom of the Hejaz. That letter is quoted as conveying the promise to the Sherif of Mecca to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs within the territories proposed by him. But, in the same letter, this promise was subject to reservation because it excluded from its scope, among other territories, the portions of Syria lying to the west of the District of Damascus. This reservation has always been regarded by His Majesty's Government as covering the Vilayet of Beirut and the independent Sanjak of Jerusalem. All of Palestine to the west of the Jordan River was thus excluded from Sir Henry McMahon's pledge*<sup>25</sup>.

In March 1921, a special department under orders from the Colonial Office dealing with the Middle East had been created and the Palestine file had been transferred from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office. On February 17th 1923, the Colonial Secretary of State for the Colonies issued a memorandum – written by the Middle East Department – seeking the resolution once and for all of the question of the “contradicting” pledges. For five years, British policy in Palestine, as remarks the author of the memorandum, Lord Devonshire, had been dictated by the Balfour Declaration and he proposed to review the main questions of the debate by evoking the various reactions on the British side to pledges and previous investigations. For that purpose, he set three main questions:

- *“Is there anything in the British Government’s pledges to the Arabs that precludes effect being given to the Balfour Declaration in favour of setting up a National Home for the Jews in Palestine?”*
- *If the answer is negative, are we to continue the policy of the late Government by giving effect to the Balfour Declaration on the lines laid down in the White Paper of June 1922?*
- *If not, what alternative policy are we to adopt?”*<sup>26</sup>.

Assessing the “vital importance” of maintaining Palestine under British scope for Imperial reasons, the Middle East Department developed twenty-nine arguments that could be summed up as follows.

First, Palestine was excluded from the pledges given to Sharif Hussein. Furthermore, these pledges were given to Sharif Hussein and not to the Arabs and even less the Arabs of Palestine.

The memorandum completely excluded the fact that the conditions of the

<sup>25</sup> British White Paper of June 1922, available at: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/brwh1922.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/brwh1922.asp)

<sup>26</sup> National Archives, CAB 24/159/, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, 17 February 1923.

correspondence required having Sharif Hussein as the representative of the Arabs. Moreover, on repeated occasions, the Sharif made clear that he was not negotiating for himself but for the Arabs; this was accepted by the British, as they relied on him to raise an Arab army.

Second, the pledges to the Zionists could not be abandoned, as they were contracted in times of war – when they were in need of the Jews - and not respecting them would be considered as “an act of baseness”<sup>27</sup>.

Moreover, given that the Zionists could obtain the support of many powers, amongst which the United States, and that the text of the Declaration had been included in the conclusions of the San Remo conference and the draft mandate, the advocates of the declarations argued that the British Government was “committed to the Zionist policy before the whole world”.

Third, we understand from the document that no one was able to provide a clear answer to the question of the Balfour Declaration, which conflicted with the previous pledges to the Arabs in the McMahon-Hussein correspondence. Nevertheless, the authors acknowledged the government's explanation according to which Palestine had always been considered as being outside the Arab territory, seeing as it was intended to lie under international control. The question was however underlined by the Palestine Arab Delegation that visited London in 1922. To find out whether or not Palestine was excluded from the Arab territory that was promised recognition of independence, the Cabinet had directly asked McMahon, who stated that he had no intention to include Palestine in the above-mentioned territory. Furthermore, the memorandum continues by stressing that the McMahon pledges were not in binding terms, as no treaty was signed, and excluded Palestine from the territories mentioned in Allenby's proclamation dealing with self-governing in the Arab territories.

Fourth, stating their arguments in a speech given by Arthur Balfour in the House of the Lords on June 21<sup>st</sup> 1922, the authors went even further and explained that whatever the wording may be of McMahon's letter, the British did “substantially” fulfil their promise to “promote Arab independence”.

*“Hussein reigns as an independent sovereign at Mecca; Feisal rules in Baghdad; Abdullah in Trans-Jordan. Ibn Saud, through his vast territories, is free from all fear of Turkish interference or aggression. Further south, the Imamin, the Yemen and the Idrisi in Asir, rule over*

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

*independent States”.*

The Middle-East department's contempt is palpable in the following sentences, when it states that Britain provided the Arabs more than they could ever have dreamed of, and for that the latter were indebted. A debt that the Arabs could pay by letting the British “have their way” in Palestine:

*“The Arabs as a whole have acquired a freedom undreamed of before the war. Considering what they owe to us, they may surely let us have our way in one small area, an area that we do not admit is covered by our pledges, and that in any case, for historical and other reasons, stands on a wholly different footing from the rest of the Arab countries”<sup>28</sup>.*

To adjust to the interests of the British Empire and end the discussion of the pledges, the British government decided – out of the four alternatives proposed by the Middle East Department <sup>29</sup> – to maintain the *status quo* and encourage the Zionist movement to further its imprint on the country and develop its institutions. Whilst they were amputating Greater Syria from its southern province, they still regarded Palestine as an undivided entity where there were certainly Arabs but also where there would be Jews. At this stage, no official project was drawn as to the future of Palestine, its government or its demographic and geographical frontiers.

In the early years of the mandate, Palestine or to be more precise, the Palestinian Arabs were considered through a “typical colonial mode of

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *These alternatives were formulated as follows:*

*“1) They might say in effect: “We have examined our predecessors' commitments” and find that they gave contradictory promises to the Arabs and to the Jews. As the Arab promise was made first, we feel bound to maintain it, and consequently declare the Jewish pledge to be null and void.”*

*2) They might say: “We are not satisfied with any pledges that were given to the Arabs regarding Palestine. The language used was inconclusive. On the other hand, the pledge to the Jews was clear and unequivocal. But the Jewish pledge provided not only for a National Home for the Jews, but also for the maintenance of the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine. Experience has shown that the two parts of the pledge are wholly incompatible. We do not propose to continue with this experiment.”*

*3) They might say; “Whatever pledges may or may not have been given, either to Jews or to Arabs, we find that the commitments incurred by our predecessors are more than we are able to honour. This is not a case of argument, but of sheer necessity. We have no alternative but to abandon the task.”*

*4) They might take the same ground as the late Government, viz., “that, looking at the pledges as a whole, they find that there is nothing in what was said to the Arabs to preclude the due fulfilment of the Balfour Declaration; that they regard the policy of the White Paper as adequately safeguarding both parts of that Declaration and see no reason for making any departure from it”.*

thought”<sup>30</sup>. So, the Arabs who constituted the overwhelming majority in Palestine were rather seen with contempt by the British officials. In contrast to the Jews, to whom the British promised Palestine, and recognized their right to self-determination, the Palestinians were seen as a conglomerate of religious communities that could not form a nation<sup>31</sup>.

Britain's vision of the indigenous people was such that it influenced its political conduct towards them and towards the Jewish settlers. As a consequence, the Palestinian Arabs were under-represented in the governmental posts. In contrast, Britain was supporting the Zionist will for the organisation and implementation of an autonomous Jewish agency, and often consulted them on important matters. According to Charles D. Smith, “Zionist officials had access to nearly all secret documents drawn up both in Jerusalem and in the Colonial Office in London, either through their own spies or through British officials sympathetic to their cause”<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, when Palestinian Arabs were appointed to administrative positions – although these were never high level or political positions –, it was used as a way to implement a divide-and-rule policy or “emasculate Arab nationalist opposition to the mandatory system”<sup>33</sup>.

In addition to these obstacles, due to the inequality of their treatment, the Palestinian leadership, made up of members of the main notable families, was the theatre of rivalries. The question of Palestinian social organisation has been the subject of numerous studies, from newspaper articles to books and academic theses, with a focus on rivalries among notable families, especially among the Jerusalem families. However, these rivalries have often been over-estimated and pointed at as the major if not the sole cause of the inability of the Palestinians to struggle against the Zionist movement and the British colonial authorities<sup>34</sup>.

Actually, the divisions amongst the Palestinian leadership were well used and even exacerbated by both the British authorities and the Zionist Executive. The *divide and rule* precept was implemented through the attribution of titles, new

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<sup>30</sup> Smith, Barbara Jean, *The roots of separatism in Palestine: British economic policy 1920-1929*, New York 1993, p.7.

<sup>31</sup> Khalidi, Rashid, *The Iron cage, the story of the Palestinian struggle for statehood*, Oxford 2006, p.8.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>33</sup> Smith, Charles D., *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict, a history with documents*, Boston 2001, Fourth Edition, p.122.

<sup>34</sup> Khalidi, Rashid, *The Iron cage, the story of the Palestinian struggle for statehood, op.cit.*, p.8.

religious positions or stipends to only some of the notables. The policy they used was in many ways similar to that used in Egypt and Syria, or even India.

### ***The Royal Commission of Enquiry and the first official proposal for partition***

British policy of *laissez-faire* encouraged the Zionist movement to develop its activities and its colonization in a more systematic way so that Jewish immigration reached a peak in the years 1934-1935. This, combined with the paternalistic British policy, favoured the emergence of a great Arab Palestinian protest movement all around the country, which turned into riots and a call for a general strike. This was to be the first general and organised revolt. As we will see in chapter four, this revolt would also encourage the Palestinian leaders to gather and organise in the Arab Higher Committee (AHC). Proceduralists<sup>35</sup> as they were, and despite the failure of their previous attempts, the British authorities were convinced that they would find a solution with the help of “experts” through discussions with the Zionist leadership and the Arabs. So, after the Arabs agreed to call off the strike, the British Government decided to send a Royal Commission to evaluate and determine the causes of the Arab revolt.

The commission (present in Palestine from November 11, 1936 to January 18, 1937), was to hear British government officers as well as the “protagonists” in Palestine. However, neither the Zionist movement nor the Arabs were at first willing to participate to the hearings. The commission was not welcomed by the Zionist Executive, which feared its recommendations and argued to the British authorities that this would be perceived as “a concession to violence”<sup>36</sup>. However, knowing that boycotting the commission would do more harm than participating to the hearings, Ben Gurion finally decided that the Zionist

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<sup>35</sup> This typology is borrowed from Brendan O'Leary who defines “proceduralists” as follows: “*Proceduralists advocate the involvement of the “affected parties”, to achieve as much reciprocal consent on the new border as possible. They try to establish rules to which reasonable partitions should conform. They see roles for commissions, and particularly judges and technical experts, in appraising the claims for appropriate boundaries*”, in “Debating partition. Justifications and critiques”, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Haim Weizmann quoted in Rose, Norman, “The debate on Partition, 1937-1938: the Anglo-Zionist Aspect”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 6(3), October 1970, pp. 297-318.

Organisation should participate.

On the Arab side, the intervention of Arab and Muslim leaders such as King Ibn Saud and the King of Iraq led the AHC to present before the commission<sup>37</sup>.

So, the Arabs of Palestine presented their case before the Commission and they did not wave an inch in their considerations and demands. For them, the strikes and the revolt were caused by two main issues, first, the Arabs were prevented from enjoying their natural and political rights in Palestine, second, by pursuing a policy favouring the creation of a Jewish National Home, the British were destroying the Arab identity and presence in Palestine<sup>38</sup>.

It seems that the Zionist Executive was ready to find a compromise with the British authorities. An interesting account of the discussions between the members of the commission and the Zionist leadership, in the person of Haim Weizmann, is given by Norman Rose<sup>39</sup>. According to N.Rose, the idea of partition arose quite early and was first developed as a “cantonisation” scheme and discussed in brief terms with Weizmann during his hearing. Under the impulse of Reginald Coupland, the members of the Commission would move from “cantonisation” to “partition”. Reginald Coupland was a fervent Zionist, but also a Professor of Colonial History at Oxford, notably specialising in the study of the national conflicts, and as such was familiar with the schemes for Ireland's partition although he did not support Ireland's division<sup>40</sup>. H.Weizmann was not at all reluctant at the idea of partition, and he was not the sole Zionist leader to feel so, but he feared that the *Yishuv* was not yet in a position where it could sustain autonomy, finding itself facing the Arabs alone. He is to have said during a meeting :

*“we should make it clear that we did not look favourably upon the scheme. We were keeping an open mind, but the details were of the greatest importance, and we would be prepared to consider the scheme if these details were not obviously unsatisfactory”<sup>41</sup>.*

<sup>37</sup> Al-Kayyali, Abdulwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian Resistance against the UK and Zionism*, Beirut 1988, p.462.

<sup>38</sup> Arab Higher committee, “Memorandum by the Arab Higher Committee to the Royal Commission of Inquiry”, in Al-Kayyali, Abdulwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian Resistance against the UK and Zionism, op.cit.*, pp.463-469.

<sup>39</sup> Rose, Normann, “The debate on Partition, 1937-1938: the Anglo-Zionist Aspect”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 6(3), October 1970, pp. 297-318.

<sup>40</sup> Fraser, Thomas, *Partition in Ireland, India and Palestine. Theory and Practice*, op.cit., p.2; Katz, Yossi, *Partner to partition. The Jewish Agency's partition plan in the mandate era*, London 1998, pp. 2-12; Jackson, Alvin, “Ireland, the Union and the Empire, 1800-1960”, in Kenny, Kevin (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire*, Oxford 2004, pp. 123-153.

<sup>41</sup> Weizmann Archives, Rechovot, Israel, Minutes of the meeting held at the Zionist Federation in

If Lloyd George did not evoke the question of partition during his hearing, he did nevertheless evoke the state of mind in which he was when supporting the Balfour Declaration. And for him this was clear:

*“The idea was, and this was the interpretation put upon it at the time, that a Jewish State was not to be set up immediately by the Peace Treaty without reference to the wishes of the majority of the inhabitants. On the other hand, it was contemplated that when the time arrived for according representative institutions to Palestine, if the Jews had meanwhile responded to the opportunity afforded them by the idea of a national home and had become a definite majority of the inhabitants, then Palestine would thus become a Jewish Commonwealth”<sup>42</sup>.*

So, in other words, the idea was to provide the Zionists with the opportunity to make their best to become a majority and thus establish their sovereignty.

The Commission’s report was more than 400 pages long and included a lengthy presentation of the situation and its historical roots. It was mostly written and inspired by Reginald Coupland. It positioned the causes of the Arab revolt in their desire for national independence and the fear of Zionism. It also presented the background of two totally different populations with competing national aspirations and who had no common ground to share:

*“What are the existing circumstances? An irrepressible conflict has arisen between two national communities within the narrow bounds of one small country. About 1,000,000 Arabs are in strife, open or latent, with some 400,000 Jews. There is no common ground between them. The Arab community is predominantly Asiatic in character, the Jewish community predominantly European. They differ in religion and in language. Their cultural and social life, their ways of thought and conduct, are as incompatible as their national aspirations. These last are the greatest bar to peace. Arabs and Jews might possibly learn to live and work together in Palestine if they would make a genuine effort to reconcile and combine their national ideals and so build up in time a joint or dual nationality. But this they cannot do. The War and its sequel have inspired all Arabs with the hope of reviving in a free and united Arab world the traditions of the Arab golden age. The Jews similarly are inspired by their historic past. They mean to show what the Jewish nation can achieve when restored to the land of its birth. National assimilation between Arabs and Jews is thus ruled*

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London on March 15, 1937, in Norman Rose, “The debate on Partition, 1937-1938: the Anglo-Zionist Aspect”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 6(3), October 1970, pp. 297-318.

<sup>42</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/282/, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, January 18, 1939.



*out. In the Arab picture the Jews could only occupy the place they occupied in Arab Egypt or Arab Spain. The Arabs would be as much outside the Jewish picture as the Canaanites in the old land of Israel. The National Home, as we have said before, cannot be half-national. In these circumstances to maintain that Palestinian citizenship has any moral meaning is a mischievous pretence. Neither Arab nor Jew has any sense of service to a single State”<sup>43</sup>.*

So, according to the British officials, Arabs and Jews could possibly not live together or share power in a united national state, their claims irreconcilable. This was further explained by Herbert Samuel, though the latter did not reach the same conclusions as the Royal Commission:

*“The obligations Britain undertook towards the Arabs and the Jews some twenty years ago . . . have proved irreconcilable, and, as far ahead as we can see, they must continue to conflict. . . . We cannot – in Palestine as it now is – both concede the Arab claim to self government and secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home”<sup>44</sup>.*

Believing that, given the situation, there was no possibility of a Jewish-Arab common agreement, thus appealing to “historicist” and “cost-benefit” arguments<sup>45</sup>, the only solution that appeared feasible and applicable for the members of the commission was the end, in the long term, of the British mandate and the partition of Palestine into two states, a Jewish state, an Arab state linked to Transjordan and the conservation under a British mandate of Jerusalem, Nazareth, the port of Haifa as well as a corridor linking the cities to the sea and the harbour. This was the first official proposition of partition and it would be immediately accepted by the government, which announced that “it would approach the League of Nations with a view to the ending of the present Mandate, and the substitution of a new one on the lines proposed”<sup>46</sup>.

This first partition scheme proposed and adopted by the British government would change the entire situation. Until then, Palestine had always been administered as one undivided and indivisible land. Even those who supported the Zionist demands and wished for a Jewish State (such as Balfour, Lloyd George, Winston Churchill etc.) had never envisaged the partition of the

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<sup>43</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/270, *Palestine: Report of the Royal Commission 1936*, June 1937, pp.370-371.

<sup>44</sup> Viscount Samuel, “Alternatives to partition”, *Foreign Affairs 16(1)*, October 1937, pp.143-155.

<sup>45</sup> See the typology identified by Brendan O’Leary in “Debating partition: justifications and critiques”, Ibis Working Paper (78), *op.cit.*

<sup>46</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/270, *Palestine: Report of the Royal Commission 1936*, *op.cit.*

country as a means to an end<sup>47</sup>. However, by 1937, partition seemed to Britain the only “way out [...] from the existing deadlock in Palestine”<sup>48</sup>. All in all, first, it meant that British policy had failed in Palestine, which they had always wanted to keep intact as a geographical and political unit. Second, they were responding to the pressure of the Zionist movement that refused any compromise to achieve an agreement with the Arabs by granting them a State of their own. Third, they knew such a stance would probably dramatically alter their relations with the Arabs and Muslims. Last but not least, partition was contravening to the terms of the mandate which meant that the British had failed in their mission vis à vis the League of Nations and had to terminate their mandate. Furthermore, from then on, the Zionist movement would not falter, launching its second offensive, namely to obtain more favourable conditions (frontiers) as we will see in Chapter three.

### ***Internal criticism of the 1937 partition plan***

News of the plan would raise numerous reactions within the British offices and parliament, within the Zionist movement and of course among the Arabs.

When the cabinet presented its proposition to the parliament, the latter revealed its divisions over the question of partition. Discussions started on 20<sup>th</sup> July in the House of Lords and a significant discussion was held between Lord Peel and former High Commissioner in Palestine, Viscount Herbert Samuel, who offered one of the most sound criticisms of the partition scheme. He opposed any partition of Palestine and was in favour of alternatives, which he presented during the debate. His arguments were later to be published in an article in October 1937 in *Foreign Affairs*. Though agreeing to the analysis of the situation and then acknowledging the need of a new start, Viscount Samuel developed strong criticism of the proposed plan:

*“I could not but agree with their judgement that it was necessary to make a fresh start. Undoubtedly the present situation is a deadlock.*

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<sup>47</sup> Galnoor, Itzhak, *The partition of Palestine. Decision crossroads in the Zionist Movement*, New York 1995, p.72.

<sup>48</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/270/, *Palestine: Report of the Royal Commission*, June 1937, p.374.

*There is no reason why a British Government should consent to engage in a policy of repression and coercion; to sacrifice the lives of British soldiers and policemen; to be exposed to active, and sometimes bitter, criticism from the Jewish side, while they found that they were alienating at the same time the whole of the Arab world and offending Moslem opinion in India and elsewhere*<sup>49</sup>.

Not only did he criticise the scheme, which proposed an imperfect partition as the Jewish state would not include all of the Jewish population and would count one fourth of the Arab population, but he rejected the transfer of the Arab population. He then proposed an alternative plan in five points, which depended upon cooperation between Arabs and Jews and contained similar measures as those that would be later proposed by Judah Magnes:

*“First, a recognition by the Jews that they must make some sacrifice in order to reassure the Arabs and arrive at a reconciliation; and this sacrifice should take the form of a limitation of the Jewish population of Palestine, during a period of years, to an agreed percentage of the whole. (I suggested, tentatively, forty percent; the present percentage is about thirty.) Secondly, the aspirations of Arab nationalism should be recognized and should be assisted, and efforts made to promote the formation of a great Confederation in the Middle East, in which Palestine should be included, to which it would bring wealth, and in which the industries of Palestine would find a vast and valuable market. Thirdly, Transjordan should be opened by agreement to the settlement of both Jews and Arabs and a loan arranged to promote that object. Fourthly, the ownership of the Moslem Holy Places in Palestine should be guaranteed by the League of Nations in perpetuity. Fifthly, the Jewish Community in Palestine as now organized, and the Arab Community, provided with a new organization, should each be given large powers over the education of their own peoples and over public health and other matters, and be provided with adequate revenues from taxation. A new Advisory Council should be established, in which each Community would be represented as such; the Council should also contain the principal British officials: it would be consulted by the High Commissioner on all matters of common concern*<sup>50</sup>.

For Samuel, this would be the only means to avoid partition, and he also stated that if the Jews and the Arabs could not reach an agreement along these lines, then partition would be the only remaining alternative “with all its disadvantages and risks”.

The debate was extended to the Parliament, which proved divided and whose members raised a number of questions. It finally endorsed the principle

<sup>49</sup> Viscount Samuel, “Alternatives to partition”, *Foreign Affairs* 16(1), October 1937, pp.143-155.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

of partition under the condition that they were presented with a detailed plan and proper argumentation on the feasibility of the scheme. It also ended with the majority deciding to authorise the government to bring the question before the League of Nations before re-submitting the plan to the parliament – after deeper investigation<sup>51</sup>. Eventually, Samuel's remarks, together with other arguments against partition and the interventions of Winston Churchill and Lloyd Georges, who asked for a more detailed study and proposition, led to the non definitive adoption of the plan. To further investigate, the government appointed an Inquiry Commission, the Palestine Partition Commission.

However, British policy did not raise a consensus within the British agencies and in November 1937, the Foreign Office led by Anthony Eden expressed its doubts and reservations as to the merits of partition and to their consequences in the Arab region. He took very seriously the note of King Ibn Saud and the various comments sent by the British Ambassador in Iraq, the authorities in Transjordan and the British envoy in Jeddah<sup>52</sup>.

This was to keep the debate about partition alive, especially between the Foreign Office, which clearly rejected partition, and the Colonial Office with the intervention of the Secretary of State for India. Indeed, the news of partition caused disturbances in India notably among the Muslim League. The question was then the subject of contradictory debates within the Cabinet<sup>53</sup>.

As we have seen, whereas Weizmann and Ben Gurion were in favour of partition, which offered a concrete perspective, contrary to the hope for Eretz Israel, the rest of the Zionist movement was rather opposed to such a solution but they had agreed to mandate the Executive for further investigation and negotiations. Thus, the Zionist Organization did not issue a clear statement. All the public statements made by the Arabs as well as the Zionist movement were in opposition of partition and this led Eamon De Valera, the former president of the Irish Republic and then President of the Irish Executive Counsel, to deliver a speech in the House of Commons against Palestine's partition. This episode

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<sup>51</sup> Galnoor, Itzhak, *The Partition of Palestine: decision crossroads in the Zionist movement, op.cit.*, pp.52-53.

<sup>52</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/273, George William Rendell, “Letter of November 8, 1937, from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office”, Annex to the “Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”.

George William Rendell was head of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, 1930-1938.

<sup>53</sup> National Archives, CAB/23/90A, “Conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S-W. 1. , on Wednesday, the 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1937”, pp.5-15.

was reported in a note by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Malcolm McDonald<sup>54</sup>.

Finally, by the end of 1937, the Palestinian leadership was dispersed all over the Middle East area, but as we will see, they did manage to preserve a certain unity in decision-making. The sole clear rejection of partition was to be heard in Arab ranks and neither the Zionist movement, nor Britain adopted a clear position, although the latter was divided about the subject on the higher level of the government's administration with the colonial Office favouring it and the Foreign Office rejecting it. The Zionist movement was willing to see what agreement it could reach with Britain, that decided to continue on the partition scheme and appointed a commission to find out the technical possibilities.

As we will see in the following chapters, the recommendation of partition contained in the Royal Commission's report provoked intense debates among the three actors on the Palestinian scene, and the Arabs decided to resume their revolt as a sign of discontent.

### ***The Woodhead Commission and the revocation of the partition plan***

Implementing the decisions made during the debates on the Peel plan, the British government, appointed another commission in February 1938 – the Palestine Partition Commission or the Woodhead Commission<sup>55</sup> – whose terms of reference had been subject to a debate between the Colonial and the Foreign Offices. Indeed, both the Secretary of State for the Colonies William Ormsby Gore, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Anthony Eden, had their ideas about the tasks of the Commission: with the former, following the decisions of the Government, suggesting that the Commission should have technical tasks only and dismissing the arguments against partition, whereas the latter proposed that the Commission should proceed with hearings about

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<sup>54</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/271, “Mr. De Valera and Palestine”, Note by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, October 14, 1937.

<sup>55</sup> After the name of the head of the Commission, John Woodhead, a former civil administrator in India (Secretary of the Commerce Department of the Government of India, Finance member of the government of Bengal).

the principle of partition itself<sup>56</sup>. Indeed, if we recall, although partition was approved by the Government, it did not raise a clear consensus within Parliament, leading to an unclear vote and the demand for further study of the plan. However, probably due to pressure from the Government, the task of the commission was finally stated as that of analysing the technical possibilities for such a partition and addressing the problems this might raise and on no account giving an opinion on the partition principle<sup>57</sup>.

*“Our terms of reference required us to recommend boundaries for the Arab and Jewish areas which would include the fewest possible Arabs and Arab enterprises in the Jewish area, and vice-versa.*

The commission travelled through Palestine from April to early August 1938, but nonetheless, as the numerous memoranda issued by the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs attest, debate on the principle of partition did not fade.

In a memorandum dated August 21, 1938, the newly appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies, Malcolm McDonald gave an account of his incentive for the Partition of Palestine and of his discussions with Haim Weizmann and 'Ezzat Tannous – a Palestinian politician in charge of the Arab Centre in London and whose purpose was to support the Palestinian Arab case. McDonald, just like his predecessor, William Ormsby-Gore, was in favour of partition and whilst he still awaited the conclusions of the Woodhead Commission, he did not hesitate to give his favourable opinion on partition.

*“1. A scheme of Partition on lines similar to those sketched in the Peel Report is still the best solution of the problem, if it proves practicable from the point of view of conditions inside Palestine and opinion outside the country. The arguments in its favour are very powerful, and most of them are set out in the Peel Report itself.*

*2. We should not abandon this general solution lightly, and should recognise that the arguments in its favour can be made very effective not only from the point of view of the Jews, but also from the point of view of the neighbouring Arab countries who fear Jewish domination in the Near East.*

*3. But two considerations may destroy this solution. First, practical considerations inside Palestine may lead the Woodhead Commission to recommend a Jewish State so small that the Jews themselves (who are*

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<sup>56</sup> Anthony Eden's views are developed in a memorandum to the Cabinet he issued in November 1937, and William Ormsby Gore's views are to be read in a memorandum he wrote in December 1937, National Archives, CAB/24/273.

<sup>57</sup> Woodhead, John, “The report of the Palestine Partition Commission”, *International Affairs* 18(2), March-April 1939.

*divided, even in the Zionist Movement, on Partition) finally decide against Partition. Second, opinion in the surrounding Arab countries and in Egypt may be so bitterly opposed to Partition, and their hostility to us be so dangerous in the present international situation, that we ourselves are forced to seek an alternative solution.*

*In view of this possibility, I am examining a variety of other proposed solutions. (I can assure my colleagues that I am not suffering from a lack of advisers; almost everybody that I meet produces some fresh solution.) None of them is really satisfactory; so far as I am able to judge, all of them would be rejected by either the Arabs or the Jews or both; we are faced by a choice between evils. Whatever we do, there is likely to be difficulty and trouble in Palestine for a long time to come. What we have to try to find is the solution which, whilst it may not bring pacification at once, is most likely over a period of years to heal the breach between Jews and Arabs and ultimately to create an enduring peace<sup>58</sup>.*

He also had come to think that H. Weizmann and the Zionist Executive were in favour of partition. During talks with Weizmann, the latter had even suggested that partition had to be imposed by the British authorities as the only way to make the Arabs understand that they should negotiate in that direction. Indeed, he considered that the unclear British position as to the future of Palestine made the Arabs hope for a solution without partition and that it would lead them to further their protests. However, even though they arrived at such a scheme, the question of demography would still remain.

And a solution to the question of demography was indeed, proposed in the report of the Peel Commission, which from its inception had addressed the intermingling of the populations, an intermingling that could not enable the creation of states ruling over demographically homogeneous territories<sup>59</sup>.

*“The number of Arabs in the Jewish area was very large, being about 295,000, as against 305,000 Jews. The area of the Arab land was also large, out of a total of about 5,000,000 dunums, the Arabs owned more than 3,750,000 dunums. The Royal Commission recognised that the problem created by this large Arab minority would be a serious hindrance to the successful operation of partition, and they proposed that it should be solved by the transfer of the greater part of those Arabs from the Jewish State to the Arab State. They hoped that it would be possible by means of irrigation to provide land in the Arab State for the re-settlement of this large number of Arabs, and they contemplated that, with the consent of the Arab leaders, the transfer of the Arabs from the plains should in the last resort be compulsory”.*

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<sup>58</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/278, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Cabinet”, Discussion on Palestine, 21 August 1938.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

The British government had however refused to resort to compulsory transfer, which made the application of the Peel partition scheme non-viable. So, the Partition Commission had to sort out a plan that would not require such drastic measures. To that end, it elaborated two other plans, a Plan B, which also could not work without transfer, and a Plan C, which it approved by a large majority. Plan C was based on a partition in three stages, the Jewish and Arab states according to this plan would be smaller, as the former would lose the Galilee and Beersheba as both areas contained an Arab majority. However, although these areas were Arab in population, the Commission decided not to transfer them to the Arab state but to leave them under British authority in the same way as Jerusalem and Bethlehem, for two major reasons. First, the commissioners considered that it would serve the Jewish state in terms of security as well as economics – the Galilee led to the port of Haifa, which was of vital importance. Second, Beersheba was a large area with a few Arab inhabitants that could eventually contain Jews and granting it to the Arabs would not enable the Jews to settle there.

With all these reservations, the commission ultimately rejected the partition of Palestine as an unfeasible scheme. However, the fact that Britain had envisaged partition to end the conflict between the two communities and transfer as a way to create ethnic homogeneous states had created a precedent that the Zionist movement would further study to provide its own partition scheme in due time.

### ***1939 White Paper: safeguarding the unity of Palestine and the pre-partition plan status quo***

In the midst of the debates, the Secretary of State for the Colonies issued a new memorandum stating the pledges and proposing guidelines for the future policy in Palestine<sup>60</sup>.

In this memorandum, the Middle East Department shows consistency in its

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<sup>60</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/282/, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, January 18, 1939.



position as it defends its government in view of the pledges made to the Arabs, which he considers were clear from the beginning. However, here we observe a new phenomenon, as until then, whereas the British government had made it clear that Palestine was not among the territories which it would recognize as independent, it did not explicitly state that it was not Arab and did not belong to them:

*“The phrase used was, unfortunately, vague, and it is a thousand pities that, perhaps owing to the exigencies of war, the authors of the McMahon correspondence did not make it clear to the Arabs beyond any reasonable doubt that Palestine was not to be theirs. Certainly, the Arab belief that we intended Palestine to belong to them, and that its withholding was an after-thought, is genuine, and they regard their ownership of it as one of our commitments. On the other hand, I believe that it is perfectly true that the British Government of the time did intend to exclude Palestine. “Responsible statesmen of the day have been unanimous in saying so, and Sir Henry McMahon has said so. As the matter will certainly form a subject of discussion when the Arab representatives come to London, the Foreign Office are circulating separately some notes upon it as well as upon other legal aspects of the Arab case”.*

Furthermore, the Arabs had never accepted the division set up by the British who considered that areas inhabited by Christians were not to be considered purely Arab<sup>61</sup>. Moreover, the Arabs were always consistent in their position and claims regarding this, a fact acknowledged at the time by the British administration.

In February 1939, after the rejection of the partition principle and in order to reach a solution, the British government decided to convene an Anglo-Jewish-Arab conference in London. The conference was presided by Neville Chamberlain and was attended by a Jewish delegation headed by Haim Weizmann.

As Britain vetoed Amin al Hussayni's presence at the conference, the Palestinian delegation was eventually led by Jamal al-Hussayni<sup>62</sup> and was composed of members of the high ranking families of Jerusalem and Arab

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<sup>61</sup> SEE Sharif Hussein's answer to McMahon letter of the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1915. Moreover, Arab nationalism was developed by Muslims and Christians through literary circles and political groups. In Palestine this was even more obvious as the preponderant political organ was the Christian-Muslim Association, which represented Palestine in several Conferences in London.

<sup>62</sup> Jamal al-Husayni (1893-1982), Secretary of the Palestinian Arab Action Committee from 1921 to 1934. He was also the founder and chairman of the Palestine Arab Party whom he represented within the Arab Higher Committee.

nationalists: Hussein Fakhri Al-Khalidi, Raghib al Nashashibi, Mussa al Alami, Georges Antonius, Amin al Tammimi, Alfred Rock and Yaakoub al Ghossayn. They were accompanied by an Arab delegation including the Emir Faisal Ibn Abdel-Aziz (Saudi Arabi); Abdel Mu'min, the heir of Egypt; the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri al Said; Emir Hussein of Yemen and the Transjordanian Prime Minister, Tawfiq Abu Al Huda.

The purpose of inviting all these delegations was to appease the Arabs moreover, the British government thought that the presence of other Arabs would temper the Palestinian position, which it clearly did not as the positions proved to be irreconcilable. Due to the lack of consensus, the British government decided to end the Conference and released a White Paper presented by Sir Malcolm McDonald – then Secretary of State for the Colonies. The document is mostly known because of its introduction of a limit to land purchase by the Jews as well as to Jewish immigration<sup>63</sup>. Moreover, it was considered as a huge change of policy, both by the Zionist movement and among Zionist sympathizers in the United States. As a matter of fact, the White Paper viewed favourably the establishment of a Palestinian state – with Arabs and Jews – within a period of ten years during which immigration could not exceed 75,000 within five years. After those five years, Jewish immigration was to be submitted to the agreement of the Arab majority.

The release of the White Paper was acclaimed by the Arabs who tried to push the Palestinians to accept it. However, the Mufti and the majority of the Palestinians regarded the ten years period until independence as a too long period, during which Britain might operate a reversal in its policy.

In Zionist circles however, the White Paper was seen as a reversal and treason, and it led to campaigns of protest in the *Yishuv*, including demonstrations but also terrorist attacks. It was seen as a blow to the Zionist objectives as well as a condemnation of the Jews in the Reich.

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<sup>63</sup> The areas concerned by the limitations are the region of Nablus, the Gaza Strip and Bersheva. As for the immigration, it was limited to 75,000 for five years.

## **C. From the Anglo-American proposal to the United Nations**

### **Plan: bi-nationalism, partition and economic union**

#### ***The way to a bi-national plan***

Whereas it was manoeuvring in order to obtain a favourable partition scheme, the Zionist movement was going further within its own instances as it called for a Jewish state all over Palestine and beyond. This was announced during the Biltmore Conference in 1942 in the United States and it was to pre-empt the basis of the Zionists future policy.

After the adoption of the Biltmore programme, the Zionist leadership worked at drawing the United Kingdom and the United States to their cause, the cause of partition and the establishment of a Jewish State in order to secure the idea of Jewish sovereignty.

At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the World was focused on the six million Jewish victims of the Third Reich and on the survivors in the camps. The majority of the survivors sought to leave for the United States, however, the latter had, since the end of the 19th Century carried out a very restrictive immigration policy based on quotas<sup>64</sup>. At the same time, the United Kingdom was still implementing the White Paper of 1939. Quickly, the situation became difficult to control and the British government was facing new moral considerations. On the one hand, there were thousands of survivors seeking a home and whom the Zionist leadership was wishing to send to Palestine, whereas on the other hand, the Arabs of Palestine were continuing to reject any form of partition and were aspiring to independence. Moreover, the British colonial authorities in Palestine had to face Jewish terrorism as since the White Paper had been adopted, Jewish militias had organised to protest against and attack the British. The destruction of the European Jews had had rather positive consequences for the Zionist movement as it encouraged Jews and non-Jews to further support the movement. Moreover, in 1945, the World Zionist Conference adopted the Biltmore programme and at the beginning of 1946, about two millions of Jews

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<sup>64</sup> From 1945 to 1948, only 25,000 Jews were allowed to settle in the United States.

all over the World joined the World Zionist Organization.

Parallel to that, the Arabs were also organising themselves and on September 25, 1944, they met in Alexandria to sign a protocol aiming at the establishment of the League of the Arab States, an opportunity to reaffirm the central position of Palestine in the Arab World.

In the meanwhile, the Jewish attacks in Palestine aggravated relations between the Zionist movement and Britain. In the United States, President Roosevelt however, had his sympathies set on the Zionist enterprise. It should be remembered that in 1938, he had even thought of the transfer of the Palestinians to enable the Jews to settle in Palestine but at that time the consequences of such a move was analysed as too important by his counsellors<sup>65</sup>. Until Roosevelt's death, the United States did not decide categorically in favour of Zionism.

When Roosevelt died, he was succeeded by Harry S. Truman, who, as soon as he was in place, appointed an academic – Earl Grant Harrison<sup>66</sup> – to write a report on the displaced Jews in Europe. Harrison's report was alarming and recommended to open Palestine for the Jews to immigrate. President Truman shared the conclusions of the report with the British. Meanwhile, Clement Attlee<sup>67</sup> had arrived at the head of the British Government and he reminded Truman of the pledges to the Arabs. He nevertheless showed himself ready to allow steady Jewish immigration into Palestine if the United-States decided to assist in the resolution of the Palestine question.

Whilst Truman accepted the deal, he was to find himself facing, on the one hand, the American ambassadors in the Arab countries raising the interests of the oil producing countries, and on the other hand, the pro-Zionist senators raising “Jewish vote” as a threat and arguing for pro-Zionist policy. He finally decided to espouse the Zionists' ideal, furthermore, Palestine also offered a chance to quickly resettle the European Jews without Western countries needing to adjust and make room.

The commission submitted its report in ten points on May1, 1946. The main recommendations were the issue of 100,000 Jewish immigration certificates to

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<sup>65</sup> Christison, Kathleen, “U.S policy and the Palestinians: bound by a frame of reference”, *op.cit.*, pp.46-59.

<sup>66</sup> Earl Grant Harrison (1899-1955), An American attorney, academician and public servant.

<sup>67</sup> Clement Richard Attlee (1883-1967), leader of the British Labour Party from 1935 to 1955, he served as Prime Minister from 1945 to 1951.

Palestine and the maintenance of Palestine under international mandate.

The recommendations of the commission raised a general outcry in the Arab World and within the *Yishuv* and the Zionist federations.

The former felt betrayed and feared the end of the Arab dream of unity, whereas for the latter, they rejoiced at the news of the immigration of 100,000 Jews but they wanted a Jewish state. Out of the recommendations of that commission, the United States and the United Kingdom produced the Morrison-Grady plan, which advocated the establishment of autonomous provinces within a federal frame, this was the come back of the “cantonisation” scheme. Despite the United States participating in its elaboration, President Truman found a way to reject it under the pretext that the plan had received no support, neither from the American population nor from their national agencies.

Wishing to put the Zionist movement and the Arabs around the same table, and reach an agreement, Britain called for a conference on Palestine. It set the Morrison-Grady plan as the basis for the discussions and negotiations. However, both the Zionist leadership and the Palestinian Arabs imposed conditions on their participation, and these conditions were rejected<sup>68</sup>. So, although the Zionist Executive and the Palestinians refused the invitations, the Arab Governments however, accepted it and they were finally to be joined during the second round of sessions in February 1947, by the representatives of the AHC<sup>69</sup>.

The conference opened in September 1946 on the basis of the Morrison-Grady plan presented by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs himself, Ernest Bevin. As expected it aroused the opposition of the Arab representatives, who had announced their refusal to participate in discussions on the basis of this plan. They did nevertheless propose an alternative plan as a basis for the discussions, and this plan was based on the end of the mandate and the establishment of an Arab State in Palestine<sup>70</sup>.

However, whilst Britain had encouraged the Arabs to take into account the

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<sup>68</sup> The Palestinian representatives had been deliberately pushed aside as they had announced they would take position against any proposition that did not stress the Arabs' historical rights in Palestine. H. Levenberg, “Bevin's disillusionment, the London conference, Autumn 1946”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 27(4), October 1991, pp.615-630.

<sup>69</sup> Arab Office in London, *The Future of Palestine*, London 1947, p.53.

<sup>70</sup> National Archives, CAB/129/16, “Palestine – Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”, January 15, 1947; H. Levenberg, “Bevin's disillusionment, the London conference, Autumn 1946”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 27(4), October 1991, pp.615-630.

Anglo-American Commission's recommendation on immigration to grant 100,000 Jewish immigration certificates, the Arabs sought a solution independent from the question of Jewish refugees.

Furthermore, the Arab proposition clearly divided the British officials and created a gap between the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office. Indeed, whilst the former was ready to study the proposition, the latter disqualified it outright. Actually, the Colonial Office rejected all the plans except the Zionist movement's plan, namely partition, which it declared as the only plan able to solve the question of Palestine.

Britain was facing a dilemma and several settlement proposals on the table<sup>71</sup>:

- *its own proposal – which was finalised with the United States, and known as the Morrison-Grady plan. This plan was in substance proposing to set autonomous Arab and Jewish provinces.*
- *the Zionist Executive's partition proposal*
- *the Arab proposal which had been presented during the Palestine Conference, held in London in September 1946, and which foresaw a common state.*

Despite the internal confusion amongst the British authorities, the negotiations had not yet ended when President Truman announced the issuance of 100,000 visas and the United States support for partition, thus sabotaging the negotiations headed by Great Britain. His decision was more a gesture towards the Jews and a way to place the United States at the centre of the events than a real blow to negotiations as indeed there was no progress<sup>72</sup>. In a context of non-ending conflict and negotiations, and after many attempts to reach a *status quo* for Palestine, no solution could be found that would reconcile the Zionist colonial aspirations and the Palestinian national aims. Britain started envisioning that the solution would have to be imposed, however they did not feel like they could do this alone. Indeed, they had been unable to find a solution before the war, how would they find one after it? Especially now that they also had to take into account the Jews who survived the genocide? They went back to the United Nations and renounced their mandate over the country.

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<sup>71</sup> National Archives, CAB/129/16, "Palestine: Future policy, A memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", January 16, 1947. On the diverse positions of the Foreign and Colonial Office: CAB/66/64/14, "The offices of the war Cabinet, The future of the British mandate for Palestine", April 4, 1945; CAB/129/16, "Cabinet, Palestine: Reference to United Nations", January 13, 1947.

<sup>72</sup> Morris, Benny, *Righteous victims. A history of the Zionist-Arab conflict 1881-2001*, New York 1999, p.180

### ***The debates in the UN: partition or not?***

The newly established and “inexperienced” United Nations took on the file and constituted a commission to enquire about the Palestine question<sup>73</sup>. For that purpose it sent a delegation to the camps in Europe and to Palestine. So, from the very beginning of that enquiry, Palestine was linked with the fate of the European Jews, which rendered an objective solution for Palestine barely plausible. This commission known as the UNSCOP (United Nations Special Committee on Palestine) set up hearings from 15 June to 20 July 1947. Boycotted by the Arabs of Palestine, it however met with Arab States' representatives and received a written statement from the Arab Office in Washington. All the testimonies called for the independence of Palestine as an Arab State with provision of equality for the Jews as individuals. The Zionist movement, as for it, welcomed the Commission with enthusiasm and apart from the bi-nationalists and the revisionists, all its members favoured the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine be it on all or only part of it – although Ben Gurion had started speaking of a Jewish State all over Palestine. I will not go further on the presentation of the Zionist and Arab proposals as these will be dealt with in the next chapters. As the inhabitants of Palestine, they refused any idea of sharing with a “settler community”<sup>74</sup> that had the intention to create a Jewish state, which meant a state where the Arabs would not even have the status of national minority. Arab desperation only contrasted with the Zionist exacerbated battle on all fronts to obtain positive statements on partition from the Great Powers. Statements it had obtained by August 1947, just a few days before the submission of the first report<sup>75</sup>.

Although the members of the commission had been hearing testimonies for days and collecting written information and reports, they were divided about the solution they would recommend. As a matter of fact, whilst all did agree about the necessity to end the Mandate, eight out of the eleven members proposed to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states bound with an

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<sup>73</sup> Pappe, Ilan, *The Ethnic cleansing of Palestine*, London 2006, p.31.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>75</sup> Morris, Benny, *Righteous victims, op.cit.*, p.184.

economic union, and with an international trusteeship for Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The other three members as for them (representatives of Yugoslavia, Iran and India), proposed that Palestine be given independence as a federal state<sup>76</sup>. As a consequence, the UNSCOP presented two reports to the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the “majority report” with the partition recommendation and the “minority report” which recommended to keep Palestine as one unit.

The Zionist movement which as we have seen favoured partition, continued its lobbying to gain votes in favour of partition through direct and indirect pressure and threats notably via the United States on the latter's client states. By the eve of the vote, the Zionist movement had already obtained official support from Truman and the Soviet Union. This was also the occasion to negotiate the terms of partition and the frontiers so as to say and that led to the Jews obtaining fifty-five percent of Palestine in the definitive plan.

The majority plan got 33 votes, and the minority proposal 13, with ten countries abstaining, among which Britain.

Once partition was decided, the UN appointed a Commission to prepare for the establishment of the two States and administrate both parts of the country in the meanwhile<sup>77</sup>. As we will see in the next chapters, the decision by the UNGA led to violent clashes but also to what has been identified by numerous scholars of the field as an ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian Arabs<sup>78</sup>.

## **E. The American Perspective on Peace and Partition, 1948-1988**

As we have seen, during and after World War I, the United States presided by Woodrow Wilson had been introducing the principle of self-determination. Whether the United States aimed for it to be applied to the southern countries, and notably to the Middle Eastern area, or not, is a matter of

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>77</sup> Khader, Bishara, *L'Europe et la Palestine: des croisades à nos jours*, *op.cit.*, pp. 201-204.

<sup>78</sup> The use of the term of ethnic cleansing to describe what had been qualified in the traditional historiography as Palestinian civil war has been controversial. Read: Pappé, Ilan, *The Ethnic cleansing of Palestine*, *op.cit.*



controversy<sup>79</sup>. Nevertheless, what is certain is that the emerging national movements in the Middle East had taken Wilson at his words and were aspiring to independence according to that principle. Despite the personal sympathies of President Woodrow Wilson with the Zionist movement, the United States had been willing to find a solution that would work for both the Zionist Movement and the Arabs. However, they were caught up in their own internal debates as to the attitude to adopt with regards to the Zionist movement and economic considerations, as they were more and more involved in the region, and in particular regarding oil production.

For several years, the United States would be more or less absent from the Middle-East scene, however, they came back with President Roosevelt who became President from 1933 to 1945. The latter was still keeping the principle of self-determination as a guiding line as he considered that the United States would not move against the will of the Arabs of Palestine and the Jews on the Palestine question<sup>80</sup>. This position was to die with him, as his successor Harry Truman made a point of pleasing his supposedly Zionist driven Jewish electorate<sup>81</sup>. This was also the period chosen by the Zionist leadership to reinforce both its presence in the United States and its lobbying to obtain the US Government's support to a Jewish State. Indeed, as mentioned above, in 1942, the Zionist Executive succeeded in endorsing the Biltmore programme, a maximalist programme that foresaw the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. On that occasion, Ben Gurion made numerous interventions in order to gather support, and from then on, many "resolutions supporting Zionism were introduced in state legislatures"<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> Kapitan, Tomis, "Self-Determination and International Order", *The Monist* 89(2), pp.356-370.

<sup>80</sup> Khalidi, Rashid, *Sowing crisis: the cold war and American dominance in the Middle East*, *op.cit.*, p.14.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.15, 25.

<sup>82</sup> Roosevelt, Kermit, "The partition of Palestine; a lesson in pressure politics", *Middle East Journal* 2(1), January 1948, pp.1-16. Grandson of President Roosevelt, Kermit Roosevelt was, in the late 1940s, on the advisory board of the Institute of Arab American Affairs Inc. and in the early 1950s he was a senior officer at the CIA's Middle East division. He thought that supporting Zionism was detrimental to the US interests in the Middle East: "Almost all Americans with diplomatic, educational, missionary, or business experience in the Middle East protest fervently that support of political Zionism is directly contrary to our national interests, as well as to common justice"

## ***The United States and the partition of Palestine***

In the United States, there had always been a certain sympathy for Zionism, partly due to religious grounds, whereas the State Department, the military and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were for their part cautious and considered partition as a threat to US interests in the region<sup>83</sup>. In a report it presented on November 28, 1947 – one day before the UNGA vote – the CIA drew its analysis on Palestine's partition and its possible outcome. Besides the war which it believed to be inevitable, the CIA warned against the consequences on the US interests in the region as well as against the Zionist territorial ambitions<sup>84</sup>. Although the report overestimated the Arabs' forces, it did note that “in the long run, no Zionist in Palestine will be satisfied with the territorial arrangements of the partition settlement. Even the more conservative Zionists (as opposed to the revisionists in the text) will hope to obtain the whole of the Negev, western Galilee, the city of Jerusalem, and eventually all of Palestine”. Nevertheless, Zionist lobbying had been restless and the American opinion was moved by the fate of the European Jews, the supposedly moral grounds of Zionism – the religious connexion, the appeal to the patriot fibre etc. Moreover, the White House and the Congress were in favour of partition and ignored the State Department and the CIA so that they were inclined to favour this outcome by any means, helping to ensure a majority vote for the partition plan, notably through pressure on other UN member States<sup>85</sup>. So, when the partition plan was presented to vote at the UNGA, the United States voted in favour of the plan, unlike the United Kingdom, which abstained. Despite the reservations of the State Department, the White House and the Congress were now willing to impose a solution no matter the expectations or oppositions of the Palestinians Arabs<sup>86</sup>.

The clashes in Palestine and in the Arab region in general that burst out after the announcement of the partition resolution, seem to have confirmed the CIA's

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<sup>83</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), “The consequences of the partition of Palestine”, November 28, 1947. Source: [http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC\\_0000256628/DOC\\_0000256628.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC_0000256628/DOC_0000256628.pdf)

<sup>84</sup> Roosevelt, Kermit, “The partition of Palestine; a lesson in pressure politics”, *Middle East Journal* 2(1), January 1948, pp.1-16; Christison, Kathleen, U.S Policy and the Palestinians: bound by a frame of reference, *op.cit.*, pp.46-59.

<sup>85</sup> Roosevelt, Kermit, “The partition of Palestine; a lesson in pressure politics”, *op.cit.*, pp.1-16.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

and State Department's conviction of the problematic nature of the partition at a moment when the United States was developing its network of military bases in the region. Indeed, the State Department tried to raise awareness on the impossibility to enforce the resolution and started to investigate alternatives to partition in the form of a "UN-mandated trusteeship including consultations with the AHC and the Jewish Agency"<sup>87</sup>. By March 1948, the evidence on the ground showed that partition was inapplicable through peaceful ways and the U.S briefly reconsidered their support to partition<sup>88</sup>, however, Truman under pressure from the Zionist leadership continued to ensure the latter of the U.S support to the scheme. So, eventually, the alternatives he was presented with were all rejected and Truman was the first to recognise the State of Israel in May 1948. Thus ending the efforts of the State Department to find unitary alternatives.

The partition was strongly opposed by the Arabs and the Palestinian Arabs who did not acknowledge the legitimacy of the United Nations and its decision. The unilateral announcement led the neighbouring Arab states to declare war on Israel, however, in the meanwhile, the Zionists had been cleansing their newly acquired territory and the territories they had gained in battle. The U.S however, called for the immediate repatriation of the Arab refugees, in vain and eventually, it shifted to a call to find a solution to the refugee problem.

Once the first Arab-Israeli war ended with the occupation of part of Palestine by the newly established Israeli state, Washington which had by then accepted a two-state solution to the Palestine Question, encouraged Israel and Jordan to resume talks in view of ending the Arab Israeli conflict. Indeed, in their view, a Jordanian-Israeli alliance would put an end to it, consecrate the annexation of the Arab part by the Hashemite Kingdom – actually, the U.S considered that the Arab State as drawn by the UN would not be viable unless it was to fall under Jordanian jurisdiction – and eventually contribute to pushing aside the Palestinian Leadership as represented by Haj Amin al Hussayni<sup>89</sup>. These talks did not lead to any viable agreement.

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<sup>87</sup> Khalil, Ossamah, "Pax Americana: The United States, the Palestinians, and the Peace Process, 1948-2008", in *CR: The Centennial Review* 8(2), Fall 2008, pp.1-41.

<sup>88</sup> Khalidi, Walid, "Plan Dalet: The Zionist Master Plan for the conquest of Palestine", *Middle East Forum* 37(9), November 1961, pp.22-28; Lippman, Thomas, "The view from 1947: the CIA and the partition of Palestine", *Middle East Journal* 61(1), Winter 2007, pp. 17-28.

<sup>89</sup> Khalil, Ossamah, "Pax Americana: The United States, the Palestinians, and the Peace Process, 1948-2008", *op.cit.*, pp.1-41.

## ***Lauding peace in partition while aligning with Israel's maximalist vision***

In the late 1940s, the United States was to further anchor its influence in the Middle East and rapidly, its relations with the Middle East would be dictated by the Cold War and the polarisation that resulted from it<sup>90</sup>. Noam Chomsky reminds us that from 1948 onwards, the United States had been supporting Israel's claims and that in the 1950s it decided to use Israel as a rampart against Arab nationalism as represented and carried by Gamal Abdel Nasser<sup>91</sup>. This policy would continue and develop in the next decades and Israel would be considered as the US "strategic asset". It was, however, only in the late 1950s and in the 1960s that the United States began supplying arms to Israel<sup>92</sup>. From then on, the Palestine Question transformed into the Arab-Israeli conflict, meaning that the potential diplomatic partners were the Arab States with the Palestinians no more than a refugee problem to solve as a humanitarian cause. And indeed, most of the United Nations resolutions issued before the 1967 war – and the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as well as parts of the neighbouring countries – dealt with the issue of the Palestinian refugees on a humanitarian level and urged for a peace settlement between Israel and its neighbouring Arab states.

The US-Israeli relation was to dramatically evolve during and after 1967 and on various levels. As noted by Rashid Khalidi, it was from 1967 onwards that the United States eventually totally aligned with Israel, meaning the recognition of Israel as its major ally in the region<sup>93</sup>. This alignment materialised in the form of arms supplies, economic support and political back up. It is interesting to recall that Israel could not have taken advantage over the Arab armies during the 1967 war without U.S assistance. As a consequence, when the war ended, Israel had seized the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan

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<sup>90</sup> Chomsky, Noam, "The US and the Middle East", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16(3), Spring 1998, pp. 25-42. ; Khalidi, Rashid, *Sowing crisis: the cold war and American dominance in the Middle East*, Boston 2009; Khalil Osamah, "Pax Americana: The United States, the Palestinians, and the Peace Process, 1948-2008", *op.cit.*, pp.1-41.

<sup>91</sup> Chomsky, Noam, "The US and the Middle East", *op.cit.*, pp. 25-42.

<sup>92</sup> Khalidi, Rashid, *Sowing Crisis*, *op.cit.*, p.27. The US was not the only arms suppliers to Israel, France and Great Britain did also militarily support Israel. The USSR supported Israel for a time and was one of the first to supply arms to Israel notably during the first Arab-Israeli war.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27

Heights and the Sinai.

Lyndon Johnson, then U.S President and a long time friend of Israel did no more than call for a cease-fire which allowed Israel to occupy the territories it had seized control of<sup>94</sup>. That support also translated in a strategic refusal to recognise the Palestinians as one of the main political actors on the scene and the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. The U.S rather ignored the political organ, its positions and its propositions and continued to seek peace agreements with the neighbouring countries. As for the United Nations, it took them months to release resolution 242. UN Security Council Resolution 242 which was co-sponsored by the U.S. The resolution made *tabula rasa* of the pre-1967 situation indeed, firstly, it makes no mention of Palestine, or the Palestinians as a recognised belligerent, secondly, Israel was not asked to withdraw from all the conquered territories but from “territories”, a rather vague denomination that convinced Israel it could decide not to return some territories. This is also a good example of the lack of consideration given to the PLO.

*“Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict as well as the end of claims, Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force”.*

However, the United Nations could not find a way to implement resolution 242 and in that context, the USSR approached the US and proposed to work together to find a solution. To that purpose, Nixon's first Secretary of State, William Rogers, proposed a peace plan in December 1969, in which he called for Israeli withdrawal from the territories conquered in the 1967 war. The plan foresaw that in return to such a move, Israel would be granted Arab recognition, thus setting the principle of land for peace. Whilst Egypt's President, Anwar al Sadat, accepted compromise and promised to recognise Israel if the latter withdrew from all the territories conquered in 1967, opening the way to total Arab recognition, Israel finally decided that they could not envisage returning to 1949 armistice line. They were backed in this decision by Nixon and Kissinger,

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<sup>94</sup> Johnson, Robert David, *Lyndon Johnson and Israel: The secret presidential recordings*, The S.Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv University : [http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/abraham/publications/johnson\\_israel.pdf](http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/abraham/publications/johnson_israel.pdf)

who privately promised to support them.

For Salim Yaqub, a specialist of U.S Foreign Relations, “since the early 1970s, Washington has steadily revised its prescriptions for a settlement to bring them more into line with Israeli preferences”<sup>95</sup>. Yaqub then explains that supporting Israel often means accepting and supporting the status quo... And at that time, Israeli preferences were balancing between annexing the territories it occupied in 1967 and leaving them under Jordanian tutelage. As a matter of fact, American support for Israel was further reinforced with the Nixon administration, and the influence of Henry Kissinger. Indeed, the latter was to mark a qualitative evolution in US-Israel relations in favour of Israel. Noteworthy examples being firstly, U.S support for King Hussein of Jordan in the crisis that became known as Black September, in 1970. Following Palestinian resistance guerilla activities in Jordan and aircraft hijackings by Palestinian armed organizations – particularly the PFLP and Fatah – , King Hussein ordered a harsh and brutal repression that ended with thousands of dead. As soon as the King had decided to decree a military government in view of halting Palestinian activities, the U.S announced that they would intervene militarily in the conflict besides the Jordanian military if Syria and Iraq were to intervene in favour of the Palestinians. Moreover, “the U.S dispatched the Sixth Fleet to the eastern Mediterranean and called the USSR to use its influence to halt Syria's intervention in Jordan”<sup>96</sup>. Secondly, relentless efforts to transform the regional conflict into separate conflicts. For that purpose, the U.S tried to lower the USSR influence in the region, especially in Egypt and to make the latter accept a peace agreement, which it did as the consequence of intense lobbying by Kissinger in 1978.

As noted by Yaqub, the early 1970s would also see another U.S move towards Israel, as the U.S would start using their veto in the United Nations institutions particularly when it came to sanctions against Israel. In 1973, Syria and Egypt attacked Israel and had the upper hand until the U.S came to the rescue of Israel.

Moving forward their exclusive relation with Israel and ignoring the PLO, the

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<sup>95</sup> Yaqub, Salim, “The United States and the Arab-Israeli conflict, 1947 to the present”, *OAH Magazine of History* 20(3), May 2006, pp.13-17.

<sup>96</sup> Abu Lebdeh, Hatem Shareef, *Conflict and peace in the Middle-East. National perceptions and United State-Jordan relations*, Lanham 1997.

U.S, in the persons of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, even signed a secret agreement in 1975 with Israel stating that the United States would not recognise or deal with the PLO – then the official representative of the Palestinian People as recognized by the Arab states and the United Nations – as long as it did not recognise Israel's right to exist and resolutions 242 and 338<sup>97</sup>. As a matter of fact, the U.S only did recognise the PLO in 1991, after the latter had accepted the two-state paradigm in 1988 and engaged in the peace process materialised by the Madrid Conference. The U.S refusal to recognise the PLO before that did not, however, prevent the United Nations from recognising the organisation in 1974, and inviting Yasser Arafat to give a speech in the context of a General Assembly meeting. The meeting, however, could not be held in New York as planned, as the PLO was still on the U.S terrorist organisations list.

For Ossamah Khalil, this special relationship with Israel did transform later, under the Clinton administration, into a “strategic relationship” to become a “strategic alliance” after September 11, 2001<sup>98</sup>.

## **F. Conclusion**

After the Ottoman Empire's collapse, Western powers took their share in the Middle East and installed a mandate system which instead of preparing peoples for independence and self-rule introduced separation and colonial partition in the Middle-East. Indeed, one could not fail to see that the separation principle was all over the numerous drafts proposed by the WZO as the basis for the British mandate in Palestine. One should also note that although Curzon who had been one of the most relentless opponents to Zionist claims over Palestine had understood the colonial dimension of the Zionist movement, he had failed to catch its particularity. The Zionist movement did not seek to colonise Palestine and use the indigenous population as a cheap work force but it sought to replace the indigenous population. Thus the outcome of the conflict between the indigenous population and the settlers would not lead to a mere

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<sup>97</sup> Khalil, Ossamah, “Pax Americana: The United States, the Palestinians, and the Peace Process, 1948-2008”, *op.cit.*, pp.1-41.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

conflict of power but of existence.

The consequences of the western powers' adoption of Zionists' demands were to emerge on two levels, first, it prefigured the partition of what had been for centuries Greater Syria, second, it introduced a settler colonial movement in Palestine, the presence of which could only lead to clashes, separation, and eventually the partition of Palestine.

Indeed, whilst the mandate authorities had shown their unwillingness to partition Palestine, they however, had created the conditions for the future partition. By simultaneously implementing policies leading to the emergence of conditions that favoured the partition of Palestine and advocating a unitary state. The U.K created a situation of separate development in Palestine and enabled the Zionist leadership to secure pre-statist institutions and eventually claim a state of their own. Facing such claims, as well as Arab opposition to Zionism, Britain tried to solve the Palestine question through further evaluation notably by sending investigative commissions, which all concluded that the two claims in question – the Arab and the Zionist – were mutually exclusive. However, in 1937, the Royal Commission proposed the partition of Palestine for the first time, a proposal met with strong controversy within the British political class and administration. As a consequence, the idea was abandoned only to reappear sporadically until it became a real option in the mid-1940s when the question of Palestine was tackled by the U.S and the United Nations. After World War II, the U.K decided to leave Palestine and surrender their mandate to the United Nations, which eventually decided Palestine's partition. That decision was strongly supported by the United States which, though for a time, driven by their interests with the Arab regimes, advocated a solution that would result from a local consensus, finally decided to support Zionist claim of partition. To reach that outcome, it even pressured some states to vote in favour of partition. Then, from the mid-1940s onwards, the U.S would replace the United Kingdom in the Middle East in terms of influence. A Jewish state was granted to the the Zionist movement by the United Nations in 1947 without any legal grounds. Claiming peace in partition, the U.S was in fact aligning with Israel's maximalist vision. Indeed, U.S officials would never cease to appeal for a peace agreement while supporting financially and diplomatically Israel, refusing to recognise the Palestinian representative Organization, the PLO, thus isolating the Palestinians



and using its veto to avoid sanctions against Israel. So, the U.S discourse was not followed by any concrete action in that sense, as the United States would prove to be an unswerving ally for Israel by maintaining the status-quo, i.e. theoretical partition.

The departure of the U.K, the arrival of the U.S on the Middle Eastern political scene and the adoption of partition by the UN – even though this has only value of recommendation – would eventually contribute to the imposition of partition as the only solution that could bring peace as the dominant discourse.



## Chapter Three: The Zionist Drive to Partition, 1882-1988

The previous chapters introduced the origins and the early development of Zionism as well as the mechanisms and lobbying that led to the adoption of the Balfour Declaration by the British Government, its adoption by the Western powers and in the text of the mandate. Also, we have seen how the foreign powers and international institutions' positions as regards the Question of Palestine evolved throughout time, from a discourse stressing the unity of Palestine to the decision of partition in the United Nations in 1947.

This chapter focuses on the Zionist internal debates and political evolution on the issue of partition. It argues that separation has been a guiding principle in Zionist ideology and that this, together with the search for Jewish autonomy and sovereignty, led to the formal acceptance of partition in 1947. The separation principle, as we will see in the first part, has materialised in the alienation of the Arabs in Palestine and contributed to the separate development of the Jewish and Arab communities leading to the emergence of separation and then partition as a solution to the Palestine question. Though the leading idea in Zionist mainstream thought had always been to establish a Jewish State in all of Palestine – an idea that was officially voiced for the first time in the Biltmore programme in 1942 through the demand of a Jewish State all over Palestine state – pragmatism and tactics pushed the Zionist leadership to accept partition. An idea that was not a novelty, as stated by Yossi Katz, as some Zionist leaders had already been tackling the issue in the 1920s<sup>1</sup>. So, the second part will evoke Zionist attitude to the first partition plan proposed by Britain in 1937 and the third part will deal with the Biltmore programme and its critics.

However, as we will see in the last part of this chapter, nominal acceptance of partition has not led to its implementation – far from that – and

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<sup>1</sup> Katz, Yossi, *Partner to partition. The Jewish Agency's partition plan in the Mandate era*, *op.cit.*, p. 17. Personalities among the Zionist Organization such as Avigdor Jacobson (the Zionist Executive's representative at the League of Nations) and Haim Arlosoroff (head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency's Executive from 1931 to 1933) had raised the issue but it would only be after the Royal Commission's proposal that the idea would be given serious thought.

second, the debate over Greater Israel would re-emerge in the official discourse notably with the 1967 war. The latter would then be challenged by the emerging two-state discourse within fringes of the Israeli population and of the Labour party notably after Lebanon's invasion by the Israeli army in 1982.

### **A. The Evolvement of Zionist Support for Separation, 1882-1929**

The previous chapters, have introduced the Zionist movement, its thought and achievements. As we have seen, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Zionist movement had already established its major institutions securing a great margin of autonomy that was not enjoyed by the Arabs of Palestine. The Jewish National Homeland however also meant the beginning of concrete separation between Jews and Arabs. Indeed, these institutions enabled the Zionist movement to grow both in number and in influence in Palestine and in the international instances, which caused a drift with the Palestinian population that feared losing control over its territory.

Things were to take another turn after WWI. By the end of the war, the Allied victors organised a Peace Conference whose aim was to set the peace terms for the defeated powers. Whereas the Arabs who had participated to the War on the eastern front had to face difficulties to obtain the right to make their case, under the impulse of Britain and France, the Zionist movement was invited to present its case at the Conference<sup>2</sup>. Represented by Haim Weizmann, the movement called for the recognition of the historic title of the Jews to Palestine and proposed boundaries for Palestine, that is to say to the Jewish National Home they demanded. The proposed boundaries included Palestine as it has come to be after the attribution of the Mandate, the south of Lebanon and part of what was to become Transjordan<sup>3</sup>. In a comprehensive study on partition in the Zionist movement, Itzhaq Galnoor emphasised that the proposed boundaries were the product of a pragmatic choice as they already were the result of a compromise. Indeed, the Zionist movement wished first, to

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<sup>2</sup> The Paris Peace Conference on January 18, 1919.

<sup>3</sup> UNISPAL, "Statement of the Zionist Organization regarding Palestine", February 3, 1919.

facilitate British-French negotiations over the territories they claimed as mandate powers by setting a clear boundary with Lebanon, second, it aimed at obtaining the support of the Amir Faisal by not claiming all of Transjordan<sup>4</sup>.

However, the Allies finally set Lebanon's southern border south of the Zionist proposal. Then, Britain added a provision expelling Transjordan from the scope of the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations when attributing the mandates in 1922, agreed to a certain degree of autonomy for Transjordan. The latter would be ruled by Amir Abdullah but with Sir John Philby as the Chief Representative. This decision was thus moving the frontier between Transjordan and Palestine west of the Jordan River<sup>5</sup>. The exclusion of the eastern bank of the river Jordan was not welcome but was seen as a necessary sacrifice by the Zionist leadership except the group that was to become the revisionist branch led by Zeev Jabotinsky. The latter saw the acceptance of that measure as a treason and eventually formed his own political party, the Revisionist Party in 1925 to protest the exclusion of Transjordan from the mandate for Palestine.

Once they were officially granted their National Home through the League of Nations, the Zionist movement was to obtain more liberties in the country, and move to the next stage, namely developing the Zionist community and the pre-state institutions. For that purpose they were to set separatist policies.

### ***Separation as a guiding principle***

The British government, which since 1917 had enjoyed the military control of Palestine, believed that the development of Zionist economy would ultimately have positive repercussions for the economy of all the sections of the population and bring development. Then, when the Zionist movement wished to gain control over all the political, social and economic aspects of their community's life, the British administrations were there to help them for the sake of the Jewish National Home but also for the sake of Palestine, which in Britain's view would automatically benefit from Zionist activities. As a

<sup>4</sup> Galnoor, Itzhak, *The Partition of Palestine. Decision crossroads in the Zionist movement, op.cit.*, p.274.

<sup>5</sup> As added by the British in the Transjordan Memorandum to article 25 of the text of the Palestine Mandate.

consequence, the Zionist movement partially succeeded in implementing its projects as early as 1923<sup>6</sup>.

Control over the major aspects of the community's life required their extraction from the British government's scope and establishing a de facto differential treatment between the Jews and the Arabs. Aware as it was of the growing Arab opposition to its enterprise, the Zionist movement wished above all to postpone the resolution of what it had come to call "the Arab question". To postpone it to the moment when there would be enough Jews in Palestine to constitute a majority and thus impose a power struggle. For that, "it was necessary that the British keep the Arabs in check so that the Jewish community could expand. This meant also keeping the Arab economy as separate as possible from the Jewish"<sup>7</sup>.

Addressing Zionist ideological outlooks in Palestine before the mandate and the Balfour Declaration, Yosef Gorny identified four approaches: the integrative, the separatist, the liberal and the constructive socialist one. The separatist outlook, which was to win over the other visions and constitute the core of Zionist thought and policy towards the Arabs, viewed the Arabs with superiority and advocated "separation and dominion"<sup>8</sup>.

Rejection of assimilation was a feature of the separatist outlook, but also one of the basics of Zionism.

*"We Jews have been living more than two thousand years among cultured peoples and we cannot and must not descend once more to the cultural level of semi-savages. Indeed, our hope that one day we shall be masters of the country is not based on the sword or on the fist but on our cultural advantage over the Arabs and Turks, which will gradually increase our influence"<sup>9</sup>.*

Beside its ideological and institutional aspects<sup>10</sup>, separatism was a policy that was best illustrated on the ground through the economic strategies of the Zionist Organisation. Indeed, the second immigration vague, introduced among

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<sup>6</sup> Pappe, Ilan, *A History of modern Palestine, : one land, two peoples, op.cit.*, p.88.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, Charles D., *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict, a history with documents, op.cit.*, p.121-122.

<sup>8</sup> Gorny, Yosef, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882-1948: a study of ideology*, Oxford 1987, p. 49

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Cited is Joseph Klausner, "Hashash" [Foreboding], *HaShiloah*, 17 (July-December, 1907). Klausner was a historian and professor of Hebrew Literature but also the successor to Ahad Haam as editor of *HaShiloah*.

<sup>10</sup> As already mentioned in Chapter I, one has to keep in mind that the first policy of the Zionist Organisation was to create Jewish institutions (The Jewish National Fund, the Jewish Colonial Bank, The Reconstruction Fund).

other decisions the concept of Jewish labour: Jewish workers in Jewish lands, kibbutzim, industries etc...

For Gershon Shafir,

*“Whereas the First Aliya established a society based on Jewish supremacy, the Second Aliya's method of colonization was separation from Palestinians. This form of pure settlement rested on two exclusivist pillars: on the WZO's Jewish National Fund and on the Jewish Labor Movements trade union - the Histadrut”<sup>11</sup>.*

As argued by Barbara J. Smith, whilst “Zionist institutions would gain a decisive influence over economic policy in land and labour matters, the separatist tendencies in Zionist economic policy [...] intensified during the 1920s”<sup>12</sup>. It intensified and was helped by British policies, which enabled the Zionist movement to develop its own industries<sup>13</sup>, which furthermore entered into competition with the Palestinian industries. This competition in industry building and labour market was the subject of numerous discussions in the Zionist circles worried about the competitiveness of the Arab workers, as they were cheaper.

To illustrate this vision, Zackary Lockmann would cite Haim Arlosoroff and Ben Gurion who had advanced the slogan “Arab labour in the Arab sector, Jewish labour in the Jewish sector, mixed labour in the mixed (government) sector”<sup>14</sup>. However, whilst they made sure – sometimes using coercion – that only Jews could be employed in Jewish sectors, this was not the case in Arab sectors<sup>15</sup>.

To be effective, that policy required the apposition or juxtaposition of two dimensions of equal importance, first, the geographical or territorial one, second the demographic one. According to Shafir, as long as the two dimensions – territorial and demographic – are considered as of equal importance, Zionism would continue developing a maximalist approach. However, if the demographic dimension overrides on the other, meaning if separation from the Arabs becomes the major issue, then, partition becomes a possible outcome.

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<sup>11</sup> Shafir, Gershon, “Zionism and colonialism. A comparative approach”, in Pappé, Ilan (ed.), *The Israel/Palestine question, op.cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, Barbara Jean, *The roots of separatism in Palestine: British economic policy 1920-1929*, New York 1993, p.7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47.

<sup>14</sup> Lockman, Zackary, “Land, labor and the logic of Zionism:a critical engagement with Gershon Shafir”, *Settler Colonial Studies 2(1)*, 2012, pp.9-38.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

Making separation a principle, the Zionist movement could not come to an agreement with the Palestinian Arabs – who never abandoned their rejection of the Balfour Declaration – and it would eventually favour the establishment of a separate homogeneous Jewish State to attain sovereignty. Once its claim of a separate national and territorial sovereignty was recognised by the colonial power however, the Zionist movement could embrace again its maximalist vision.

### ***Alienating the Palestinians: Getting around the Palestinian Arab leadership***

After the Balfour declaration made the objective of the Zionist movement clear, and the mandate gave the Zionist movement the green light to implement its goal, the Arab nationalists had understood that they would face a real challenge to their objective of unity and independence. However, as mentioned above, the partition of Syria had encouraged the Arabs to focus on local struggles. Whereas the Palestinian Arabs were determined to get rid of Zionism, other Arabs not always aware of the dangers of Zionism, usually showed themselves more inclined to negotiate with the Zionist Organisation.

In this context, the Palestinians were persuaded of their natural right to Palestine and rejected the demands of the Zionist leadership over a number of important issues such as immigration and land purchases. This was one of the reasons why the Zionist movement preferred to have talks with other Arab leaders (notably Faisal and Abdullah) who were not directly confronted with the Zionist Organisation, making them more inclined to reach an agreement<sup>16</sup>.

However, the Palestinians had not approved of Amir Faisal's discussions and agreement with Weizmann in the past and they made it clear to the Zionist leadership that the only ones who could ever sign an agreement with them were the Palestinians.

The Zionist leadership would nevertheless not cease to circumnavigate the Palestinians in the attempt to reach an agreement with other Arab

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<sup>16</sup> Caplan, Neil, "Zionist-Arab diplomacy: Patterns and ambiguities on the eve of statehood", in Laurence Jay Silberstein (ed.), *New perspectives on Israeli history: the early years of the state*, New York 1991, pp. 242-255.



dignitaries. It is in that spirit that they contacted Shakib Arslan, a Lebanese Amir, who advocated a pan-Islamic nationalism and who, as such, had been a fierce defender of the Ottoman empire before advocating Arab nationalism. In the 1930s, he published a periodical, which he called *La Nation arabe (The Arab nation)*, in which he positioned himself against the British and French mandates. Arslan was however, very clear in his discussions:

*“The Amir Shakib told me clearly that by the limitation of immigration he means that we, on our side, commit ourselves to the assurance that the Arabs will always be a majority in Palestine, that immigration will be regulated in such a way that the Jewish population will not outnumber the Arabs, and not even become equal to it. They want the Jews to remain forever a minority. I told him that here was a point which was unacceptable. They are also insisting on our renouncing the article in the Mandate concerning the creation of a Jewish Agency. Before being sure that these points are accepted by us, they don't want to undertake anything. What do you think? You know how much I desire a Jewish-Arab entente, but the sacrifices which we are being asked in exchange for their intervention with the Palestinian delegation, to make them stop their intrigues, seem to me too great. I don't deny that the intervention of Shakib Arslan and Ihsan Al Jabiri could have some effect towards pacifying spirits in Palestine, but can we renounce the most precious and most essential things in the Mandate? [...]”<sup>17</sup>.*

The episode with Shakib Arslan was not the only attempt made by the Zionist movement, but most of those that occurred before the partition of Palestine ended quite the same way, with the rejection of Zionist supremacy over the country. Nevertheless, the most striking and important example of this bypass policy can be found in the contacts with the Hashemite Kingdom and the constant will to find an agreement with the latter. Whether in 1947-1948 to prevent the Palestinians from establishing their own state as stipulated by the United Nations<sup>18</sup>, or later, as we will see below, with the development of solutions based on the “Jordanian option” always to prevent the recognition of the Palestinian national movement and demands.

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<sup>17</sup> Extract of a letter from H.M. Kalvaryski to Dr. Weizmann, Geneva, 21 September 1922, in Neil Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy: Early Arab-Zionist negotiation attempts*, London 1983, pp.203-204. Translated by Neil Caplan.

<sup>18</sup> This is the very thesis developed by Avi Shlaim in his comprehensive work, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionists and the partition of Palestine*, New York 1988.

## **B. The Solidification of the Zionist partition plan, 1929-1939**

### ***The Wailing Wall conflict and the rejection of the Passfield White Paper***

When the conflict over the Western Wall – the Wailing Wall – peaked in 1929, the situation on the ground, in terms of violence, had been rather quiet and the last Palestinian riots had occurred in 1921. However, the development of the Zionist movement, its proximity with the British authorities and the privileges it enjoyed, as described above, combined with a drastic impoverishment of the Palestinian population, created a noxious atmosphere. This was exacerbated by the Zionist movement and by the rumours according to which the Jews were seeking to obtain the control over all the holy places. Whilst the seventh Palestinian congress did not issue major decisions, it called for rebellion against Zionism as well as against sustained Jewish immigration<sup>19</sup>. So, when the *Beitar*, the revisionists' militia, decided to demonstrate on the Mosques Esplanade the religious authorities finally called for action. And in 1929, a revolt broke out in Jerusalem, which ended with about three hundred people killed – including 133 Jews and 116 Palestinian Arabs<sup>20</sup>.

Some Zionist leaders and a few members of the Zionist movement – particularly the bi-nationalists to whom the fifth chapter is consecrated – saw then that the Palestinians were starting to structure themselves and that it was much more than a clash but an organised revolt. The revolt was strongly repressed by the British authorities. Once again, Britain sent a commission to enquire about the “reasons” of the clashes and to present recommendations. This commission was known as the Shaw Commission, named after its chair: Sir Walter Shaw; it concluded that the violence was not planned and that what had happened was provoked by Arab attacks in “an atmosphere of political and religious tensions”<sup>21</sup>. The commission's report also stressed the problem of land

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<sup>19</sup> Al-Kayyali, Abdelwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian resistance against Great Britain and Zionism*, *op.cit.*, pp.111.

<sup>20</sup> Laurens, Henry, *L'Orient arabe. Arabisme et islamisme de 1798 à 1945*, *op.cit.*, p. 210.

<sup>21</sup> Baron, Xavier, *Les Palestiniens, un peuple*, Paris 1983, p. 56.

purchase by Jews and it even stated that “a class of landless and frustrated farmers” was about to be formed<sup>22</sup>.

In May 1930, in order to continue and complete the investigation, the colonial office sent another commission. The latter was led by Sir John Hope Simpson and presented similar conclusions, condemning moreover, the eviction of hundreds of Arab farmers and above all the “boycott of Arab labour” by the Zionist movement<sup>23</sup>. These as well as numerous other reports, together with the Chancellor memoranda, would be taken into account in drawing up the Passfield White Paper – after the Colonial Secretary Lord Passfield. In his White Paper, Passfield recommended the limitation of Jewish immigration and condemned Zionist institutions for their Jewish Labour policy. During the same period, the Palestinian Arabs sent a delegation to London whose aim was, again, to ask for the end of Jewish immigration, the end of the land transfers and, quite interestingly, for the establishment of a democratic government that would be elected on a proportional basis<sup>24</sup>. However, the White Paper provoked strong disagreements within the British political class as the opposition positioned against it and condemned the consultation process before its release<sup>25</sup>.

The White Paper was also immediately condemned and rejected by the Zionist leadership, which argued it was a total revocation of the clauses of the Mandate and as such it questioned a decision made by the International Institutions<sup>26</sup>. In the British Offices too, the White Paper raised an outcry among the members of the Labour Government as well as among the Conservative opposition. Winston Churchill argued that it was in contradiction with the Balfour Declaration and Lloyd George even called it an anti-Semitic measure<sup>27</sup>. The internal and Zionist pressure was such that fearing the consequences of such a move, the British government reaffirmed its loyalty to the terms of the mandate, and to the Balfour Declaration in a letter sent by Ramsay MacDonald, then Prime Minister, to Haim Weizmann. This letter – the *black letter* as it came

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>23</sup> Khader, Bishara, *L'Europe et la Palestine. Des croisades à nos jours*, *op.cit.*, p.149.

<sup>24</sup> A proposition to implement such a government was made under the form of a legislative council.

<sup>25</sup> House of Commons debate on the White Paper, November 17, 1930. Accessed at: <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1930/nov/17/palestine>

<sup>26</sup> Segev, Tom, *One Palestine complete: Jews and Arabs under British mandate*, Oxford 2001, pp.334-335.

<sup>27</sup> House of Commons debate on the White Paper, November 17, 1930, *op.cit.*

to be known as by the Arabs<sup>28</sup> – dated on February 13, 1931, de facto cancelled the White Paper and buried the idea of one Arab state in all of Palestine. Furthermore, the controversy around the White Paper only exposed the reality of the country, which was the presence of two competing national movements. Thus, the reversal in British policy enabled the Zionist movement – the mainstream trend – to further its demands and argue for partition whereas a minority in the movement argued for a bi-national state.

Parallel to these events, the developments on the ground had also revived the debate around the British pledges concerning Palestine. This was a subject of concern for the High Commissioner appointed to Palestine at the end of 1928, Sir John Chancellor. Chancellor considered that the Balfour Declaration was not in the interest of the British Empire, and in January 1930, he sent a memorandum to the Government in London explaining his position<sup>29</sup>. His memorandum raised such interest among the British administration that the King himself asked him for a note on the state of affairs in Palestine. Chancellor considered that British policy in Palestine was unjust and impossible to carry out, and he proposed to reduce Jewish immigration and land purchases. Most of all, he strongly opposed the Zionist movements' idea that the Palestinian Arabs could move to any other part of the Arab territories, and believed that it was unfair for the Arabs but also contrary to the Balfour Declaration that stipulated that nothing would be done to prejudice the existing non-Jewish communities. Chancellor advocated a more careful policy, one that would not further the Zionist claims:

*“The facts of the situation are that in the dire straits of the war, the British Government made promises to the Arabs and promises to the Jews which are inconsistent with one another and are incapable of fulfilment. The honest course is to admit our difficulty and to say to the Jews that, in accordance with the Balfour Declaration, we have favoured the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine and that a Jewish National Home in Palestine has in fact been established and will be maintained and that, without violating the other part of the Balfour Declaration, without prejudicing the interests of the Arabs, we cannot do more than we have done”<sup>30</sup>.*

<sup>28</sup> This letter is since then referred to as the 'black letter' by the Arabs. See Jabber, Fuad, Ann Mosely Lesch & William Quandt, *The Politics of Palestinian nationalism*, Berkeley 1973, p.34.

<sup>29</sup> Segev, Tom, *One Palestine Complete: Jews and Arabs under British mandate*, *op.cit.*, pp.334-335.

<sup>30</sup> Sir John R. Chancellor to Lord Stamfordham, May 27, 1930, Middle East Archive, St. Antony's College, Oxford. Quoted in Shlaim, Avi, “The Balfour Declaration and its consequences”, *op.cit.*, pp.

For Chancellor, the objective of the Balfour Declaration had already been attained and the Jewish National Home existed in Palestine. However, in following this policy, Great Britain would contravene the provision concerning the other inhabitants of Palestine whom the Zionist movement clearly wanted to see leave the country.

Chancellor's view, just as the White Paper succumbed to the Zionist movement's pressures and was buried by McDonald's letter, thus opening the way to expanding Zionist activity in Palestine, unlimited immigration and hence, further competition, conflicts and clashes with the Arabs of Palestine.

### ***Seizing opportunities, accepting partition: the Zionist leadership and the Royal Commission's partition plan***

#### *The Royal Commission and the Zionist leadership*

In 1936, the Arabs of Palestine launched a great revolt, the first of such importance and scope. Indeed, for the first time, all the factions of the Arabs of Palestine were involved in the revolt through demonstrations and above all the general strike. Moreover, for the first time, the local leadership gathered in one political organ, the AHC. As mentioned in Chapter Two, to understand and stop the revolt, Britain then decided to enquire about the causes and sent the Royal Enquiry Commission. The Zionist movement was not particularly enthusiastic about this Commission, as it feared the British government would consider the compatibility of Zionist and Arab aspirations and so it tried to use its influence to prevent it. The decision, however, was already made<sup>31</sup>.

After first refusing to participate in the hearings, the Zionist leadership decided it could not boycott the Commission without harming its position. Haim Weizmann was then the main Jewish witness and he enjoyed a certain status within the Zionist movement but also among his British contacts, he was then to be heard five times. Itzhak Galnoor notes that although Weizmann's testimony included "a hint of the need for separation", the latter stressed the

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251-270.

<sup>31</sup> Rose, Norman A, "The debate on partition 1937-1938: The Anglo-Zionist Aspect: I. The proposal", *Middle Eastern Studies* 6(3), Oct 1970, pp.297-318.

importance of immigration whilst trying to explain that even in the case where the Jews would become the majority, Palestine should not become a Jewish State. However, he also pointed out that the country would automatically become a Jewish National State if it contained no Arabs<sup>32</sup>. It was only during his fourth hearing on December 23, 1936, that the questions of cantonisation and the division of the country into two large parts arose. This was the doing of Sir Laurie Hammond and Reginald Coupland<sup>33</sup>. This was the first time such ideas had arisen in official circles and discussed with one of the belligerents. They were still not fully formulated so Haim Weizmann argued that cantons would only be an artificial solution. But, by January, Coupland would resubmit to him the idea in a more detailed way, even using the term of “partition” and from then on Weizmann was to consider the idea as a great one for the future of Zionism in that it permitted to think of a future including Jewish sovereignty. Partition required the end of the mandate and he was still not sure of the outcome of such a step, nevertheless, he thought of it as a more long-term policy so, when he returned to London in February 1937, Weizmann had clearly rallied the idea of partition and he made his objective to gain support for partition amongst the Members of Parliament (MPs). On March 2, he received the confirmation that partition would be recommended by the Commission<sup>34</sup>.

When the British government revealed the conclusions of the Royal Commission's report, the Zionist movement expressed diverse reactions, with, for example, the Jewish Chronicle giving its editorial the following title: “Royal Commission's nightmare scheme” as soon as the plan was public. It was divided between those who were opposed to the principle of partition and those who were opposed to the partition plan but not to the principle, at least on a temporary basis. So, it seemed hesitant rather than rejecting. Indeed, as we have seen, Haim Weizmann was rather in favour of the principle of partition and he was to be backed by David Ben Gurion<sup>35</sup>. Furthermore, even those who backed the partition principle took great care not to show their interest and

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<sup>32</sup> Galnoor, Itzhak, *The Partition of Palestine. Decision crossroads in the Zionist movement*, *op.cit.*, p.57.

<sup>33</sup> Rose, Norman A, “The debate on partition 1937-1938: The Anglo-Zionist Aspect: I. The proposal”, *op.cit.*, pp.297-318.

<sup>34</sup> Haim, Yehoyada, “Zionist attitudes towards partition, 1937-1938”, *Jewish Social Studies* 40(3/4), Summer-Autumn 1978, pp.303-320.

<sup>35</sup> Katz, Yossi, *Partner to partition, the Jewish Agency's partition plan in the mandate era*, *op.cit.*, p.17.

support, from fear that the scheme would be identified as Zionist doing<sup>36</sup>. On August 2, 1937, the twentieth Zionist Congress in Zurich was held and the main issue dealt with was the partition plan. Whilst being in favour of the principle of partition, Haim Weizmann addressed an ambiguous message to the 484 delegates: “We shall resist these proposals before the eyes of the world, openly and honestly, with every means at our disposal”<sup>37</sup>. He was to be followed by a number of speeches in favour and most of them against partition. The lines of fracture and new alliances were to be created according to positions on partition. The religious Zionists who could not envisage the division of Palestine or *Eretz Israel* found an entente with Vladimir Jabotinsky and the revisionists, who claimed a great Jewish state and feared that any decision on borders would be definitive. The leftist organisation Hashomer Hatzair, for its part, advocated cooperation between Jewish and Arab working classes as well as with the proponents of a bi-national state. In spite of the dissolution of *Brit Shalom*<sup>38</sup>, Judah Leon Magnes (the Chancellor of the Hebrew University and a prominent advocate of bi-nationalism in Palestine) and other former members of the association were still very active – most of them even united behind Magnes to elaborate a resolution, which he was mandated to present during the congress. Opposing partition, in continuity with *Brit Shalom*'s precepts, they proposed a plan for a bi-national state in a non-divided Palestine. To that end, they called for direct negotiations with the Arabs and the appointment of a committee with half its members as Zionists and the other half as non-Zionists, in order to negotiate with Great Britain, the Arabs, the League of the Nations and the United States. Explaining that the Arabs were against partition, they argued that if the Jews also decided not to accept partition, the British Government could not pursue in that direction and could only revoke its decision. For Magnes, the creation of a Jewish state was against the mandate and the Wilsonian ideals as it would mean using the Arabs as pawns and that this could only lead to a lengthy war.

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<sup>36</sup> Rose, Norman A, *The Gentile Zionists: A study in Anglo-Zionist diplomacy 1929-1939*, London 1973, pp. 129-30.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted by Aaron Klieman, “In the public domain: the controversy over partition for Palestine”, *Jewish Social Studies* 42(2), 1980, pp.147-164.

<sup>38</sup> *Brit Shalom* was the first association in the Yishuv to advocate to a bi-national society and a bi-national state. Formed in 1925, it was dissolved in 1933. The bi-nationalist component of the Zionist movement will be the subject of Chapter Five.

However, neither the right wing's arguments nor those of the bi-nationalists' weighed against the leaders of the movement who favoured partition as a temporary pragmatic choice but not as an end in itself. Indeed, Haim Weizmann, Moshe Shertok, Nahum Goldmann and David Ben Gurion were in favour of partition as a pragmatic choice born out of necessity<sup>39</sup>. For Ben Gurion,

*“The [1922] British Mandate should be understood as the first stage; the [proposed 1937] Jewish State will constitute the second stage; yet it will not be the last stage. There are no eternal political arrangements. We live in a dynamic, changeable world. In the face of all present and future changes we hold a singular testing criterion: the rapid growth of Jews in Eretz Yisrael and the strengthening of their independent force. That's the sole pathway to transform Palestine into Eretz Yisrael”<sup>40</sup>.*

All in all, the Zionist congress did not reject partition, especially as the British Government had accepted it. On the contrary, they saw it as a possibility that could be embraced, should the conditions offered be favourable. So, they decided to release a non-binding resolution:

*“The Congress strongly rejects the assertion of the Palestine Royal Commission that the Palestine Mandate has proved unworkable and demands its fulfilment. The Congress directs the Executive to resist any infringement upon the rights of the Jewish people internationally guaranteed by the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate. While regarding the scheme of partition put forward by the Royal Commission as unacceptable, the Congress empowers the Executive to enter into negotiations with a view to ascertaining the precise terms of His Majesty's Government for the proposed establishment of a Jewish State ...<sup>41</sup>.*

### ***The Jewish Agency's partition plan and the transfer question***

Even before the Commission released its report, the Zionist leadership started to consult about the possibility of partition and a two-state outcome. This is the case of Ben Gurion who seems to have presented such a plan

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<sup>39</sup> Galnoor, Itzhak, *The Partition of Palestine. Decision crossroads in the Zionist movement*, *op.cit.*, p.57.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in: Behar, Moshe, “One-State, Two-States, Bi-National State Mandated Imaginations in A Regional Void”, *Middle East Studies Online Journal* 5(2), 2011, pp.97-136.

<sup>41</sup> The Jewish Agency for Palestine and Executive of the Zionist Histadrut, Protocol of the Twentieth Zionist Congress, quoted in Aaron Klieman, “In the public domain: the controversy over partition for Palestine”, *op.cit.*; and Haim, Yehoyada, “Zionist attitudes towards partition, 1937-1938”, *op.cit.*



during a Mapai's Central Committee meeting held on February 5, 1937<sup>42</sup>. The plan did not however receive a warm welcome and a rift was created between the Executive and the rest of the movement's members.

Whilst the members of the Royal Commission were deliberating, the Zionist leadership was gathering information from their contacts in Great Britain and trying to influence the outcome of the enquiry<sup>43</sup>.

So even before the Commission rendered its report, the Zionist Executive was working on a more favourable partition proposal.

*"The Executive must do its utmost... so that a good proposal, ideal to the extent possible concerning the establishment of the Jewish State should be submitted to the forthcoming congress. A large part of the Zionist Movement favours this and therefore the Congress granted its sanction that this position is not illicit, because it rejected the position which sought to negate this opinion and stated that the forthcoming Congress would decide while the Executive for its part would see to a sound plan for a state... Congress entrusted the Executive with the conduct of negotiations regarding a Jewish State which would not arise in all of Palestine but only in part of the country..."<sup>44</sup>*

Having decided to enter into negotiations with the British authorities on the partition issue, the Zionist movement did its best to facilitate the final adoption of the partition principle. It sought to find an alternative plan with more favourable conditions for Zionism, notably a more expanded territory. Thus, the Jewish Agency's political department appointed a Boundary Commission with the task of drafting a map following the considerations that the Royal Commission itself used to draw its boundaries, focussing particularly on security and economic interests – which meant British interests too. The idea was also to create new facts on the ground to facilitate the success of their claims. Claims that they would submit to the Woodhead Commission.

They had fought to obtain Galilee as part of the proposed Jewish State and in spite of the strong presence of Arabs in that region, the Royal Commission had agreed<sup>45</sup>. So, the Zionist movement decided to create settlements there and

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<sup>42</sup> Galnoor, Itzhak, *The Partition of Palestine. Decision crossroads in the Zionist movement*, op.cit., p.60.

<sup>43</sup> Katz, Yossi, *Partner to partition. The Jewish Agency's partition plan in the Mandate era*, op.cit., p. 19.

<sup>44</sup> CZA, Protocol of the inner Zionist General Council's meeting on November 3, 1937 and June 1938. Quoted in Yossi Katz, *Partner to partition. The Jewish Agency's partition plan in the Mandate era*, op.cit., p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> In June 1937, Moshe Shertok had written to the members of the Commission to highlight the historical, spiritual and vital importance of the Galilee for the Jews.

buy land in order to secure its inclusion in the final decision<sup>46</sup>. The Zionist plan also envisaged a more extensive territory for the permanent British mandate – to the detriment of the Arab State. The Zionist executive in particular proposed to include more parts of the Jerusalem district as well as the Negev and the Dead Sea areas within the territories to be controlled by Britain. The idea was to avoid losing important Jewish settlements in favour of the Arabs and most importantly, that, in time, parts of the areas under British mandate might be proposed for more Jewish settlements<sup>47</sup>. But above all, the question of immigration was of utmost importance to the Zionist movement. And, all these maps for a Jewish state were void if the state in question was not to be entirely, meaning homogeneously, Jewish.

So, remained the question of the Arab presence. The Royal Commission had already mentioned that there should be an exchange of population between the two future states, possibly a “soft transfer”, meaning a voluntary one, however, both the British government and the Zionist movement were conscious that there was only an infinite chance of that happening<sup>48</sup>. And if it did not work, there would have to be measures to ensure a compulsory transfer.

As argued by Benny Morris, “the evidence for pre-1948 Zionist support for 'transfer' really is unambiguous”<sup>49</sup>. The author of the *Birth of the Palestinian refugee problem*, explains that talks of transfer have been constant since the beginning of the Zionist colonisation enterprise, in a somewhat private way, which would not be the case for the discussions after 1936<sup>50</sup>. Moreover, the idea of transfer was further developed after the Peel Commission proposed its partition plan which as we have seen tackled the demographic issue and proposed transfer as a solution. Whilst in the first version of his book, Morris acknowledged only a very tenuous connexion between the talks on transfer in the 1930s and the expulsion in 1947-1948, in the revised version, he “concluded that pre-1948 ‘Transfer’ thinking had a greater effect on what

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<sup>46</sup> Haim, Yehoyada, “Zionist attitudes towards partition, 1937-1938”, *op.cit.*

<sup>47</sup> Rose, Norman A, “The debate on partition 1937-1938: The Anglo-Zionist Aspect: I. The proposal”, *op.cit.*, pp.297-318; Katz, Yossi, *Partner to partition. The Jewish Agency's partition plan in the Mandate era*, *op.cit.*, p. 46-49.

<sup>48</sup> See the account on the Peel Commission in Chapter II.

<sup>49</sup> Morris, Benny, *The Birth of the Palestinian refugee problem revisited*, Cambridge 2004, p.6

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

happened in 1948 than I had allowed for". However, Morris still considers that the connexion is far more tenuous than argued by Arab historians notably Nur Masalha<sup>51</sup>. Indeed, for Walid Khalidi and Nur Masalha, solving the "Arab problem" through "transfer" has been a constant in Zionist political thought<sup>52</sup>. Masalha has showed how the myth of an empty land and the discourse on the absence of a distinct Palestinian people have been key elements in the development of the transfer discourse, but also how transfer became central in Zionist strategy from 1936 to 1948<sup>53</sup>. So central actually that the Jewish Agency appointed an experts' Committee to deal with the question: The Transfer Committee. The Committee studied in length the precedents, notably the Greek-Turkish and Balkans ones and even made trips to those areas during the Autumn 1937, to observe "the experience of population transfer that occurred there"<sup>54</sup>. They concluded that transfers in those regions were successful and benefited "all the parties", feeling that the "benefits" of transfer would help them argue in favour of such a policy within the Zionist movement. At the end of the day, although there were a few debates about the morality of a transfer policy, the principle was not rejected, and on the contrary, as Ben Gurion argued during the twentieth Zionist Congress, it had already started.

*"Was the transfer of the Arabs ethical, necessary and practicable? ... Transfer of Arabs had repeatedly taken place before in consequence of Jews settling in different districts"<sup>55</sup>.*

Furthermore, Ben Gurion thought the Jewish Agency had to do its best to convince Great Britain to pursue the politics of transfer. However, the report of the Committee also criticised the slow transfer as practised by the Zionist Executive as unproductive. They argued for drastic measures to encourage the Arabs of Palestine to settle in Transjordan and Syria and so they proposed that the Jewish Agency should find land for the transferees<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.5-6.

<sup>52</sup> Khalidi, Walid, "Plan Dalet: The Zionist Master Plan for the conquest of Palestine", *Middle East Forum* 37(9), November 1961, pp.22-28.

<sup>53</sup> Masalha, Nur, *The Politics of denial, Israel and the Palestinian refugee problem*, London 2003, p. 14-19.

<sup>54</sup> Katz, Yossi, *Partner to partition. The Jewish Agency's partition plan in the Mandate era*, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>55</sup> Masalha, Nur, *The Politics of denial*, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>56</sup> Katz, Yossi, *Partner to partition. The Jewish Agency's partition plan in the Mandate era*, *op.cit.*, p. 94-95.

The plan lacked details and required numerous conditions that were not met at the time, moreover, the Zionist Executive was aware that the Arabs would not agree to leave easily and that most of them would have to be removed forcibly, but it was not ready at the time to do this alone, hoping rather that the British authorities would take care of that task. However, it soon appeared that the British would not<sup>57</sup>. The abandonment of the Partition Plan by the British government and the following White Paper advocating the establishment within a ten-year period of an Arab State with a Jewish minority, did nevertheless not put an end to the transfer option, on the contrary, from then on the Zionist Executive would think about how they could themselves create the conditions and apply it, notably through accords with the Arab neighbouring countries to resettle the Arabs of Palestine<sup>58</sup>.

### **C. Biltmore and the demand for a Unitary State**

Whilst war was raging in Europe, the Zionist leadership was working to obtain support from and in the United States. In 1941, the then president of the executive committee of the Jewish Agency, Ben Gurion, was on a tour of the United States in order to prepare Jewish communities for his new political programme for a *Jewish Commonwealth*. He presented the programme in January 1941 to the American Zionist Federation. In 1942, in the middle of the war, in order to organise the annual Congress of the World Zionist Organization, the Zionist executive called for a meeting at the Biltmore Hotel in New York from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> May. Nearly 600 delegates from all over the United States were to attend the meeting in order to discuss and reformulate the objectives of the movement. It was the opportunity for Ben Gurion to present the new programme he had drawn up in response to the 1939 White Paper. In his speech, he upheld that there should and could not be a new World order after the war as long as there was no solution to the lack of a homeland for the Jews. The ideas of a bi-national state or of a partition of Palestine into two

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104.

<sup>58</sup> Masalha, Nur, *The Politics of denial, op.cit.*, p. 19.

states were then rejected in favour of a “maximalist programme” advocating the establishment of a Jewish sovereignty in all of Palestine. This was not a new objective, but a new strategy. Indeed, it was a turning point in the Zionist Movement history and political activity as it was the first time that its objectives were set out so clearly. Of course, it was a strategic move backed by the atrocities the European Jews were facing which gave it a form of legitimacy. This new strategic line was adopted during that conference in what has become known as the Biltmore Programme. It contained the re-affirmation of the historical ties of the Jews with Palestine and made the case of the Zionist enterprise. Furthermore, the Biltmore programme brought the question of numbers and demography back into the foreground, with the maximalist trend taking the majority within the Zionist movement, it demanded a Jewish majority in Palestine and was ready to confront the British authorities and their White Paper of 1939. However, the main decisions were contained in points six to eight:

*“6. The Conference calls for the fulfilment of the original purpose of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate which recognizing the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine’ was to afford them the opportunity, as stated by President Wilson, to found there a Jewish Commonwealth. The Conference affirms its unalterable rejection of the White Paper of May 1939 and denies its moral or legal validity. The White Paper seeks to limit, and in fact to nullify Jewish rights to immigration and settlement in Palestine, and, as stated by Mr. Winston Churchill in the House of Commons in May 1939, constitutes ‘a breach and repudiation of the Balfour Declaration’. The policy of the White Paper is cruel and indefensible in its denial of sanctuary to Jews fleeing from Nazi persecution; and at a time when Palestine has become a focal point in the war front of the United Nations, and Palestine Jewry must provide all available manpower for farm and factory and camp, it is in direct conflict with the interests of the allied war effort.*

*7. In the struggle against the forces of aggression and tyranny, of which Jews were the earliest victims, and which now menace the Jewish National Home, recognition must be given to the right of the Jews of Palestine to play their full part in the war effort and in the defence of their country, through a Jewish military force fighting under its own flag and under the high command of the United Nations.*

*8. The Conference declares that the new world order that will follow victory cannot be established on foundations of peace, justice and equality, unless the problem of Jewish homelessness is finally solved. The Conference urges that the gates of Palestine be opened; that the Jewish Agency be vested with control of immigration into Palestine and*

*with the necessary authority for upbuilding the country, including the development of its unoccupied and uncultivated lands; and that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world.*

*Then and only then will the age old wrong to the Jewish people be righted*<sup>59</sup>.

Knowing that the programme would be supported but controversial, Ben Gurion had made sure not to reveal the programme too soon. And indeed, as soon as he knew about it, Weizmann was very critical. For the latter, it marked a rapprochement with the maximalist programme of the revisionists and this opinion was shared by the British Embassy in the United States. The plan constituted a national demand at a moment when national self-determination was law and when nation-states were in formation all over the world, it translated the will of the Zionist movement not to let the chance pass. And it revealed itself to be a good calculation, as in November of the same year, information about what was happening in Europe and more particularly to the Jews in Germany and Poland were to reach Palestine and attract sympathy for the programme. What should have been the conclusions of a Jewish American conference became the Zionist political programme and the committee of Zionist Action adopted it on the 19th November 1942 with a majority.

The demand for unlimited immigration, until then embraced for ideological reasons, was now reinforced with humanitarian arguments.

The Biltmore programme was adopted as a response to the 1939 White Paper and its proposal of a united and unitary State with an Arab majority. It proposed the opposite alternative, that is a Jewish State with a Jewish majority, thus risking – as argued by *Hashomer Hatzair* – to dismiss all chances for a peaceful resolution<sup>60</sup>, to affect the British administration's patience and to eventually push it to put the partition scheme it had proposed in 1937 back on the table. This was at least the fear of the advocates of bi-nationalism within the Zionist movement, as we will see in Chapter Five. However, more than that, Biltmore announced clearly that the Zionist movement would never be content with partition and a Jewish State on only part of Palestine, thus that the endorsement of partition was a mere tactical move.

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<sup>59</sup> UNISPAL, "Declaration adopted by the Extraordinary Zionist Conference at the Biltmore Hotel of New York City", May 11, 1942.

<sup>60</sup> Hazony, Yoram, *The Jewish State: the struggle for Israel's soul*, New York 2000, p.242.

#### **D. The Zionist movement and the UN partition plan: official acceptance, de facto rejection**

When Britain appealed to the United Nations to find a solution to the Palestine Question, the Zionist movement understood that it was a great opportunity to obtain what it wished for. Indeed, the United States had for a while been showing great sympathy for the movement and this contributed to raise optimism within the Zionist movement's ranks.

Whereas the Arabs of Palestine decided to boycott the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, the Zionist leadership decided it would make the best of it. And during their hearings, David Ben Gurion and Haim Weizmann made strong cases in favour of partition, both having been advocates of the solution for a long time, as already mentioned. After recalling Zionist history since WWI, Weizmann thanked President Truman and Andreï Gromiko, the Soviet Union's envoy, for their statements in favour of a Jewish State and then talked in messianic terms about Zionism, stating that Zionism had always been seeking what God had promised the Jews: the whole of Palestine, but that they would accept partition as God would, in due time, "keep his promise"<sup>61</sup>. He attacked the 1939 White Paper in very violent words, immigration after all was the basis of Zionism. Partition for him and his colleagues was preferable to any other scheme, even those including independence in an Arab-Jewish federation. Bi-nationalism was out of the question, they wanted a clean and clear cut. And they would do their best to impose partition as the best solution, which should indeed not be a difficult task as they already had the favour of the two great powers, the United States and the USSR that for once were in agreement.

After much pressure from the Zionist movement and the United States, and despite other proposals for a bi-national state or federal structure being backed by some of the members of the Commission, the United Nations decided the partition of Palestine as a basis for the establishment of a Jewish State and an Arab State. Partition was then announced on the 29<sup>th</sup> of

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<sup>61</sup> UNISPAL, /A/364/Add.2 PV.21, Oral Evidence presented by Haim Weizmann to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, Jerusalem, July 8, 1947.

November. This decision, as mentioned earlier and as we will see in the next Chapter, was strongly opposed by the Arabs and the Palestinians, whereas it was acclaimed by the Zionist Leadership who understood it as the recognition of their right to a state and saw it as the first step towards achieving its objectives.

As expected, from the next day, clashes occurred between Palestinians and Jews. The British authorities had already announced they would leave the country and the Zionist movement knew that once the British would leave they would be confronted with the Arab armies. They had to act quickly so as to create new facts on the ground, namely evacuate as many Arab areas as possible while maintaining intact the Zionist settlements in the area allotted to the Arab State. This strategy would constitute the first phase of the war, later called the civil war, as it confronted the Zionists with the Arabs of Palestine, and was to continue until March 1948.

March 1948 represents a turning point on the Palestine scene. Anticipating the retaliation of the British troops, and the intervention of the Arab armies, the Zionist Executive adopted the “Plan Dalet” to accelerate the conquest of Palestine<sup>62</sup>. This plan foresaw the forcible removal or transfer of the Arab Palestinian population<sup>63</sup>. And once in place, the plan would provide for the emergence of a larger exclusive Jewish State<sup>64</sup>.

The “*plan Dalet*” roughly consisted in providing the maps and information compiled for many years about the Palestinian localities and their inhabitants to

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<sup>62</sup> Ilan Pappé, *A history of modern Palestine. One land, two people*, Cambridge 2004, p. 129. Plan Dalet is still highly controversial among Scholars of the Middle East. Whilst traditional Zionist historiography has always rejected the idea of a premeditated transfer of the Palestinian populations, the Arab and Palestinian historians have been struggling to impose their version of the story for decades. Actually, the latter have tried to prove that a forcible transfer had taken place since the 1950s. The foremost historian Walid Khalidi, for example, has undertaken thorough research on the subject and his conclusions were delivered in several articles published in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Palestinian and Arab version would eventually be taken into account in Western scholarship after it was confirmed by Israeli historians, known as the “new historians”, in the late 1980s. So, whilst the expulsion of the Arabs of Palestine in 1948 now seems accepted, there is still a debate over “whose fault it was”. Obviously, the Arab leaders did not call the Palestinians to flee, but Benny Morris maintains that whilst the Arabs are not to blame, Israel is not either. For him, this was the natural outcome of war and he refuses to draw a link between the discussions and position on transfer that took place in the 1930s among the Zionist leadership and the actual transfer or expulsion that took place in 1948. And this is where he is strongly criticised by the other “new historians”, most of whom have come to the conclusion that the Zionist leadership and later Israel have enforced a transfer policy that was long thought of.

<sup>63</sup> Khalidi, Walid, “Plan Dalet: The Zionist Master Plan for the conquest of Palestine”, *Middle East Forum* 37(9), November 1961, pp.22-28.

<sup>64</sup> Pappé, Ilan, *The Ethnic cleansing of Palestine, op.cit.*, p. 9.



the Israeli troops with a simple instruction: get the maximum of territories with the minimum of Arab inhabitants<sup>65</sup>. The process established to implement that policy is often referred to as “transfer” and it has been dealt with in numerous studies notably as we have seen by Walid Khalidi or Nur Masalha who have argued that transfer has been one of the key elements in Zionist political thought since the early 1930s. Going further, Masalha stated that Ben Gurion entered the war with “a transfer desire of mindset”<sup>66</sup>. The idea of a premeditated transfer has recently been taken further by Ilan Pappé in his *Ethnic cleansing of Palestine*. The term ethnic cleansing has however been criticised especially among Israeli historians and political class. Pappé used the definitions of ethnic cleansing as elaborated by the US department the United Nations and numerous researchers in the 1990s after the Yugoslavian situation, namely the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. He then showed that these definitions suited perfectly to the Palestine case when talking about what is generally known as the first Arab-Israeli war, even if the latter implies troops and confrontations. With his analysis, Pappé tends to prove that the transfer of the Palestinians is incumbent solely on the Zionist and Israeli political and military class. Geographer Ghazi Falah supported the ethnic cleansing thesis as he chose to analyse the 1948-1949 war through the paradigm of total war combining “unlimited violence and depopulation of the Palestinian places”<sup>67</sup>.

All in all, whilst the lack of political clarity in which Palestine found itself between 1947 and May 1948 offered the opportunity to implement the ethnic cleansing, the ideology behind it had been for a long time present in Zionist political thought.

Moreover, the task was taken so seriously and whole-heartedly that when the British left Palestine in May 1948, already most of the Palestinian population of what was to become Israel was on the road to exile<sup>68</sup>.

As soon as the British evacuated Palestine, the Zionist movement declared its “independence” and proclaimed the birth of the State of Israel,

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10. The same slogan was to be implemented during the 1967 war.

<sup>66</sup> Masalha, Nur, “A critique of Benny Morris”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21(1), Autumn 1991, pp. 90-97.

<sup>67</sup> Falah, Ghazi, “The 1948 Israeli-Palestinian war and its aftermath: the transformation and de-signification of Palestine's cultural landscape”, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86(2), June 1996, pp. 256-285.

<sup>68</sup> Pappé, Ilan, *The Ethnic cleansing of Palestine*, *op.cit.*, p.158.

which opened the door to the First Arab-Israeli war involving Israel and the neighbouring Arab states. Just five days after the start of the war, the United Nations tried to appease the situation and sought reconciliation through the appointment of a United Nations Mediator in Palestine in the person of Count Folke Bernadotte. The latter made two peace proposals in which he advocated a two state-solution with the revision of the frontiers between the Jewish and the Arab states and if necessary by the United Nations, but above all he called for the return of the refugees. Bernadotte was however killed on September 17 by a member of the Stern Gang, which adhered to revisionist Zionism but had split from the Irgun – the revisionist party's militia – in 1940.

As a consequence of the large-scale policy, more than 750,000 Palestinians had become exiles, “531 villages were destroyed and 11 urban neighbourhoods had been emptied” of their Palestinian inhabitants<sup>69</sup>. Palestine as it had crystallised under the British mandate, did not exist any more. Israel was established on over 78% of the territory, the Western bank of the river Jordan was controlled and then annexed by the Hashemite Kingdom and Gaza found itself under Egyptian rule.

## **E. Israeli position on Peace , 1949-1988**

### ***The Jordanian option vs Greater Israel***

The Jordanian option and the Greater Israel option refer to two major trends within the Zionist and then the Israeli political circles. Both deal with the future of the territories allocated to the Arab State in the partition scheme. The Jordanian option was not in fact an option that emerged after the UN decision to partition Palestine, rather, it had already been mentioned by the Peel Commission. The idea was to partition Palestine and push for a federation between the two banks or sides of the Jordan river. The idea was then to take shape in 1947, when the British approached King Abdullah, whom they considered their most trustworthy ally in the region, and convinced him to

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<sup>69</sup> Pappé, Ilan, “The 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestine”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36(1), Autumn 2006, pp. 6-20.

annex what was destined to become the Arab part of Palestine<sup>70</sup>. Later on, as extensively shown by Avi Shlaim, the Zionist leadership would also enter into contact with Abdullah and both would come to a kind of similar agreement<sup>71</sup>. However, the years 1948-1950 gave the idea a whole new dimension as the establishment of Israel over nearly 78% of the territory and Jordan control over the rest after the first Arab-Israeli war made the Jordanian option a reality.

The expressions “Greater Israel” or “the whole land of Israel” are currently usually used to refer to the same entity: the territory encompassing the current state of Israel and the occupied territories. However, these expressions have always caused controversy as there exists no consensus over the frontiers of “Eretz Israel” or the land of Israel and the Bible drew more than one frontier. Whilst there was, as is underlined by Benny Morris, a consensus over the objective of Zionism – except for those groups believing in spiritual Zionism – i.e. the establishment of a Jewish sovereignty in Palestine, there existed none over the frontiers of the entity. The question of frontiers has always been the core of a heated debate within the Zionist movement and whilst the latter had always sought all of Palestine as its territory, it had become a matter of time, strategy and tactics. As a matter of fact, in the late 1910s, the Zionist movement was claiming a territory encompassing both sides of the Jordan River, “Greater Palestine”<sup>72</sup>. And it was out of pragmatism and not without internal fights that they decided to accept the exclusion of Transjordan (the western bank of the Jordan) from Palestine and as a consequence from the scope of the Balfour Declaration. This decision caused a major rift within the Zionist movement and was, as mentioned above, one of the motors for the creation of the Revisionist party in 1925, the ancestor of the Likud.

Later, in the late 1930s, the most pragmatic of the Zionist trends understood that as long as the Jews did not dispose of a sovereign state, sovereignty had to be the core quest and to achieve it, they could not demand all of Palestine, making them ready to new territorial compromises. However, this did not stop them from trying, although in vain, to gain more territories, notably the Galilee

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<sup>70</sup> Khalidi, Rashid, *The Iron cage*, *op.cit.*, p. 127-128.

<sup>71</sup> Shlaim, Avi, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionists and the partition of Palestine*, *op.cit.*; *The Politics of Partition. King Abdullah, the Zionists and Palestine 1921-1951*, Abridged Ed. New York/Oxford 1990.

<sup>72</sup> Morris, Benny, *One State, Two States. Resolving the Israel/Palestine conflict*, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

and Jerusalem, in particular during the hearings with the Royal Commission in 1936-1937<sup>73</sup>. The Biltmore programme consecrated the official re-emergence of the Zionist maximalist vision, calling for the first time in clear words for a Jewish State on the land of Israel and drawing at the same time the frontiers of the wanted State. From then on, the top priorities were obtaining sovereignty and contracting additional territories. So that when the Anglo-American commission advocated a bi-national state, the Zionist movement immediately rejected the plan and gave way to violence<sup>74</sup>.

As soon as the Zionist movement obtained its state in November 1947, it engaged in the expansion of its territory, proclaimed its state and engaged in a war with its Arab neighbours, a war that ended with the seizure of even more territories. By the end of the war, Israel had effectively reached its goal with a territory comparable to the one they had lobbied for over the previous ten years<sup>75</sup>, moreover, as explained above it had successfully transferred about eighty percent of the Palestinians who lived in the territory it now controlled. The Palestinian population who stayed – nearly 160,000 – was surrounded by complete strangers, strangers to their language, traditions and social and political systems. They were living in the middle of their enemies and were themselves considered as inside enemies. Israel having unexpectedly to cope with that population (it had been unable to push all the Palestinians into the roads of exile) decided in October 1948, to place them under a military government which was going to last eighteen years, until December 1966. Living under military government meant curfews, arbitrary imprisonment or even deportation which considerably limited them in their movements and activities. Discriminatory and restrictive laws were promulgated that expropriated or confiscated most of the Palestinian lands<sup>76</sup>.

After the armistice of 1949, the question of territory remained unsettled, as beside the willingness to conquer the whole of mandatory Palestine, there existed a strong drive towards what was to be later called the “Jordanian

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<sup>73</sup> Haim, Yehoyada, “Zionist attitudes towards partition, 1937-1938”, *op.cit.*.

<sup>74</sup> On July 22, 1946, the Irgun, a Zionist militia affiliated to the Revisionist Party bombed the King David Hotel, known to be the British headquarters, killing 91 persons and injuring 46.

<sup>75</sup> Galnoor, Itzhak, *The Partition of Palestine. Decision crossroads in the Zionist movement*, *op.cit.*, p.279.

<sup>76</sup> Ghanem, Asad, Nadim Rouhana and Oren Yiftachel, “Questioning “Ethnic Democracy”: A Response to Sammy Smooha”, *Israel Studies* 3(2), Fall 1998, pp. 253-267

option". Israel was then in its formative years and already occupying areas not included in the territory it was given by the United Nations. It could not allow itself to start another conflict and risk losing the territories it had conquered. So, for pragmatic and strategic reasons Israeli leadership left unsettled the question of Greater Israel.

The question of Greater Israel was only to re-emerge after 1967, with the question of the annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip. As a matter of fact, since 1956 and the Suez Canal crisis, there had been constant tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbours. These were exacerbated by Israel's strikes on Jordan as a response to the infiltration operations by the Palestinian *fidaiyyun* organisations. However, the main sources of tensions were the cultivation by Israel of land situated in the demilitarised zone between Israel and Syria, the use by Palestinian and Syrian fishermen of Lake Tiberias and above all Israel's pumping of Lake Tiberias' waters for agricultural and industrial use<sup>77</sup>. These events, combined with permanent harassment of Syrian troops by the Israeli army<sup>78</sup>, led to an escalation from April 1967 and eventually to the Six Days war in June 1967.

In the wake of the war, Israel had gained control over the rest of historic Palestine's territory besides the Syrian Golan Heights, southern Lebanon and the Egyptian Sinai and provoked a new expulsion of Palestinian population notably in Jerusalem where Israel started a Judaisation policy<sup>79</sup>. As a result, Israel was occupying all of mandatory Palestine and it was once again facing a great dilemma: annex the occupied territories with their majority of Arabs that would invert the balance of population or render them and keep a homogeneous although narrow Jewish state. In the aftermath of the war, the United Nations voted resolution 242 which called for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories hence, de facto displacing the lines of the partition plan by normalising and legitimising the previous occupation. From then on, the

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<sup>77</sup> Dieckhoff, Alain and Mark Tessler, "Israël et les États arabes: de la confrontation totale à une paix partielle", in Dieckhoff, Alain (ed.), *L'État d'Israël*, Paris 2008, pp.293-312.

<sup>78</sup> Nearly ten years after the war, Moshe Dayan would confirm the state of tension that existed before the war and the harassment policy of the Israeli army. In Zisser, Eyal, "June 1967: Israel's Capture of the Golan Heights", *Israel Studies* 7(1), *Foreign Relations* Spring, 2002, pp. 168-194

<sup>79</sup> Pappé, Ilan, *A history of modern Palestine, op.cit.*, pp.194-196; Lesch, Ann M., "Israeli Deportation of Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 1967-1978", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 8(2), Winter 1979, pp. 101-131.

Greater Israel discourse was not limited to the Revisionists, and now that it seemed feasible, the idea spread. Until then Israel had been going through different phases characterised by Baruch Kimmerling as the pre-sovereign period coupled with presence; the sovereign period coupled with “ownership” and control over the territories conquered in 1947-1948<sup>80</sup>. 1967 redefined Israeli relations to land control as it presented a possibility for ownership of the West Bank. It thus led to the emergence of a new maximalist movement transcending political labels, the Whole Land of Israel Movement (*Hatnu'ah Lema'an Eretz-Yisrael Hashleimah*) as it encompassed members from the entire political spectrum<sup>81</sup>.

Its manifesto stated:

*“Zahal's victory in the six day war placed the people and the state within a new fateful period. The whole of Eretz Israel is now in the hands of the Jewish people, and just as we are not allowed to give up the State of Israel, so we are ordered to keep what we received there from Eretz Yisrael... We are bound to be loyal to the entirety of the country... and no government in Israel is entitled to give up this entirety, which represents the inherent and inalienable right to our people from the beginning of its history”<sup>82</sup>.*

The movement was strong and its bards were numerous, from poets and other artists to political figures. Beside the political statements, the movement translated on the ground through an expansionist settlement policy and the development of settler movements such as Gush Emunim. These, with the approval of the Labour dominated government, started confiscating Palestinian lands and colonising the occupied territories almost immediately after the war<sup>83</sup>.

A major turning point was to occur with the arrival in power of the revisionist Likud party in Israel ten years after the 1967 war. Indeed, as we have seen, the revisionists had been on the leading edge in advocating the advent of Greater Israel, wishing to establish a state on all of Palestine and beyond. Whereas the Labour party, for its part, had been open to a territorial

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<sup>80</sup> Kimmerling, Baruch, “Change and continuity in Zionist territorial orientations and politics”, *Comparative Politics* 14(2), January 1982, pp.191-210.

<sup>81</sup> Masalha, Nur, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians: the politics of expansion*, London 2000, pp.28-29.

<sup>82</sup> Lustick, Ian, *For the land and the Lord, Jewish fundamentalism in Israel*, New York 1988, p.43.

<sup>83</sup> Dieckhoff, Alain, “Israel face aux Palestiniens”, in Dieckhoff, Alain (ed.), *L'État d'Israël, op.cit.*, pp.275-292.

compromise with King Hussein of Jordan, the revisionists' arrival in power accelerated the colonization process of the occupied territories.

It may be worth at this stage reminding ourselves of the change of position that occurred within the revisionist fringe. Indeed, the revisionist trend had begun to change position during the 1950s, slowly accepting that the eastern bank of the Jordan could not be included within the Jewish State. It should be remembered that before that, they had been the great opponents of the exclusion of Transjordan from Zionist activities<sup>84</sup>. After 1967, the predecessor of the Likud, Gahal, was firmly opposed to any return of the conquered lands except for the Sinai and that for two reasons, first, it was not part of Eretz Israel, second, Menachem Begin, the head of the Likud and from 1977, Israel's Prime Minister was not ready to grant more than mere administrative autonomy to the Palestinians and sought a separate peace with Egypt<sup>85</sup>. Moreover, it was firmly opposed to resolution 242 and refused to recognize the PLO, which it sought to isolate and destroy (Israel would eventually invade Lebanon in 1982 to destroy the organisation). This led them to push aside the Jordanian option in favour of the Greater Israel one. However, the Jordanian option would re-emerge in the mid 1980s, although again proving unsuccessful<sup>86</sup>.

### ***The emergence of a two-state movement in Israel***

As mentioned in the previous part, immediately after the seizure of the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan, the Sinai and South Lebanon, a debate emerged over the return of the occupied territories. The majority of Israelis were in favour of keeping them under Israeli control however, there was also a minority that considered the idea of using these territories as bargaining power, basically land for peace. This was the basis of the Allon plan that emerged in late July 1967<sup>87</sup>. The latter included conditions according to which the

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<sup>84</sup> Nadav G., Shelef, "From 'both banks of the Jordan' to the 'Whole Land of Israel': ideological change in revisionist Zionism", *Israel Studies* 9(1), Spring 2004, pp. 125-148. Also see Chapter I.

<sup>85</sup> Shlaim, Avi, "The Likud in power: the historiography of revisionist Zionism", *Israel Studies* 1(2), Fall 1996, pp.278-293.

<sup>86</sup> Dieckhoff, Alain, "Israel face aux Palestiniens", *op.cit.*, pp.275-292.

<sup>87</sup> Morris, Benny, *One State, Two States. Resolving the Israel/Palestine conflict*, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

negotiations were to be held with the Hashemite Kingdom and not the PLO, meaning that the part of the West Bank that Israel would not keep would go to Jordan<sup>88</sup>. However, the plan was rejected by the Israeli Cabinet and never became part of any official policy although it would after the late 1980s serve as a basis for the two-state solution proposals.

With the arrival of the Likud in power, the situation seemed even more difficult. The Israeli government appeared to refuse any offer of territorial concessions, and negotiations with Egypt were at a deadlock. This is the moment when 348 reserve officers and soldiers of the Israeli army decided to publish an open letter to the government in order to push for advancement on peace<sup>89</sup>. Peace Now, was then created with a call of “land for peace”, demonstrating against the invasion of Lebanon and objecting to the pursuit of colonisation in the occupied territories.

Peace Now was motivated by what Tamar Hermann called “pragmatic pacifism”, indeed the movement's members were not pacifists and they were ready to fight for their country without question. However, they preferred peace when it was possible. Theirs was a pragmatic reading of pacifism: it was a necessity in a situation where the control over all the territories conquered during the 1967 war could induce more weakness than strength. Actually, they feared that the occupation would keep too many fronts open and blemish Israel's legitimacy on the international scene<sup>90</sup>.

When the PLO eventually adhered to the principle of the two-state solution and proclaimed the independence of the Palestinian State in 1988, it opened the door to secret talks between members of the Israeli Intelligence Service and the leaders of the PLO. These in turn opened the way for the Madrid Peace Conference and Oslo Agreement.

## **F. Conclusion**

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<sup>88</sup> Morris, Benny, *Righteous victims*, *op.cit.*, p.330.

<sup>89</sup> Peace Now, “The Officers' letter”, March 1978: <http://peacenow.org.il/eng/content/officers-letter-march-1978>

<sup>90</sup> Debié, Frank, “Les stratégies territoriales en Cisjordanie et à Gaza”, in Dieckhoff, Alain (ed.), *L'Etat d'Israël*, *op.cit.*, pp.313-332.



After having secured the principle of a Jewish National Home in Palestine, the Zionist movement launched a diplomatic and political offensive to transform the National Home into an exclusively Jewish political centre. For that purpose, it has implemented the principle of separation from the Arabs in all the political, economic and social fields. This as we have seen, was particularly obvious in the numerous drafts the WZO proposed to serve as a basis for the text of the British mandate over Palestine. Separation as a tool for Jewish autonomy became an objective in itself, and one that would lead to sovereignty. When after the Great Arab Revolt, and facing a deadlock in its policy, the British government came up with the idea of partition in 1937, as a solution to the Palestine question, the Zionist movement almost immediately accepted the principle of partition, although wishing for a more favourable settlement for Zionism than the one proposed by the British government. Indeed, what was a “way out” for Britain, was for the Zionist movement a way to secure sovereignty. And to reach such a settlement, the Zionist leadership decided to accelerate its land settlement policy. This meant trying to buy more lands from the Arabs and establishing settlements in the areas they wished would one day would be part of the Jewish State. A Jewish State without a Jewish majority was out of the question, so the Zionist Executive made sure of finding a way to secure Jewish exclusiveness. It tackled the issue of transfer as a foreseeable solution. Indeed, the Peel Commission itself had envisaged this under the euphemism of the “exchange of population”.

Although Britain did abandon its partition scheme in the late 1930s, the Zionist leadership continued to develop its plans for an exclusive Jewish State. The situation on the ground as well as the situation of the European Jews in the early 1940s made a solution even more urgent and the Zionist leadership made a strategic move from the acceptance of the principle of partition in 1937 to the advocacy of partition before the various Commissions of Enquiry it met. And this despite the fact that the leading idea in Zionist thought had always been to establish a Jewish autonomy in all of Palestine. So whilst it internally advocated the transformation of the whole of Palestine into the Jewish State, notably with the Biltmore programme, the Zionist movement was pragmatic enough to argue in favour of partition on the international scene.

As we have seen, the United Nations eventually decided on Palestine's partition and although it had nominally fought for and accepted partition, the Zionist movement made sure to obtain partition on its own terms, meaning the most territories with the least Arabs. And for that purpose, the Zionist leadership and then the Israeli political-military class implemented a policy of transfer, followed by the establishment of Jewish settlements in all the ethnically cleansed areas.

Whilst the Israelis accepted the terms of the 1949 armistice, the idea of the whole of Palestine under Israeli control still prevailed and Israel was faced with a choice between aiming for Greater Israel or to further the Jordanian option. In the aftermath of war, Israel decided to leave the territorial question undecided. However, that question would re-emerge after the 1967 war, which enabled Israel to control all of mandate Palestine and created a new fact on the ground necessitating new peace proposals and a new basis for partition and the two-state solution. The 1977 elections put an end to the Jordanian option for a while and consecrated new facts on the ground, namely the Jewish colonies in the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan.

The 1980s were then to open the way to a two-state movement, which first called for a peace settlement on the basis of the Jordanian option and the land for peace principle, and then, once the PLO had endorsed the two-state solution and accepted the UN resolutions 242 and 338, it encouraged direct negotiations with the Organisation itself.



## Chapter Four: Palestinian Perspectives on Partition(s)

The 1910s saw the growth of Arab nationalism, which brought with it the search for self-determination and sovereignty. However, WWI had contributed to the total redrawing of the Arab east and North Africa and instigated the desires of the traditional colonial powers, which were processing the division and partition of the region. In that context, Palestine was at the core of numerous pledges. The partition of Syria created different realities in Syria and Palestine which would accelerate the passage from a struggle based on *Qawmiyya*, with the objective of establishing an Arab State in Greater Syria, to one based on *Wataniyya*, as a way to defeat British and Zionist colonialism. However, Zionism too created a new reality on the ground that would eventually pose the question of the partition of Palestine.

This chapter examines the Palestinian perspective on partition and construction of the anti-partitionist discourse to show that it has been constant and consistent to the extent that the Palestinians were ready to offer an Arab unitary state in Palestine. First, I will explore the historical process that led the Palestinian Arabs to replace the objective of an Arab State in a united Greater Syria. The Arab Palestinians had no choice but to adapt to the situation imposed by the colonial powers and *Wataniyya* was a way to struggle against the foreign powers and particularly Zionism.

Second, I will contemplate the Arab attitude towards Zionism and the British mandate, to argue that although they rejected Zionism, the Palestinian Arabs were ready to give the Jews their share of political representation within an Arab government and according to the principles of democracy. However, after only fifteen years of rule, the United Kingdom was losing grip over Palestine and the mandate became unmanageable. As a response to the events in Palestine, namely the Great Arab Revolt of 1936, the mandatory authorities eventually came up with a partition plan that the Palestinians rejected.

As we will see in the third part, rejection of partition and advocacy of a democratic government would prevail during the period preceding the adoption

by the United Nations of the partition resolution in 1947.

Finally, just a few months after the adoption of the partition resolution, the Zionist movement would proclaim the establishment of a Jewish State and proceed to an ethnic cleansing in order to expand its territory without including the Arabs. Weakened and dispersed the AHC members would eventually proclaim the establishment of a government in exile, the All-Palestine government.

### **A. Faced with Zionism: Between Qawmiyya and Wataniyya, 1918 – 1922**

As we have seen in Chapter One and Two, Arab nationalism or *Qawmiyya* had developed during WWI. By 1918 it had largely replaced Ottomanism, and, although it had not yet fully developed, Arab nationalism had one clear objective, Arab unity, and as such it rejected colonial partitions. By 1919, Arab nationalists would call for the independence of the Arab peoples and most importantly for the unity of Greater Syria, thus against the separation and partition of Palestine and the Zionist project.

However, as we will see, in the following sections, just a few years after the Arab nationalists organised in a united framework, as underlined by Muhammad Muslih, the local crises would get the better of the Arab nationalists who, in absence of a clear Arab nationalist programme, “resigned themselves – some painfully and begrudgingly – to the overwhelming pull of local concern and priorities. Nationalism linked to limited pieces of territory and their populations prevailed”<sup>1</sup>. Local nationalism or *wataniyya*, would then appear as the only means to struggle against British and French colonialism, and even more since Britain was known to support the Zionist project and since the champion of Arab nationalism was not aware enough of the dangers of Zionism for the Arab cause<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Muslih, Muhammad, “Arab politics and the rise of Palestinian nationalism”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16(4), Summer 1987, pp.77-94.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## ***The aftermath of the Balfour Declaration in the Arab region***

When the news about the Balfour Declaration reached the Middle East and the Arab nationalists, approximately at the same time as the news of the Sykes-Picot Agreements, in December 1917, it had the effect of a small bomb. In order to defuse it, the British Government multiplied the appeasing messages to the Arabs.

Sharif Hussein – by then King of Hejaz – leaving the benefit of the doubt to his British interlocutors, immediately sent for explanations. The British of course responded with a reassuring message sent through Commander D.G. Hogarth, one of the heads of the Arab Bureau in Cairo. The latter was dispatched to Jeddah at the beginning of January 1918, where he conducted a series of interviews with King Hussein. In the message, that came to be known as the Hogarth message, Britain stated: “Jewish settlement in Palestine would only be allowed in so far as it would be consistent with the political and economic freedom of the Arab population”<sup>3</sup>. More than evasive, the message did not say anything about the Sykes-Picot Agreement and its dismantlement of the Arab territory, or about the real content of the Balfour promise<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, it was sufficient to calm King Hussein.

Whilst the awareness of King Hussein and his sons was gradual and expressed with great disappointment, the reaction of the Arab nationalists was immediate and hostile. Reacting to the news about the Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot agreements, seven Arab notables from the newly-formed Party of Syrian (in the sense of Greater Syria) Unity, and based in Cairo, issued a memorandum requesting explanations from the British Government<sup>5</sup>. They also demanded that “the ultimate independence of Arabia” should be guaranteed. In a will to appease the Arabs, the British government issued a declaration – the Declaration to the Seven – stressing it would always seek the consent of the people in the guidance of its policies<sup>6</sup>. However, the letter consecrated the dividing of the Arab territories into four categories – the territories that were

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in: Antonius, Georges, *The Arab awakening*, *op.cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>4</sup> Shlaim, Avi, “The Balfour declaration and its consequences”, *op.cit.*, pp. 251-270

<sup>5</sup> Khader, Bishara, *L'Europe et la Palestine des croisades à nos jours*, *op.cit.*, pp.120-121.

<sup>6</sup> UNISPAL, “The Declaration to the Seven of June, 1918”, Annex G to the *Report of a Committee set up to consider certain correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sharif of Mecca, in 1915 and 1916*, March 16, 1939.

already independent, the ones that were freed by “the Arabs themselves”, those freed by the Allied troops (roughly Iraq and Palestine) and those still under Turkish rule. This enabled Britain to introduce a differential treatment of the territories according to their category, indeed, although it recognised “the complete and sovereign independence of the Arabs” inhabiting the areas under the first two categories, it was more than ambiguous in the case of the areas freed by the Allied troops<sup>7</sup>. In this, the British government was thus preparing for the separation and the partition of the Near East.

Great Britain's assurance to the Arabs did not prevent the Zionists from developing their institutions (mentioned above). This inability or lack of will from the British administration only helped propagate fear among the Arabs. As unrest was growing, the British and French governments in a joint effort issued a declaration aiming at calming the situation. This time, it stated more clearly the principle of liberation – without however mentioning independence – including Syria and Mesopotamia, which were the areas demanded by the nationalists.

*“The goal envisaged by France and Great Britain in prosecuting in the East the War let loose by German ambition is the complete and final liberation of the peoples who have for so long been oppressed by the Turks, and the setting up of national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the free exercise of the initiative and choice of the indigenous populations.*

*In pursuit of those intentions, France and Great Britain agree to further and assist in the establishment of indigenous Governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia which have already been liberated by the Allies, as well as in those territories which they are engaged in securing and recognizing these as soon as they are actually established”<sup>8</sup>.*

By October 1918, the Arabs and the British had reached and taken Damascus, and by November the armistice was signed. The war being over and, reassured by the joint declaration as well as by the fourteen points issued by President Wilson, the Arabs were on their way to the Paris Peace Conference which they thought would settle once and for all their independence and territorial claims.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Antonius, George, *The Arab awakening, op.cit.*, p. 435-436

## ***The Paris Peace Conference: the fragmentation of the Arab independence struggle***

In 1918, in view of gaining further legitimacy, isolating the French government and gaining American support, the Zionist leadership decided to negotiate an agreement with the Arabs. Indeed, if it reached such an agreement, this would respect Wilson's principles. However, it knew they could not deal with the Palestinian Arabs, whose hostility towards Zionism was known and who had started organising in associations amongst which the well-known Arab Muslim-Christian Association<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, the British government was encouraging the Zionist movement to talk with Faisal, knowing that the latter was under its influence through T. E. Lawrence, with whom he had fought and whom he trusted to be a true friend of the Arab cause. So, the British government used its influence to convince Faisal to meet with Weizmann and discuss the question of Palestine. The first encounter between Faisal and Weizmann took place in June 1918 in Aqaba, and Weizmann made an effort to reassure Faisal as to the objectives of the Zionist movement, which were to help to develop the country for the advantage of the Jews as well as the Arabs. Of course, he denied any willingness to establish a Jewish government in Palestine<sup>10</sup>. Parallel to that, and as mentioned above, the Arabs of Palestine were organising in local chapters of the Arab Muslim-Christian Association. They started petitioning the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration – established by military edict in 1918 – against the Balfour Declaration and for the restitution of Palestine into Syria<sup>11</sup>.

The Paris Peace Conference, aiming at establishing a settlement according to the principle of self-determination as developed by President Wilson, began on January 18, 1919 and Faisal was invited by Britain to take part as the Arab delegate.

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<sup>9</sup> Palestinians from the Muslim-Christian Association formed that year presumably in June would even submit memoranda to the Peace Conference to reiterate that nothing should be done without the Arabs' consultation and consent. Abdelwahab al-Kayyali (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian resistance against Great Britain and Zionism*, *op.cit.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>10</sup> Antonius, George, *The Arab awakening*, *op.ct.*, p. 283-286.

<sup>11</sup> Fieldhouse, D.K, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958*, *op.cit.*, pp.153; Abdelwahab al-Kayyali (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian resistance against Great Britain and Zionism*, *op.cit.*, pp.1-16.



Once Faisal reached London, the British government made the case for Zionism and used all its influence to push him to recognise the Zionist aspirations on behalf of the Arabs and to sign an agreement with Weizmann. Although reluctant, Faisal, who was under extreme pressure, eventually signed an agreement with Weizmann on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1919. He nevertheless made sure to add a clause in Arabic stating that the agreement would be null and void if the Arabs did not achieve their independence.

Beside guaranteeing the application of the Balfour declaration and proposing the creation of an independent state of Palestine alongside the Arab state, the text also clearly secured the rights of the “Arab peasant and tenant farmers”. The signature of the agreement, which consecrated the partition of Syria with Faisal's consent, was however strongly condemned by the Arab nationalists, especially the Palestinians, as attested in the diary of Auni Abd al-Hadi – who, as we have seen above, was a companion of Faisal in the Secret Societies. According to Abd al-Hadi and the historians of the period, Faisal signed the agreement without understanding its implications because it was in English, a language he did not know. Moreover, as reported by Henry Laurens, the texts in English, which were favourable to the Zionists differed from the texts in French and Arabic<sup>12</sup>. The latter seem to be less advantageous as they refer only to an “equality of rights between Jews and Arabs in Palestine”.

By mid-January, Faisal went to Paris and after controversy over his legitimacy, he was eventually authorised to present his case<sup>13</sup>. In contrast, the Zionist movement, whose claims were convergent with Britain's, presented its case as part of Great Britain's propositions and plans.

Since his arrival in Europe, Faisal had sent two memorandums explaining the Arabs' claims to the British and the French governments' representatives. In the first, dated January 1<sup>st</sup>, he argued in favour of independence and stressed the notion of unity of the Arab region – which he presented as the region inhabited by the Arabic-speaking peoples. Concerning the question of

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<sup>12</sup> Laurens, Henry, *L'Orient arabe. Arabisme et islamisme de 1798 à 1945*, *op.cit.*, p.158.

<sup>13</sup> Once he arrived in Paris, Faisal discovered that the French were rather hostile to his presence and did not recognise his right to be present at the Conference, as Hejaz was not considered as an Allied belligerent state. As a matter of fact, since President Wilson had imposed the consultation of the concerned peoples for making any territorial decisions, they were worried that his presence could represent a challenge to the application of the Sykes-Picot agreement. However, the British, who were trying to tip the balance in their favour, intervened through the Foreign Office and his right to speak at the conference was finally recognised.

Palestine, he wrote:

*“In Palestine, the enormous majority of the people are Arabs. The Jews are very close to the Arabs in blood, and there is no conflict of character between the two races. In principle, we are absolutely as one. Nevertheless, the Arabs cannot risk assuming the responsibility of keeping the balance of power, in the clash of races and religions that have, in this province, so often brought difficulties to the world. They wish for the effective super-position of a great trustee, so long as a representative local administration commended itself by actively promoting the material prosperity of the country”<sup>14</sup>.*

The second memorandum he wrote was dated January 29, and, once again, it insisted on the unity of the Arab region:

*“Representing my father who, by request of Britain and France, led the Arab rebellion against the Turks, I have come to ask that the Arabic speaking peoples of Asia, from the line Alexandretta-Diarbekr southward to the Indian Ocean, be recognised as independent sovereign peoples, under the guarantee of the League of Nation. The Hejaz, which is already a sovereign state and Aden, which is a British dependency, are excluded from the Arab demand. The confirmation of the states already existing in the area, the adjustment of their boundaries with one another, with the Hejaz, and with the British at Aden, and the formation of such new states as are required, and their boundaries, are matters of arrangements between us, according to the wishes of their respective inhabitants. Detailed suggestions in these smaller points will be put forward by my government when the time comes. I base my request on the principles enunciated by President Wilson and am confident that those in power will attach more importance to the bodies and souls of the Arabic speaking peoples than to their own material interests”<sup>15</sup>.*

It should be pointed out that although Faisal based the Arabs' claims on the principle of self-determination, demanding the implementation of sovereign states – and, in doing so, called for a geographical partition, he still envisaged the future states as part of the larger Arabic speaking peoples unitary territory.

By February 3, 1919, the First Arab Palestinian Conference dispatched a message of protest against the establishment of a national home for the Jews in Palestine to the Peace Conference<sup>16</sup>. They voiced their refusal of the Zionist colonisation of Palestine and stressed that no decision concerning

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<sup>14</sup> Bonsal, Stephen, *Suitors and suppliants. The little nations at Versailles*, Simon Publications 2001, (First published in 1947), p.44.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in George Antonius, *The Arab awakening*, *op.cit.*, p. 286-287

<sup>16</sup> “Message of protest - from the First Arab Palestinian Congress to the Peace Conference – against the making of Palestine into a National Homeland for the Jews”, in Al-Kayyali, Abdelwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian resistance against Great Britain and Zionism*, *op.cit.*, pp. 3-4.

Palestine could be made without consultation of its inhabitants. They were also relentless in reminding them of the principle of self-determination and the engagement to protect the “weak nations”.

Faisal then made his case on February 6<sup>th</sup>, and he presented in substance the same demands as those made during his speech on January 29<sup>th</sup>; he also tackled the question of Palestine as a question that needed a deeper common analysis.

On February 27<sup>th</sup>, it was the Zionist movement's turn to make its case and it immediately asked that the terms of the Balfour declaration, which envisaged a “Jewish national home”, be changed into “an autonomous Jewish commonwealth”. At the same time, Weizmann still advocated Jewish immigration that would not harm the existing population's rights. However, when asked by Lansing, the United States' envoy, the meaning of a Jewish national home, he would answer:

*“The Zionist Organisation does not want an autonomous Jewish Government, but merely to establish in Palestine, under a Mandatory Power, an administration, not necessarily Jewish, which would render it possible to send into Palestine 70,000 to 80,000 Jews annually. The Zionist Organisation requires permission at the same time to build Jewish schools where Hebrew would be taught, and to develop institutions of every kind. Thus it would build up gradually a nationality, and so make Palestine as Jewish as America is American or England English. Later on, when the Jews form the large majority, they will be ripe to establish such a Government as would answer to the state of the development of the country and of their ideals”<sup>17</sup>.*

This declaration did not leave any space for doubts as to the objectives of the Zionist movement – namely to become a majority in Palestine and eventually to implement a Jewish state. Even before any international institution sanctioned the dismemberment of Palestine, the Zionist movement based its demands on a partition of Palestine from its Arab environment. Moreover, Palestine was disconnected from its indigenous population, which was scarcely mentioned in all the documents presented by the Zionist Organisation.

Despite the efforts of the British government to hide the comments of H. Weizmann, the latter were published and became known all over the Arab

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Sir Martin Gilbert, “An overwhelmingly Jewish State, From the Balfour Declaration to the Palestine mandate”, in Ambassador Alan Baker (ed.), *Israel's rights as a nation-state in international diplomacy*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs - World Jewish Congress, 2011.

territories. Faisal, who was still in France, replied immediately through the Paris based newspaper *Le Matin*:

*“If the Jews wish to establish a state and claim sovereign rights in the country, I foresee and fear very serious dangers and conflicts between them and the other races”<sup>18</sup>.*

So, despite his willingness to come to an agreement with the Zionist movement, Faisal was not ready to concede a Jewish State in Palestine. This put an end to the Faisal-Weizmann agreement.

The Paris Peace conference finally ended without having ruled on the Arab and Palestine questions, although the hearings that were held did serve as a basis for future discussions that were to take place at the San Remo conference in April 1920.

#### *The King-Crane Commission and Syrian Unity: a short-lived window*

Meanwhile, the organising powers of the Paris Peace Conference, or the Council of Four – France, Great Britain, Italy and the United States, had agreed to appoint a commission of enquiry in the region to investigate and ascertain the wishes of the populations. However, France and Britain were aware of the Arabs' aspiration to full independence and hostility to any foreign interference. Moreover, the Arab Palestinians had made clear that they rejected the Balfour Declaration and their separation from Greater Syria. They knew that such a position would compromise their interests. So, France, Great Britain and Italy finally decided not to send representatives to the Peace Conference commission of enquiry, thus, only the United States appointed members – Henry King, President of Oberlin College and Charles Crane, a philanthropist with an experience of the region. The Commission had already familiarised itself with the reports and literature on the Near East when it arrived in Jaffa on June 10<sup>th</sup> 1919.

In the meanwhile, Faisal returned to Syria early in May. There, he was presented with a proposal for the formation of a national assembly. The proposition was supported by the Arab Independence Party – *Hizb al Istiqlal al*

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Bishara Khader, *L'Europe et la Palestine: des croisades à nos jours, op.cit.*, p. 126.

*Arabi*<sup>19</sup> – which, in fact, had grown out of *al Fatat* and *al Ahd*. Elections were held during that same month and the SNC was convened in July 1919, in Damascus to prepare for the King-Crane Commission of enquiry on the future of Greater Syria. During its first session, the congress adopted a number of resolutions that rejected any division, partition and/or foreign “political tutelage”:

- *the recognition of the independence of Syria with the inclusion of Palestine as a sovereign state with the Amir Faisal as King, and the recognition of the independence of Iraq*
- *the rejection of the Sykes-Picot agreements and the Balfour Declaration and any other plan for the partition of Syria or the creation of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine*
- *the rejection of the political tutelage implied in the proposed mandatory systems, but acceptance of foreign assistance for a limited period of time and provided it did not conflict with national independence and unity, preference being given to America or – if not America – to Britain*
- *the rejection of French assistance in any form*<sup>20</sup>.

These were the conclusions they would present to the American commission of enquiry, also known as the King-Crane Commission. Over a period of six weeks, the latter heard oral testimonies and met with the SNC and the Arab Muslim-Christian Association. The commission was also presented with more than 1,800 petitions, amongst which, 260 were presented by Arabs of Palestine. Eighty percent of the petitions made the case for a united Syria – to include Palestine – , then more than seventy percent of the petitions called for the independence of Syria and Iraq. More than seventy percent of the overall petitions rejected the Zionist programme – with more than eighty percent of the petitions from Palestine doing so<sup>21</sup>, most of which made a case for Arab independence, Syrian unity etc. According to the members of the commission, more than seventy two percent of these petitions “were directed against the Zionist programme”.

By August, the commission was back in Paris where it submitted its report on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The commission's conclusions took into account the will of the Arab

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<sup>19</sup> Muslih, Muhammad, “The rise of local nationalism in the Arab East”, in Khalidi, Rashid, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, and Reeve S. Simon (eds.), *The Origins of Arab nationalism, op.cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>20</sup> Antonius, Georges, *The Arab awakening, op.cit.*, pp. 293-294

<sup>21</sup> Report of the King-Crane Commission, August 28, 1919.

populations and responded positively to both the Syrian Congress and the Arab Muslim-Christian Association as it rejected the partition of Syria and Palestine and recommended "serious modification of the extreme Zionist programme for Palestine of unlimited immigration of Jews, looking finally to making Palestine distinctly a Jewish state"<sup>22</sup>. To secure the unity of Syria, and prepare it for independence, the commission even recommended the installation of mandates rather than colonial administrations:

*"We recommend, as most important of all, and in strict harmony with our Instructions, that whatever foreign administration (whether of one or more Powers) is brought into Syria, should come in not at all as a colonising Power; in the old sense of that term, but as a Mandatory under the League of Nations with a clear consciousness that "the well-being and development," of the Syrian people form for it a "sacred trust. [...] We recommend, in the second, that the unity of Syria be preserved, in accordance with the earnest petition of the great majority of the people of Syria.*

*[...] There would then be no reason why Palestine could not be included in a united Syrian State, just as other portions of the country, the holy places being cared for by an international and inter-religious commission, somewhat as at present under the oversight and approval of the Mandatory and of the League of Nations. The Jews, of course, would have representation upon this Commission"*<sup>23</sup>.

Of course, these conclusions were seen as a positive stance by Faisal and the Arab nationalists. However, the report of the American commission was not taken into account during the deliberations that followed. Moreover, it was made public only two years after being issued. In the meanwhile, the San Remo International Conference, which took place in Italy from April 19<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> 1920, dealing with the arrangements for and future of the Ottoman Empire, had already handed in its conclusions, which were the attribution of a mandate over Palestine to the United Kingdom and a mandate over the rest of Syria to France. These conclusions were reaffirmed by the signature of the Treaty of Sèvres, and, in 1921, British policy in Palestine was again asserted at the Cairo Conference<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> UNISPAL, "Recommendations of the King-Crane Commission with regard to Syria-Palestine and Iraq", August 29, 1919.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> A conference during which Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs laid out his ambitions for Britain's role in the Arab world for the following generations.

### *The slow disintegration of Arabism in favour of Palestinian patriotism*

Discontent continued to grow in the Arab regions and the Amir Faisal who, under British pressure, had just agreed to give the French limited control over the coastal area of Greater Syria, had come back to Syria in March 1920. Out of British scope, he became conscious that he could not deal with the foreign powers without a clear mandate from the SNC. The members of the SNC were careful when it came to the Allied powers and were very critical of Faisal's political arrangements with the Britain and France. The recent developments and the situation on the ground, led Faisal to join the views of his Arab nationalists' colleagues in a more categorical position. From then on, he revoked his engagements with the British, the French and H. Weizmann – the agreement with the latter was null and void anyway<sup>25</sup>. Reaffirming the main principles stated during the first Syrian Congress, namely independence and above all unity of the Arab region<sup>26</sup>, the nationalists and Faisal clearly rejected the partition of Syria. It was in this spirit that they decided to organise elections in March 1920, elections during which Faisal was elected King of Syria (Greater Syria). With a similar Arab nationalist approach, the same process was carried out in Iraq. However, by April, the mandates had been distributed and the mandate powers were preparing the transfer of power, which took place rapidly. A few months later, as soon as they replaced the British in Damascus, the French dethroned Faisal and forced him to leave Syria. The expulsion of Faisal was a blow for Arab nationalism, whose leaders were now dispersed all over the region. The Arab territories were subject to a partition sanctioned by the highest international organisations and unity and independence were nothing more than a *politician's promise*<sup>27</sup>.

In Palestine, the Third Muslim-Christian Congress, held in Haifa on December 3, 1920, repeated its previous decisions and positions, rejecting the British administration and the Balfour Declaration, and demanding the end of Zionism and Jewish immigration. However, and despite the reluctance of numerous delegates, notably Auni Abd al-Hadi for whom Palestine was a

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<sup>25</sup> SEE Chapter I.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the First Congress' resolutions in Chapter I.

<sup>27</sup> Antonius, George, *The Arab awakening, op.cit.*

construct, it also decided to base its action on patriotism as an intermediary step and seek independence for Palestine as an Arab state<sup>28</sup>. In that, they were adapting to and acknowledging the situation on the ground and the partition of Syria. This is best expressed by a comment by Musa Kazem al-Hussayni<sup>29</sup>:

*“Now, after the recent events in Damascus, we have to effect a complete change in our plans here. Southern Syria no longer exists. We must defend Palestine”*<sup>30</sup>.

This move is of the utmost importance as it was the first recognition of Palestine as an entity in the frontiers defined by the colonial powers. However, this recognition was made on the basis of the reality on the ground and not as a result of an ideological move. Moreover, whilst Palestine was the immediate goal, Syria was the ultimate one as indicated by the decisions of the Arab Muslim-Christian Association that followed<sup>31</sup>. Indeed, whilst there was a move, there never was a rupture, at least not yet then. As a matter of fact, the Question of Palestine has always encompassed a dual dimension which marks the interweaving between Arabness and Palestinian-ness. The relation between Arab nationalism – *al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya* – and local nationalism – *Wataniyya* – as we will see in the following sections would soon re-emerge notably from the great Arab revolt in 1936 onwards and would remain as a constant until 1967 date after which it would become blurred.

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<sup>28</sup> Arab Palestinian Congress, “Resolutions of the Third Arab Palestinian Congress sent to the British High Commissioner”, December 18, 1920, in Al-Kayyali, Abdulwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian Resistance against the UK and Zionism*, *op.cit.*, pp.16-20.

<sup>29</sup> Musa Kazem al-Hussayni was a member of a prominent family in Jerusalem, the Hussayni's. He was mayor of Jerusalem from 1918 to 1920 date of his dismissal by the British authorities. Prominent member of the Arab Muslim -Christian Association, he was to become its leader from 1922 until his death in 1934.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Kayyali, Abdulwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian Resistance against the UK and Zionism*, *op.cit.*, pp.16-20; Kimmerling, Baruch and Joel Migdal, *The Palestinian people, a history*, Cambridge 2003, p.82

<sup>31</sup> Al-Kayyali, Abdulwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian Resistance against the UK and Zionism*, *op.cit.*, pp.16-20.



## **B. Attitude to Zionism and the British Mandate**

### ***Arab Palestinian opposition to the Balfour Declaration before the Great revolt***

Refusing to recognise the Balfour Declaration and rejecting anything done in its name, the Arabs were well aware of the threats contained in the declaration and the position of the British authorities, which they feared would be a means to take over the country. And indeed, since the issuance of the Declaration, the Zionist movement increased its activities in Palestine – land purchase and immigration. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the Zionist Organization had developed distinct agencies specialised in banking and land purchase at the beginning of the century, to which it added a trade union, the *Histadrut* and a militia, the *Hagana*, which were both established in 1920. The British government had witnessed these events and, in conformity with its prerogatives as stated in the text of the mandate, selected the Zionist Organization as the representative organ for the “Jewish movement”<sup>32</sup>.

Failing to bring about changes in British policy through diplomacy, Arab resentment towards the British government and its Zionist protégés grew stronger and eventually translated into demonstrations, culminating in the Nebi Musa riots of April 1920, during which five Jews and four Arabs were killed<sup>33</sup>. The British authorities appointed a commission of enquiry to investigate the reasons for these events and it was concluded that the Balfour Declaration was “undoubtedly the starting point of the whole trouble” and that Arab fears were founded<sup>34</sup>. However, Winston Churchill, who had become Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs in February 1921, was inflexible on the matter of the Balfour Declaration as shown by his reaction when, during a visit to Palestine in March 1921, he was presented with the conclusions of the third Arab Muslim-Christian Conference, which condemned the Balfour Declaration. To their demand for the abrogation of the Declaration, his response was negative; furthermore, he

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<sup>32</sup> National Archives, CAB 24/159/, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, 17 February 1923.

<sup>33</sup> Shlaim, Avi, “The Balfour Declaration and its consequences”, *op.cit.*, pp.252-270.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

also refused to revise it and to reduce Jewish immigration<sup>35</sup>.

The position of the British government was once again greeted with demonstrations and on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1921, clashes burst out between Arabs and Jewish demonstrators. These events led to the appeal for the fourth Arab Muslim-Christian Congress that took place in Jerusalem from May 29<sup>th</sup> to June 3<sup>rd</sup> and which was to present the same conclusions as the third congress<sup>36</sup>. As a consequence, the British government decided to send an enquiry commission that concluded that the incidents were not planned but spontaneous and noted that there was growing a hostility on the Arab side towards the Jewish immigrants, a hostility motivated by economic reasons as well as the continuing Jewish immigration.

The report was followed by a speech delivered in Jerusalem, in June 1921, by the British High Commissioner of Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel<sup>37</sup> and aimed at reassuring the Arabs:

*“They [i.e., the words of the Declaration] mean that the Jews, a people that are scattered throughout the world, but whose hearts are always turned to Palestine, should be enabled to found their home here, and that some among them, within the limits that are fixed by the numbers and interests of the present population, should come to Palestine in order to help, using their resources and efforts, to develop the country to the advantage of all its inhabitants”<sup>38</sup>.*

However, the Palestinian Arabs were not reassured. Probably thinking that they would have influence if they were closer to the centre of power, the representatives of the Arab Muslim-Christian Association decided to send a delegation to Britain. The delegation, presided over by Musa Kazem al-Hussayni, arrived in August 1921 in London and, according to the Middle East department of the Colonial Office, it expressed two demands: “the abrogation of the Balfour Declaration and the immediate grant of a representative government in Palestine”. The British government had however no intention of abrogating the Balfour Declaration nor to grant a representative government, at

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<sup>35</sup> Bishara, Khader, *L'Europe et la Palestine, des croisades à nos jours*, op.cit., p. 137.

<sup>36</sup> Executive Committee of the Arab Palestinian Congress, Communiqué on the Fourth Arab Palestinian Congress' rejection of the mandate, July 8, 1922, in Al-Kayyali, Abdelwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian resistance against Great Britain and Zionism*, op.cit., pp.46-47.

<sup>37</sup> Herbert Samuel (1870-1963), Politician and diplomat, he was appointed first High Commissioner of Palestine on July 1, 1920, a position he held for five years. In 1915, he had advocated a British protectorate in Palestine in order to make it a home for the Jewish people.

<sup>38</sup> National Archives, CAB 24/159/, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, February 17, 1923.

least in the short term. Instead, W. Churchill, who received the delegation, encouraged it to reach an agreement with the Zionist Organization.

In its willingness to find a solution that would combine the Zionist political objectives and the Arabs' rights, the British government did nevertheless work to found a legislative council and this was discussed through a correspondence between the Colonial Office, the Palestinian Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organization<sup>39</sup>. The Arab Palestinians rejected the proposal of a legislative council that would lack any decision-making role and would be confined to a consultative role. This correspondence shows that the Palestinian Arab Delegation was concerned by British policy and refused the separation of the populations proposed by British representatives. It regarded the Palestine question as a political question and refuted the assimilation of all Jews to Zionism. Furthermore, they criticised the administration of Palestine as a colony by an “ardent Zionist”<sup>40</sup>, whereas the League of Nations gave it a status of mandate. They also rejected the use of Hebrew as the official language for Palestine, as they considered it to be a tool used to settle the Zionists in Palestine and create irreversibility by reinforcing whatever national character they had. Condemning the attribution of a special status to the Zionist Organization – a public body for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine – they proposed to give the Zionists a share in representation, on a proportional basis. Instead, the delegation proposed to consider the people as a whole and as such to implement a policy that would safeguard the religious, economic and political rights of all the people of Palestine, to provide for the creation of a national independent government, to safeguard the legal rights of foreigners, to guarantee religious equality to all peoples, to guarantee the rights of minorities and to guarantee the rights of the Assisting Power<sup>41</sup>. Thus, they were making plans for an independent Palestine – as opposed to a unitary Syria – and proposed that the Jews be part of the people of Palestine in a united territory.

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<sup>39</sup> UNISPAL, Cmd. 1700, “Palestine. Correspondence with the Palestine Arab delegation and the Zionist Organisation”, June 1922.

<sup>40</sup> By using this phrase, the Arab Delegation was quoting a speech delivered on June 14<sup>th</sup> 1921 by the Colonial Secretary in the House of Commons.

<sup>41</sup> UNISPAL, Cmd. 1700, “Palestine. Correspondence with the Palestine Arab delegation and the Zionist Organisation”, June 1922.  
Al-Kayyali, Abdelwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian resistance against Great Britain and Zionism*, *op.cit.*, p.112.

The demands of the delegation were reiterated a number of times but were never taken into consideration, which made the delegation's members worried by what they called the growing "division and tension between the Arabs and the Zionists" which could only end up with the "extinction" of the Arabs of Palestine. They also condemned the partiality of the British government:

*"Therefore we see division and tension between Arabs and Zionists increasing day by day, resulting in general retrogression. Because the immigrants who are being dumped upon the country from different parts of the world are ignorant of the language, customs, and character of the Arabs, and enter Palestine by the might of England against the will of the people, they are convinced that they have come here to strangle them. Nature does not allow the creation of a spirit of co-operation between two peoples so different, and it is not to be expected that the Arabs would bow to such a great injustice, or that the Zionists would so easily succeed in realising their dreams. The fact is that His Majesty's Government has placed itself in the position of a partisan in Palestine of a certain policy, which the Arab cannot accept because it means his extinction sooner or later. Promises avail nothing when they are not supported by actions, and until we see a real practical change in the policy of His Majesty's Government, we must harbour the fear that the intention is to create a Jewish National Home, to the "disappearance or subordination of the Arabic population, language, and culture in Palestine"<sup>42</sup>.*

However, the British government had no intention of assuming a change of policy or abandoning the Balfour Declaration and it saw no contradiction between that commitment and ruling Palestine as a unit and all its inhabitants as Palestinians. Furthermore, to translate this spirit into action, it proposed to set a mixed legislative council<sup>43</sup>.

After spending one year in England trying to make their opinion heard, the delegation returned empty-handed to Palestine except for the White Paper. Unsatisfied with the developments, the Arab Muslim-Christian Association called for the fifth Palestinian Congress. This was the occasion to reject Churchill's White Paper. Moreover, the Congress decided to boycott the elections for a Legislative Council as well as the Rutenberg Project<sup>44</sup>, and to

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/159, "Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs", February 1923. Annex: "Telegram from Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer administering the Government of Palestine", June 29, 1922.

<sup>44</sup> The Rutenberg project or concession has been described by Sahar Huneidi as the largest and most politically controversial Zionist scheme during Samuel's period of office. Named after its designer, a

stop trade relations with the “Jews”<sup>45</sup>. These decisions would be reiterated during the following congress in June 1923. While the Churchill White Paper refuted the idea that the British government had promised a Jewish state, it also rejected the veracity of the pledges to the Arabs concerning Palestine. However, the pledges made to the Arabs and the Zionists continued to cause controversy among the British authorities.

The rest of the 1920s was almost quiet, however, existing tensions eventually burst to the surface in 1929 with riots and violent confrontations opening the way to a decade of further rebellion and revolt in Palestine.

As it appeared to the Arabs and especially the Arabs of Palestine that the British government would not revoke its promises made to the Zionist movement in the late 1910s and early 1920s, they started to organise to speak out against the Zionist programme, warning about the consequences of its implementation in Palestine. It however soon became clear that the Zionist movement wanted to establish a Jewish majority in Palestine, which was perceived as a threat to the Arab character of Palestine and to the Arabs' right to self-determination. By the early 1930s, the Arabs of Palestine eventually started envisaging political co-existence with the Jews in the form of a mixed legislative council as proposed by Britain. A proposition rejected by the Zionist movement, which was expanding its activities in Palestine.

### ***The Palestinian Arab Revolt***

In the early 1930s, the British authorities were willing to consider some of the Palestinians' demands and they were ready to limit Jewish immigration according to Palestine's capacity of economic absorption and to accept the principle of an internal autonomy, but this had to be under British supervision. They thus reiterated their proposal for the establishment of a mixed legislative council. The council would be made of twenty-eight members, with twelve

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Russian electrical engineer, the project originally envisaged hydro-electrification and irrigation of all of Palestine. Therefore, concessions were granted to Rutenberg who was supported by the Zionist Organisation who eventually was the one who would benefit from the concessions. Huneidi, Sahar, *A Broken trust, Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestinians*, London 2001, pp.205-208.

<sup>45</sup> Conclusions of the Fifth Arab Palestinian Congress, August 20, 1922, in Al-Kayyali, Abdelwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian resistance against Great Britain and Zionism*, op.cit., pp.55-56.

elected, eleven nominated and five from the British administration. Among the elected members, eight would be Muslims, one Christian and three Jews; the nominated members would comprise three Muslims, two Christians, four Jews, two businessmen and five British, but most importantly, the president of the council had to be a British person appointed in London<sup>46</sup>. After years of refusal, the Palestinian Arabs were ready to accept the principle of a legislative council. However, this time, the composition was far from being satisfactory to the Zionist Organization, which rejected it during its Lucerne Congress in 1935, on the grounds that Britain could not recognise the special status of the Jews and constitute a Legislative Council based on the actual ratio of population, which was in its majority Arab. To their Arab counterparts, however, they had been arguing that a legislative council was of no value without an understanding between them<sup>47</sup>. On the one hand, the Legislative Council was a stillborn project, being rejected by the British Parliament, and on the other hand, no alternative was to see the light, despite the discussion held between the Arab and Zionist leaders. Indeed, there was an argument of principle on the question of Jewish immigration, whilst the Arabs proposed it to be limited, the Zionist movement would not accept a minority position and rejected any plan the Arabs made them directly. For instance, in April 1936, Georges Antonius, then adviser to the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al Hussaini, proposed to Ben Gurion a scheme combining the “natural rights” of the Arabs of Palestine and the “cultural and religious rights” of the Jews. Moreover, the Jews would be entitled to settle on part of the coastal plains<sup>48</sup>. Other attempts on similar bases – undivided Palestine, Arab majority with a Jewish minority, equal civic rights etc. – were proposed without success. Actually, there was no chance of agreement between the Zionist movement, who made no secret of their goal that was the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine – Greater Palestine as their propositions included Transjordan – , and the Arabs who were totally against becoming a minority in their own country<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Bishara, Khader, *L'Europe et la Palestine. Des croisades à nos jours*, *op.cit.*, p.158.

<sup>47</sup> A.H. Cohen, Note of talk between M.Shertok and the Amir Abdallah, Amman, 11 July 1935, Document reproduced in Caplan, Neil, *Futile Diplomacy 2. Arab-Zionist negotiations and the end of the mandate*, London 1986, pp.204-205.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Khalidi, Kamal, *The Arab-Israeli conflict: what perspective?*, *op.cit.*, pp.30-31

<sup>49</sup> Examples of exchanges between Arab and Zionist leaders in the early 1930s were reproduced in Caplan, Neil, *Futile Diplomacy 2. Arab-Zionist negotiations and the end of the mandate*:

This was the context in which the Palestinian Arab Great Revolt emerged, and was also to re-introduce the Arab character of the Palestine Question as it would see the increasing implication of the newly established Arab governments' leaders<sup>50</sup>. The history of this episode has been analysed at length in numerous studies<sup>51</sup>. Apart from stating the general roots of the revolt, all the studies point back to the warfare organised, in November 1935, by a preacher, Izz al-din al-Qassam – who had participated in the struggle against the French mandate over Syria and had been condemned to death by the French colonial authorities which represented a turning point in Palestine<sup>52</sup>. Al-Qassam and his supporters were far from numerous, and they lacked support from the other Arab and Palestinian organisations. So, the guerilla action was harshly repressed and its leader was killed in an ambush, by the British<sup>53</sup>. The “great revolt” was then to start in April 1936 with the riots in Jaffa. The riots of Jaffa were repressed and emergency regulations and a curfew were imposed by force by the British troops which led to the formation of an Arab national committee that was to decree a popular general strike all over Palestine. When the clashes burst out in 1936, the revolt was led by the *fellahin* and the Arab Palestinian political movements did not have any other choice than to quickly join in and support the strikes by calling everyone to participate. The different existing political parties established in the early 1930s united and formed a new structure in April 1936, the AHC, under the leadership of Haj Amin al-Hussayni<sup>54</sup>. From then on, the diverse existing Palestinian associations

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M.Shertok, “Note of conversation between Dr H. Arlosoroff and Awni Abd al-Hadi, at the home of G. Agronsky”, 12 February 1932, pp.186-187; “Three accounts of meetings between D. Ben Gurion and Musa al-Alami”, March 1934, pp.189-192; “Two accounts of meeting between David Ben Gurion and Awni Abd al-Hadi”, July 18, 1934, pp.192-196;

<sup>50</sup> Smith, Charles D., *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. A history with documents, op.cit.*, p. 140; Kadi, Leila, *Arab Summit conferences and the Palestine problem (1936-1950) – (1964-1966)*, Beirut 1966, p.1.

<sup>51</sup> Read Laurens, Henry, *La Question de Palestine: Tome 2 - Une mission sacrée de civilisation (1922-1947)* V.2, Paris 2002; Morris, Benny, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999, op.cit.*; Kimmerling, Baruch and Migdal, Joseph S., *The Palestinian People: A History, op.cit.*

<sup>52</sup> Kanafani, Ghassan, “La révolte the 1936-1939 en Palestine”, published for the first time under the title “Thaourat 1936-39 fi Filestin” in *Chou'oun Filistiniyya* (6), January 1972. The version used here is the translation from the English version which was published by the Committee for Democratic Palestine, New York 1972. The electronic version is available at : [http://fcgk44.free.fr/img/Kanafani\\_La%20revolte.pdf](http://fcgk44.free.fr/img/Kanafani_La%20revolte.pdf), p 8. Al-Qassam was also opposed to the Palestinian notables, who he thought were too accommodating with the colonial powers.

<sup>53</sup> Since then on, Izz al-din al-Qassam has become a heroic figure of the Palestinian resistance (to the point that the Hamas movement named its armed branch of his name).

<sup>54</sup> Al-Kayyali, Abdulwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian Resistance against the UK and Zionism, op.cit.*, pp.378-379.

would call for and support the general strike, the AHC would even renew its call a few times. It tried to negotiate with the British authorities demanding the cessation of the land transfers from the Arab population to the incoming Jews as well as the end of Jewish immigration, but Britain refused any discussion as long as the revolt continued, and they set the end of the uprising as a condition for discussions. A condition that was taken on board by the Arab monarchs who believed the British would eventually “do justice to the Arab people”, probably by finally granting them independence<sup>55</sup>.

So, under British and Arab pressure, in October 1936, the AHC issued a manifesto calling off the strike in order to sort out things with Great Britain<sup>56</sup>. What ensued is that they refused to meet with the Royal Commission, considering that they already had given their vision of the Palestine question more than once, but that it had never been taken into account. The Arabs of Palestine would however – under Arab pressure – eventually agree to testify before the Commission in January 1937. In his intervention, the Mufti denounced British policy as the core cause of the Revolt: had not the British deprived the Arabs of Palestine of their right to self-determination in favour of Zionism?<sup>57</sup>

### ***Arab and Palestinian positions towards the partition plan of 1937***

When the news of the Royal Commission’s recommendations reached the Arabs, it found a united front of hostility to the partition plan. The Peel plan only hardened the revolt. And whilst, the Arabs consistently and constantly rejected any rupture of the national territorial unity and considered the proposal of partition as an attack on the Arabs' right of self-determination, they were conscious that they had to express it in a way that it could be taken into

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<sup>55</sup> UNISPAL, UA/AC.14/8, “Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian question communication from the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations”, October 2, 1947.

*“to call upon you to resolve for peace in order to save further shedding of blood. In doing this, we rely on the good intentions of our friend Great Britain, who has declared that she will do justice. You must be confident that we will continue our efforts to assist you”.*

<sup>56</sup> Al-Kayyali, Abdulwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian Resistance against the UK and Zionism, op.cit.*, p.454.

<sup>57</sup> Mattar, Philip, *The Mufti of Jerusalem: Al-Hajj Amin Al-Hussayni and the Palestinian National Movement*, New York 1998.



account by the British authorities. The opposition was expressed in the form of letters to the High Commissioner from villages, associations, *Ulemas* and notables<sup>58</sup>. In a formidable united effort, action was taken to have all the parties express the same hostility so even the Nashashibis party, which was not so hostile to the British, made its opposition public during a meeting of the party it led – the National Defense party – on the 11th July 1937<sup>59</sup>. Furthermore, two days after the publication of the report, the AHC sent an appeal to the Muslim and Arab leaders in the Middle East in order to gain their support. As a consequence, demonstrations were held in numerous Arab and Muslim countries and messages of support and condemnation of the British policy were sent from many countries including India<sup>60</sup>.

Most of the Arab countries were still subject to foreign rule, and their scope of action was thus limited. However, many Arab countries, including Iraq and Egypt, made their opposition to partition known through communications with the League of Nations in July 1937 and 1938 respectively<sup>61</sup>. Besides criticising the decision, they offered an alternative to the partition plan in the form of an Arab State including the Jews as a minority enjoying equal civil rights. King Ibn Saud may have made the most robust criticism of the British scheme in a confidential note he sent to the British government by the 6th of September 1937<sup>62</sup>. King Ibn Saud urged the British Government to change its policy's orientation, as it would only lead to more demonstrations of violence and ultimately to a conflict between the Arabs and the British, a conflict that he himself did not wish to happen. After stating the situation in Palestine and expressing that the question of Palestine was an Arab and Muslim question, he remarked that:

*“because we believe that the British Government had already fulfilled*

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<sup>58</sup> Al-Kayyali, Abdulwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian Resistance against the UK and Zionism*, Documents, *op.cit.*, pp.600-607.

<sup>59</sup> Klieman, Aaron, “In the public domain: the controversy over partition for Palestine”, *Jewish Social Studies* 42(2), 1980, pp.147-164.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*; Arab Higher Committee, “Telegram to the Arab Kings and Princes on the occasion of Britain's communiqué on Palestine's partition”, Jaffa, July 7, 1937, in Al-Kayyali, Abdulwahab (ed.), *Documents of the Arab Palestinian Resistance against the UK and Zionism*, *op.cit.*, p.601.

<sup>61</sup> Kadi, Leila, *Arab Summit conferences and the Palestine problem (1936-1950) – (1964-1966)*, p.7.

<sup>62</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/273, “King Ibn Saud's note to His Majesty's Government”, September 6, 1937, enclosed in Anthony Eden's memorandum to the Cabinet, November 1937.

It should be pointed out that King Ibn Saud had already expressed his rejection of partition to Sir Reader Bullard, the British envoy in Jeddah before the publication of the report.

*their promise to the Jews while partition robs the Arabs of their essential rights specially if we take into consideration what is called 'exchange of population' from the Jewish to the Arab Zone, which is nothing but an unprecedented clearing out of the Arabs from the Jewish Zone*<sup>63</sup>.

And followed his note with a proposal that could, according to him, end the conflict:

*"The Arab Zone has not got such a large number of Jews and the text of the Balfour Declaration far from speaking of the clearing out of the Arabs from their country, insisted that nothing should be done to prejudice their rights. It gives us great pleasure to suggest to Great Britain a fair and just solution acceptable to all those whom the question may concern. It is desired to bring about a final solution of the question on the following lines :—*

*(i) The establishment of a Constitutional Government in Palestine in which all the present population will be represented in the present ratio on a basis which will be agreed upon with sufficient guarantees for the protection of the Holy Places, allowing all a free access to them, for ensuring the right of minorities, for maintaining justice and for safeguarding the interests of Great Britain.*

*(ii) The regulation of Jewish immigration to maintain the present percentage, so that it will never be exceeded under any circumstances whatever.*

*(iii) The introduction of the necessary measures in connexion with the transfer of land, so that the Arabs cannot be deprived of their lands*<sup>64</sup>.

Such protestations by Arab leaders, especially by King Ibn Saud, and those sent by the British envoys and Ambassadors in Iraq and Jeddah were taken very seriously by the British Foreign Office, then led by Anthony Eden. This provoked a heated debate between the Foreign and the Colonial Offices as the latter supported the partition decision<sup>65</sup>.

The Arabisation of the Palestine Question, or the reintegration of the Palestine question in its regional context was to be consecrated during the Bludan (Syria) Conference. The Conference convened by Arab non-governmental representatives from September 8th to 10th, 1937 would provide a platform to discuss the question of Palestine and propose a solution and roadmap of

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<sup>63</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/273, "King Ibn Saud's note to His Majesty's Government", September 6, 1937, *op.cit.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> National Archives, CAB/24/273, "George William Rendell, Letter of November 8, 1937, from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office". Annex to the Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs".

George William Rendell was head of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, 1930-1938.

action<sup>66</sup>. The conference was presided by a former premier of Iraq and was attended by more than three hundred delegates from Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, Iraq, Egypt and Arabia<sup>67</sup>. It issued resolutions rejecting partition and reiterated a call to the Arab and Muslim leaders and heads of states<sup>68</sup>.

- *“Palestine is an integral part of the Arab countries.*
- *Palestine must not be divided nor must a Jewish state be created therein. Attempts to do either or both these things shall be resisted.*
- *The Act of Mandate and the Balfour Declaration must be abrogated and be replaced by a treaty between the Arabs and Great Britain on the Iraqi model.*
- *Jewish immigration must be stopped and sales of land to others than Arabs must be forbidden by law.*
- *The resolutions of the congress shall be communicated to the League of Nations and other interested parties”<sup>69</sup>.*

Arab determination was at its highest level, but so was British repression. Besides the arrests, the violent repression of the demonstrations and strikes, the British authorities were seeking to end the AHC's activities and launched a wave of arrests of the heads of the main political parties and movements, finally deciding the dissolution of the AHC<sup>70</sup>. The repression resulted in the decapitation of the Palestinian leadership whose members were either deported or imprisoned, with only a few able to leave for neighbouring countries, one of whom was Haj Amin al-Hussayni who flew to Lebanon. Palestine was then left without a proper political leadership.

Partition was impossible to implement, so was the conclusion of the (Woodhead) Commission in charge of the study of the technicalities of partition. Dialogue and reaching an agreement between the Zionists and the Arabs seemed just as impossible. There remained only one solution, ensuring

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<sup>66</sup> Kadi, Leila S., *Arab Summit conferences and the Palestine problem (1936-1950), (1964-1966)*, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> Were present: 119 Palestinians, 75 Syrians, 60 Lebanese, 35 Trans-Jordanians, 13 Iraqis, 4 Egyptians, and 1 Saudi.

<sup>68</sup> National Archives, FO371/20811 and E55515/22/31, cited in Aaron Klieman, “In the public domain: the controversy over partition for Palestine”, *op.cit.*; Kadi, Leila S., *Arab Summit Conferences and the Palestine Problem (1936-1950) (1964-1966)*, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>69</sup> In Keddourie, Elie, “The Bludan Congress on Palestine, September 1937”, *Middle Eastern Studies 17(1)*, Jan 1981, pp.107-125.

<sup>70</sup> Khalidi, Rashid, *The Iron Cage. The story of the Palestinian struggle for statehood*, *op.cit.*, pp.106-110.

better conditions for the continuation of the mandate, which was the control of immigration and the establishment within a few years of an Arab state comprising the Jewish National Home, this was the programme of the White Paper of 1939<sup>71</sup>. As we have seen, the White Paper raised an outcry among the Zionist movement, which from then on would focus on its cancellation by all possible means and further increased their demands: they would not demand a Jewish State on part of Palestine but on all of Palestine<sup>72</sup>.

For the Arabs of Palestine and the Arab States, there ought to be no Jewish State whether on all of Palestine or on part of it through a partition scheme. And although the White Paper was in a sense reassuring, the Zionist offensive, which materialised three years later with the Biltmore programme provoked another wave of protestations which did not cease to reach the mandate authorities and the United States, which had become the centre of Zionist attentions since the Biltmore Conference.

The 1940s saw the progressive accession to independence of the Arab countries and by 1944-1945, these independent States decided to establish an organisation to deal with common Arab issues. Palestine was naturally one of these issues and it was the subject of special dedication from the onset, it was the consecration of the official takeover of the Palestine Question by the Arab States<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> SEE the account of that episode and Arab reaction to the White Paper in Chapter II.

<sup>72</sup> This was the purpose of the Biltmore Conference and programme. See Chapter III.

<sup>73</sup> A special resolution concerning Palestine was adopted as one of the first measures in the Alexandria Protocol.

*“A. The Committee is of the opinion that Palestine constitutes an important part of the Arab World and that the rights of the Arabs in Palestine cannot be touched without prejudice to peace and stability in the Arab World.*

*The Committee also is of the opinion that the pledges binding the British Government and providing for the cessation of Jewish immigration, the preservation of Arab lands, and the achievement of independence for Palestine are permanent Arab rights whose prompt implementation would constitute a step toward the desired goal and toward the stabilization of peace and security.*

*The Committee declares its support of the cause of the Arabs of Palestine and its willingness to work for the achievement of their legitimate aims and the safeguarding of their Just rights.*

*The Committee also declares that it is second to none in regretting the woes which have been inflicted upon the Jews of Europe by European dictatorial states. But the question of these Jews should not be confused with Zionism, for there can be no greater injustice and aggression than solving the problem of the Jews of Europe by another injustice, i.e., by inflicting injustice on the Arabs of Palestine of various religions and denominations.*

*B. The special proposal concerning the participation Of the Arab Governments and peoples in the "Arab National Fund" to safeguard the lands of the Arabs of Palestine shall be referred to the committee of financial and economic affairs to examine it from all its angles and to submit the result of that examination to the Preliminary Committee in its next meeting.*

*In faith of which this protocol has been signed at Faruq I University at Alexandria on Saturday, Shawwal 20, 1363 (October 7, 1944)”.*

The Palestinian leadership crisis was accentuated with the dispersion of the AHC leaders and the members of the Arab League took the opportunity to designate a new leadership figure in the person of Musa al Alami, giving him the task of opening Arab offices to advocate the Arab case for Palestine. The Arab Office would play the role of Palestinian representative at least until the return of Haj Amin al-Hussayni from his exile. Reacting to the Zionist offensive, which had started with the maximalist Biltmore programme, the Arab League decided the boycott of “Jewish products”<sup>74</sup>.

In the mid-1930s, it appeared that the Zionist movement was seeking Jewish national sovereignty and would not content itself with a proportional – minority – presence in a Legislative Council. When the question of partition arose, the Arabs would fight it unanimously and even propose an alternative, which was the constitution of a democratic state. Once again, this was rejected by the Zionist movement, which had decided to go for partition to secure a Jewish State while internally communicating about a Jewish State in all of Palestine.

### **C. Palestinian Position towards the Anglo-American and the UN Peace Plans: reaffirming Palestine's independence as an Arab State**

#### ***Arguing against partition before the Anglo-American Committee***

As mentioned in Chapter II, during the war, the Zionist movement had intensified its pressure on the British and the American governments so that President Truman wrote to the British demanding a rise in the number of immigration certificates issued. As the Labour Party took over power in Great Britain, it also made a statement favourable to Zionism, which encouraged the

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The text of the Alexandria Protocol can be found on [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/alex.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/alex.asp); Bishara Khader, *L'Europe et la Palestine. Des croisades à nos jours*, *op.cit.*, p.176; and in Henry Laurens, *L'Orient arabe*, *op.cit.*, p.321.

<sup>74</sup> Khader, Bishara, *L'Europe et la Palestine*, *op.cit.*, p.177.

latter to continue their lobbying and actions of protest against the White Paper and to call, once and for all, for the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. By 1945, the British government and the United States decided to constitute a common investigation commission to elaborate a peace plan with a view of finding a final solution to the Palestine Question. Fearing that the Commission would advocate partition, the Palestinians first called for a boycott of the Anglo-American Commission<sup>75</sup>. However, the AHC finally decided on the eve of the Commission's arrival in Jerusalem to appear before it<sup>76</sup>. So, four Palestinians were to testify: Jamal al-Hussayni for the AHC, Awni Abd al-Hadi for the Arab Higher Front and Ahmad Shuqayri and Albert Hourani for the Arab Office<sup>77</sup>.

The positions may be summed up as follows: first, the Palestine Question was independent from the question of the Jewish refugees, which was an international problem and had to be dealt as such; second, an independent Arab State had to be created in Palestine where all the inhabitants could enjoy equal civil rights. Given that, it was out of the question to consider any Jewish State in Palestine.

The most sound and powerful argument was probably given by Albert Hourani, who was later to become the Head of the Arab Office in London<sup>78</sup>. The value of Hourani's testimony lies in his analysis of the situation and the proposed solutions, the partition proposal and the bi-national proposal (made by Judah Magnes and which we will see in further details in Chapter V) as well as the maintenance of the *status quo*, or the continuation of a Zionist oriented policy. The object of this chapter being to review Palestinian position towards partition, I will not comment in length on the position on bi-nationalism. Rather, it will be the subject of a part in the next chapter.

Expressing the views of the Arab Office, but more generally of the Arab League (which created the Office and the AHC with which arguments were

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<sup>75</sup> Qaddoura, Jamal Muhammad, *The Palestine Question and the Inquiry Commissions: 1937-1947*, Beirut 1993, pp. 140-141. (Arabic)

<sup>76</sup> Khalidi, Walid, "On Albert Hourani, the Arab Office and the Anglo-American Committee of 1946", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35(1), Autumn 2005, pp.60-79.

Actually, the AHC could not reach a position since its leaders were dispersed and could not meet. However, Jamal al-Husseini was released just in time, allowing the AHC to meet and make an official decision on whether or not to boycott the Commission.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Arab Office, "The Arab case for Palestine: evidence submitted by the Arab Office to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, Jerusalem March 1946.

discussed<sup>79</sup>), Hourani described partition as a policy that could “bring down in ruins the whole political structure of the Middle East” and the analysis he gave of partition sounds somehow really topical.

*“it is clear that the establishment of a Jewish State in part of Palestine would not satisfy the great majority of Zionists that want political domination over the whole of Palestine, at least. If they obtain a state in part of Palestine, they would be tempted to use it as the first step to pressing further claims. The establishment of a Jewish State in part of Palestine would not satisfy them, but would strengthen their position and encourage them to ask for more. That, on the one hand. On the other hand, even if they accepted partition in the first place, there are factors at work which would draw them, sooner or later (and probably sooner) into inevitable conflict with the surrounding Arab world. There is a dynamic force in Zionism which, unless it is checked now, will lead them on to destruction. They will be forced into conflict with the Arab world by various factors – by the need to deal with their own Arab minority, which would not consent willingly to become the subjects of a Jewish State and which would rise and protest, and whose protest would be aided actively by surrounding Arab countries”<sup>80</sup>.*

Rejecting the partition of Palestine, the Arab Office and the AHC also rejected bi-nationalism – on principle but also for strategic reasons – as well as the continuation of the *status quo*. As a matter of fact, the Arab Office considered that maintaining the ongoing policy and releasing immigration certificates for the Jewish refugees would only give a clear signal to the Zionists that they could pursue violence to secure dominance over Palestine. Hourani reminded his counterparts of the objectives of the Zionist movement and that its leaders would stop at nothing to achieve their goals.

*“The Arabs are bound to remember that in the past few years responsible Zionists have talked seriously about the evacuation of the Arab population, or part of it, to other parts of the Arab world. [...] Again it must be emphasized that what the Zionists want is a state, political domination, and they are therefore prepared to do anything to get it. Everything else is political strategy. Thus in the past they used the method of economic absorptive capacity in order to obtain immigration, and thus they will use the democratic argument if possible. If they can obtain a state by way of having a majority, that might seem simpler and it would enable them to justify their action in the eyes of the British and the American public. But if they cannot obtain a state and political domination by way of having a majority,*

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<sup>79</sup> Khalidi, Walid, “On Albert Hourani, the Arab Office and the Anglo-American Committee of 1946”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35(1), Autumn 2005, pp.60-79.

<sup>80</sup> “The Arab case for Palestine: evidence submitted by the Arab Office to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, Jerusalem, March 1946.

*they will try to obtain it in some other way, either by violence or by securing an artificial domination supported from outside”.*

For all these reasons, there could be no maintenance of the *status quo*. Moreover, the problem of the Jewish refugees could not be solved in the frame of the Palestine question and the burden of the re-homing of the refugees could not be imposed on the Arabs in Palestine. These were particular questions and required particular solutions.

What was proposed was the same as had been proposed during the London Round Table Conference that had led to the issuance of the 1939 White Paper, i.e. an Arab State within which the Jews would be accepted as equal citizens. However, the Jews had to acknowledge the fact that they would be in Palestine by Arab goodwill.

### ***The last attempts to prevent partition: from the London Conference to UNSCOP***

The conclusions of the Commission were awaited with impatience and when the recommendations were made public, the AHC rejected them as they were in contradiction with the “natural rights” of the Arabs of Palestine and it deprived them from their right to self-determination<sup>81</sup>. The Anglo-American Committee did indeed reject both national claims and stated that Palestine ought to be neither Arab nor Jewish. By doing so, the Committee *de facto* rejected the partition of Palestine.

The heads of the Arab States were convened to a meeting in Egypt to discuss the plan on May 28, 1946, the meeting served as a platform for announcing Arab rejection of the plan and of any attempt to overthrow the 1939 White Paper, notably the immigration limitation clause<sup>82</sup>. The position was further brought during the Bludan Conference in June 1946. The conclusions reiterated the rejection of the Anglo-American plan, called for negotiations with the British Government in view of ending the current situation in Palestine,

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<sup>81</sup> Qaddoura, Jamal Muhammad, *The Palestine Question and the Inquiry Commissions: 1937-1947*, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>82</sup> Kadi, Leila S., *Arab Summit conferences and the Palestine problem (1936-1950), (1964-1966)*, *op.cit.*, p. 26-27.



rejected any partition plan, and called for the boycott of Zionist products and activities<sup>83</sup>.

The Arab plan was presented to the British during the London Conference in September 1946, it could be summed up as follows:

- *the end of the British mandate and the announcement of the independence of Palestine as a Unitarian state*
- *the establishment of a democratic government in agreement with the constitution written by an elected constituent assembly (which presupposed the organisation of elections)*
- *the guarantee of essential rights to the Jews as a minority community*
- *the immediate cessation of Jewish immigration and the submission of the questions linked with immigration to the new government of Palestine*
- *the conclusion of an alliance between independent Palestine and Great Britain*
- *the guarantee to access the holy places*<sup>84</sup>.

These propositions were indeed totally incompatible with the Zionist proposals, as the latter would not consent to anything other than a Jewish State. This made the British deliberation very complex all the more as it was subject to American pressure<sup>85</sup>.

The British government failed to find a solution with both Jews and Arab and as a consequence, the British finally decided to refer to the United Nations for a final solution to the Palestine Question.

As soon as the British announced that they would bring the Question of Palestine to the United Nations, the Council of the Arab League gathered to discuss the Palestine issue and their response to the British move. The Arabs had repeatedly during the last decades announced their opposition to the Zionism and its objectives as well as to the British mandate. They had done their best to convince the Anglo-American Committee but had failed to obtain a

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<sup>83</sup> Kadi, Leila S., *Arab Summit conferences and the Palestine problem (1936-1950), (1964-1966)*, *op.cit.*, p. 29-30.

<sup>84</sup> National Archives, CAB/129/16, "Palestine – Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs", January 13, 1947; H. Levenberg, "Bevin's disillusionment, the London conference, Autumn 1946", *Middle Eastern Studies* 27(4), October 1991, pp.615-630.

<sup>85</sup> President Truman called for further immigration into Palestine during the Round Table Conference which was received as an act of sabotage by the Arabs but also by the British who sincerely hoped they could avoid partition. See Chapter II for a more lengthy account of this episode.

settlement that would meet their demands. So, now, they felt that the recourse to the United Nations was once again a measure that proved the unwillingness of the Great Powers to hear their case and that it would only lead to a resolution of the question without them. They considered that there was no use to go to the United Nations unless it was in order to proclaim the independence of Palestine<sup>86</sup>. This is the content of a memo signed by the representatives of five Arab States sent to the United Nations General Assembly before the meeting that would eventually decide the appointment of the UNSCOP<sup>87</sup>. However, their demand to end the mandate and recognise Palestine as an independent Arab State was outvoted and a decision to send yet another Enquiry Commission under the aegis of the United Nations with the purpose of finding a solution to the Palestine Question was made.

The United Nations were once again rejecting Arab demands, so, the AHC decided to boycott the commission and organised demonstrations to greet it. After hearing the Zionists leaders and movements, the Commission eventually decided that it could not decide of the fate of Palestine without at least hearing the Arabs' point of view. For that purpose, it entered into contacts with the Arab diplomatic representations in Jerusalem<sup>88</sup>. The case for Palestine then lay in the hands of the Arab States and the Arab League.

By August 1947, one month before the commission's debates, the Arab Office would publish a booklet examining in details the various aspects of the Palestine Question and presenting once again the positions of the Arabs of Palestine and elsewhere on the future of Palestine<sup>89</sup>. The British mandate and its support of Zionism had led to the separation of Palestine from its Arab neighbours and environment but it had also denied the Arabs of Palestine their right to self-determination.

The text quoted to a large degree the content of the testimonies presented to the Anglo-American Committee and reiterated its rejection of partition, the continuation of the *status quo* and of any scheme involving federation or bi-nationalism.

To the rejection of principle of the partition of Palestine, the report added the

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<sup>86</sup> Kadi, Leila S., *Arab Summit conferences and the Palestine problem (1936-1950), (1964-1966)*, *op.cit.*, p. 38-39.

<sup>87</sup> Khader, Bishara, *L'Europe et la Palestine: des croisades à nos jours*, *op.cit.*, p. 188.

<sup>88</sup> Pappé, Ilan, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli conflict, 1947-1951*, London 2006, pp.23-24.

<sup>89</sup> Arab Office, *The Future of Palestine*, London 1947 (August), Preface by Musa al-Alami.

practical problems that partition would introduce, notably with regard to demography. Indeed, the intermingling of both populations in some parts of the country was such that it would require a transfer of the Arab population from the Jewish state to the Arab state in order to match the Jewish Agency's requirements for a Jewish State<sup>90</sup>.

Moreover, the lands mentioned for the Arab State were poor agricultural lands and above all, far from the economic centre that the Arabs had participated in developing. The territory destined to become part of the Arab State was already overpopulated and allowed for no economic growth. Economic growth already made difficult by the artificial redrawing of the Middle East. Partitioning Palestine would cause even more difficulties.

Above all, the report pointed out the fact that partition could not be a solution either in the short or in the long term. Far from that, it predicted a “permanent state of war”, to finally conclude that:

*“the existence of one undifferentiated community within the framework of a common state is far more likely to bring about an eventual solution of the problem of Palestine than the perpetuation of differences by the establishment of separate communities or states”<sup>91</sup>.*

Instead of separation and partition, the Arab Office reminded that the Arabs had proposed on numerous occasions the establishment of a unitary state. They now proposed it to be Unitarian and “democratic government representative of all Palestinian citizens on a level of absolute individual equality”<sup>92</sup>.

#### **D. The All-Palestine Government\*, the first attempt of a government in exile**

After almost three decades of permanent struggle for the advent of an undivided and independent Arab State in Palestine, the Palestinian Arabs were facing an unstoppable international machinery that had decided in spite

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.70-77.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.77.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

\* Also cited as the Government of All-Palestine.

of them, the partition of their country.

The decision of the UNSCOP created a state of chaos in Palestine where clashes burst out between the Zionist militias and Palestinian volunteers. The fights were followed by expulsion and within a few months Palestine was totally redrawn. From a country with an Arab majority, to one with a Jewish majority.

When the British had announced in September 1947, that they gave up their mandate to the United Nations and they would leave Palestine, Amin al-Hussayni – in the name of the newly re-established AHC<sup>93</sup> – had proposed to the Arab states to help him form a “shadow government” whose aim would be to prepare for the period that would follow the departure of the British<sup>94</sup>. However, no Arab leader – refusing to give more power to the mufti – answered positively to that proposition so that when the British left, the Palestinians unlike the Zionists had no tools to face the consequences of the United Nations' decision.

On 22 September 1948, however, Haj Amin al-Hussayni, announced the independence of the state of Palestine and the constitution of its government under the name of the 'All-Palestine Government'<sup>95</sup>. Although he had lost most of his credibility, Haj Amin al-Hussayni was backed in his decision by the Arab League and particularly Egypt, which feared the expansionist aims of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and preferred to support at least verbally, the AHC<sup>96</sup>. The Kingdom of Jordan, which was the only Arab country to refuse to recognise the All-Palestine Government, intended to annex the West Bank and for that purpose, it set up conferences in Amman and Jericho. Discovering the

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<sup>93</sup> The Arab Higher Committee which had been recognised as the representative of the Arab Palestinians during the Great Arab Revolt in 1936-1939 was dispersed and its most notable leader, Haj Amin al-Hussayni who had been allied to Germany during World War II had spent some time in France, before moving from one Arab country to another. During the war, Haj Amin al-Hussayni had been to Germany with other members of the Committee and during his absence, they were replaced by other Palestinian figures linked with the Arab regimes and especially with the Hashemite kingdom which also had views on Palestine as the secret negotiations between King Abdallah and Golda Meyer show. From then on, existed two official directions of the Palestinian national movement, on the one hand, the Arab Higher Committee led by Amin al-Hussayni and after by Jamal al-Hussayni, on the other hand, the National Authority, led by Raghib al-Nashashibi and supported by the Hashemites. But as we have seen, there was also the Arab Office, led by Mula al-Alami, which was sanctioned by the Arab League and enjoyed an entente with the AHC.

<sup>94</sup> Shlaim, Avi, “The rise and fall of the All-Palestine government in Gaza”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 20(1), Autumn 1990, pp. 37-53.

<sup>95</sup> An announcement was cabled on September 28, 1948 by Ahmad Hili Pasha, the Premier and Acting Secretary of the All Palestine Government to the United Nations. The statement is available on UNISPAL.

<sup>96</sup> Shlaim, Avi, “The rise and fall of the All-Palestine government in Gaza”, *op.cit.*, pp. 37-53.

Jordanian decision, the Head of the Egyptian Royal Cabinet summoned all the Arab representatives and gave them a message from the King Farouq in which he stated:

*“The King has received reports to the effect that a conference has been held in Jericho attended by the refugees, who decided to request that Palestine be annexed to the Kingdom of Jordan... Those who attended the conference were a minority in comparison with the total number of the Arabs of Palestine, who are dispersed throughout the Arab countries, and those who are still in Palestine, and they are in no position to express their views as they wish in full freedom”<sup>97</sup>.*

Nevertheless, Jordan indeed annexed the West Bank by April 1950 and the Arab leaders could do little but make statements and threaten to expel Jordan from the League, or state that there was still the aim of “maintaining the pre-aggression entity of Palestine”<sup>98</sup>.

This Government of All-Palestine, which was to have its base in Gaza, was composed in October 1948, it had Haj Amin al-Hussayni as president and Ahmad Hilmi Abdul Baqi as prime minister. The latter did indeed represent the Palestinian people within the Arab League council in its session of October 30, 1948 and until his death in 1963<sup>99</sup>. However, this government was more a symbolic one than anything else, since on the one hand, Israel was already established and recognised, and the people of Palestine were still being expelled from the country and, on the other hand, it had no material and human resources – as it could not rally the resistance – to set up any concrete policies<sup>100</sup>. It continued to exist, even though progressively losing importance, until the death of Ahmad Hilmi Abdul Baqi, which was the occasion to definitively bury the Government of All-Palestine.

The Government of All-Palestine had been the first attempt of a Palestinian government, however, it was little more than a symbolic protest against the partition of Palestine by reaffirming in title the everlasting unity of the land of Palestine. Besides, it had neither the territory nor a united population to govern.

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<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Muhammad Izza Darwaza, *Al Qadiya al Filistiniya fi Mukhtalef Marahiliha*, part II, Beirut 1960, p. 210, reproduced in Issa I-Shuaibi, “The development of Palestinian Entity consciousness”, Part I, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 9(1), Autumn 1979, pp. 67-84.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Al-Shuaibi, Issa, “The development of Palestinian Entity consciousness, part I”, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-84.

<sup>100</sup> Read Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: from peasants to revolutionaries*, London 1979.

## E. Conclusion

Arab and especially Palestinian perspectives on partition have been rather consistent throughout the years and decades from the 1910s to the Nakba, the rejection was indeed unanimous. However, the mandate period with the British rule on the one hand and Britain's Zionist protégés on the other hand got the better of the Arabs who had eventually to turn to Wattaniyya as the only way to lead their independence and liberation struggles and protect their countries. This was a pragmatic move as stressed by Musa Kazem al-Hussayni however, it opened the door to future partition schemes. Thus, when the Arabs accepted the first partition, the partition of the Arab territories previously under Ottoman rule this was as a default position. They indeed, considered it would be a temporary situation, one that would be overcome once they would have freed themselves from western rule and its protégé, the Zionist movement.

Equally consistent if not more in their rejection of British rule over Palestine and Zionism that had brought partition into the Middle East, the Arabs and especially the Arabs of Palestine would not cease to notify their decisions through petitions and riots, in vain. What the British administration was ready to offer, that is a mixed legislative council under control of the British administration and an autonomous Jewish community could not be regarded as an option by the Palestinians. Palestine was part of Greater Syria and as such whilst the Palestinians could not reverse the partition at the moment, they wished to install an Arab government, and they were ready to consider the Jews as part of the Arab Palestinian people and grant them a proportional representation as a minority, this was their vision of a united Palestine. However, the Zionist leadership has moved passed that point and rejected all propositions that did not include Jewish sovereignty, an objective shared with a few allies within the British government.

When partition was first proposed by the British government, the Palestinians but also the other Arabs organised in a joint effort to express once again Arab rejection of any rupture of the national territorial unity and of Zionism<sup>101</sup>. Moreover, they considered the proposal of partition as an attack on

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<sup>101</sup> National Archives, FO371/20811 and E55515/22/31, cited in Aaron Klieman, "In the public domain:

the Arabs' right of self-determination, and the Arabs wanted to determine themselves in an independent Arab State... So, they continued to propose unitarian schemes combining the “natural rights” of the Arabs of Palestine and the “cultural and religious rights” of the Jews<sup>102</sup>.

Their positions were to be expressed again at the occasion of the London Conferences for Palestine, the Anglo-American Inquiry commission and ultimately the UNSCOP commission. The Arab positions may be summed up as follows: first, the Palestine Question was independent from the question of the Jewish refugees, which was an international problem and had to be dealt as such; second, an independent Arab State had to be created in Palestine where all the inhabitants could enjoy equal civil rights. Given that, it was out of the question to consider any Jewish State in Palestine.

This was further developed, as we have seen, by Albert Hourani who offered an insightful analysis of Zionism. Hourani foresaw that partition was only a step in the Zionist programme moreover, and he was convinced that even if the Zionist organisation was really after a Jewish State only on part of Palestine, it would sooner or later enter into conflict with the Arabs<sup>103</sup>. So, partition would reveal itself not at all a solution device but the beginning of a non-ending conflict.

Instead, the Arabs reiterated their propositions for an independent Palestinian democratic State that would guarantee the “essential rights to the Jews as a minority community”<sup>104</sup>.

The incompatibility of Arab and Zionist claims were such that Britain rendered its mandate to the United Nations which under the influence of the Jewish Agency and the United States eventually recommended partition.

However, even then, the Palestinians continued to reject partition and in a desperate attempt to counter it, the AHC in the person of Haj Amin al Hussayni proclaimed the Government of All Palestine as if to ward off partition. This

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the controversy over partition for Palestine”, *op.cit.*; Kadi, Leila S., *Arab Summit Conferences and the Palestine Problem (1936-1950) (1964-1966)*, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>102</sup> Al-Khalidi, Kamal, *The Arab-Israeli conflict: what perspective?*, *op.cit.*, pp.30-31

<sup>103</sup> “The Arab case for Palestine: evidence submitted by the Arab Office to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, Jerusalem, March 1946.

<sup>104</sup> National Archives, CAB/129/16, “Palestine – Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”, January 13, 1947; H. Levenberg, “Bevin's disillusionment, the London conference, Autumn 1946”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 27(4), October 1991, pp.615-630.

being in reaction rather than in proposition of an alternative, it did not offer any common vision or any unitarian programme.





## Chapter Five: The Bi-Nationalist Option, 1918-1967

From the 1900s, the Zionist movement developed a number of Jewish institutions in Palestine and established Kibbutzim where they advocated Jewish labour only. Thus, by the early 1920s, there were already two separate communities in Palestine. This separation was sanctioned by the British authorities, which enabled the Zionist movement to create “a state within the state”, and to have its own recognised representatives in the Zionist Organization. All these developments favoured the emergence within the Zionist movement of a mainstream trend aiming at the establishment of a Jewish majority in Palestine and later a Jewish Commonwealth/State.

However, a Jewish majority and a Jewish state were not the aims of all Zionists, a minority amongst whom advocated bi-nationalism as a means of reaching an understanding with the Arabs. The latter were aware of the separatist intentions of the Zionist leadership and warned against the repercussions of such a policy on the relation with the Arabs, but also with the British administration.

Bi-nationalist thought was originally developed by a group of intellectuals, mostly from Eastern Europe – although other far less known initiatives would later briefly appear that would include Sephardic Jews – who advocated a return to Judaism. They were also Zionists and as such, their aim was the creation of a Jewish Homeland, however, they considered “the Arab question” or the relation with the Arab as the touchstone of Zionism. Refusing the separation between the Jews and the Arabs, they rejected the dialectics of majority/minority and were convinced that the stated will of the Zionist movement to establish a Jewish majority in Palestine could only antagonise the Arabs. They considered the first partition proposal as a consequence of Zionist maximalist policy and they would slowly transform their “philosophy” into a political programme. From then on, they would do their best to prevent partition, but also the establishment of a Jewish or an Arab State, seeking rather a bi-national society integrated in its Arab environment. They were joined in this aim by other organisations from the Zionist left wing – such as the

prominent Hashomer Hatzair.

Blaming the Zionist movement for sabotaging the relations with the Arab population in calling for a Jewish majority, the bi-nationalists, as we will see, were often seen as traitors and were at the centre of continuous controversy.

This chapter examines the bi-national idea as it was developed by the advocates of spiritual Zionism, that is an anti-separatist and anti-partinionist ideology, the programmes that emerged from it as well as their reception among the Arabs of Palestine.

First, I will review the origins of bi-nationalism, which are to be found within the spiritual trend of Zionism. Spiritual Zionism provided the theoretical framework for bi-national thought and its anti-separatist, anti-partitionist component, a framework that I will review in the second part of this chapter. Then, I will look into the concrete propositions that came from the bi-nationalist framework, through contacts with the Arabs, the reactions and the alternative propositions elaborated in the aftermath of the first partition proposal.

However, as we will see, their action would be drastically diminished and receive less attention as it was perceived as obsolete after 1948.

Finally, and before concluding by sharing the major criticisms of the bi-national movement, I will inspect the Arab response to bi-nationalism.

## **A. Dissent among Zionism: spirituality and bi-national thought**

### ***Birth of bi-national thought***

If Zionism was a minority movement, it was also heterogeneous. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a few Jewish Zionist intellectuals, essentially from Germany and central Europe, advocated a bi-national solution for Palestine. To understand their position, it is important, first, to state that their Zionism was a spiritual one, which they inherited from the Russian journalist Ahad Haam<sup>1</sup>. He was a thinker on spiritual Zionism and became the mentor of many of the bi-

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<sup>1</sup> Ahad Haam, literally “one of the people”, was the pseudonym of Asher Ginsberg was born in Russia in 1856 and died in Palestine in 1927. He was an essayist and one of the thinkers of cultural Zionism.

nationalists. Their political and spiritual engagement were inspired by their understanding of his writings and philosophy.

Ahad Haam saw Zionism as a tool for the cultural and spiritual revival of the Jews, and this is the path they chose to follow when embracing bi-national thought. For them bi-nationalism, was the only way to link the values inherent to Judaism and nationalism. For them, Zionism had to avoid imitating European nationalisms, seen as aggressive and imperialist.

For them, whilst Zionism was a solution to the crisis of the liberal Jewish culture; it could not be the solution to what had been identified as the 'Jewish problem'. That problem could not be solved by the creation of a Jewish state but by the revival of the Jewish culture and the re-emergence of Jewish identity. In that configuration, the role of Palestine was to provide a spiritual centre in which to develop Jewish identity through culture and religion and from which it would be spread around the world to enlighten the Diaspora and other peoples.

These intellectuals would form the central group or the core of the bi-nationalist associations in the *Yishuv*. Among them, we find the economist and Zionist leader Arthur Ruppin, the philosopher and theologian Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, the historian of Kabbala and messianism Hans Kohn, a philosopher and historian who was to provide a noted study on nationalism, and Samuel Hugo Bergmann, a philosopher<sup>2</sup>. The liberal Rabbi, Judah Magnes, who joined them in their thinking and demands, was not a member – for reasons we will see in the next section – of the first group they formed in 1925, which they called *Brit Shalom* (Peace Covenant). Within *Brit Shalom*, they argued for coexistence with the Arabs, the creation of a bi-national society and the integration of the Jews into the Near East<sup>3</sup>. The group numbered at its peak 200 members, mostly intellectuals from Europe<sup>4</sup>. They criticised nationalism as it was developing in the west and dreamt of a new, "pure and pacifist" nationalism, a model for other nations. The basis of their thought resided in their Judaism, and even if they were non-orthodox or non-practising Jews, they all referred to Jewish spirituality. Their vision of the dangers of

<sup>2</sup> Ratzabi, Shalom, *Between Zionism and Judaism. The radical circle in Brith Shalom*, Boston & Leiden 2002, p.22.

<sup>3</sup> The charter of the association is available in Paul Mendes Flohr (ed.), Buber, Martin, *Une terre et deux peuples*, *op.cit.* pp.103-104.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Laurens, *La Question de Palestine. Une mission sacrée de civilisation*, Paris 2002, p.185.

Zionism even caused them allegations of treason.

The members of *Brit Shalom* and their sympathisers evolved around the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, which was founded by Judah Leon Magnes, one of the most active bi-nationalists, in the mid-1920s. In itself, the Hebrew University materialises the contradictions in their thought.

The main elements of their thought, as we will see, were the values of Judaism, nationalism, opposition to the negation of exile and criticism of the Messianism inherent in Zionism<sup>5</sup>.

### ***Moral and pacifism versus pragmatism***

Scholars have constantly questioned their motivations, whether they were sincere and advocated their solutions for moral reasons (morally linked to the value they defended), or whether they were animated by pragmatism and realism (being in a minority position, they could not hope for more). To understand the motivations of these men, one should keep in mind the context in which *Brit Shalom* was founded. Indeed, before focusing on the intellectual origin of its members and their political and philosophical considerations, one should point out that the association was officially established the same year the revisionist party was created. The revisionist party, a right wing party led by Zeev Jabotinsky<sup>6</sup>, advocated the establishment of a Jewish state on the two banks of the Jordan river (comprising Palestine and Transjordan) and while it was indeed, the instigator of the Iron Wall policy, it was also one of the rare to acknowledge the presence of the Arabs and recognise them a national feeling. Contrary to the revisionist party but also to most of the Zionist leaders, the members of the association had in mind the internal threats of Zionism and they wanted to convince the Zionist leadership of the need to imagine Palestine as a two-people land.

First, it is clear that values played a prominent role in their political approach.

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<sup>5</sup> This is particularly developed in Raz-Krakotzkin, Amnon, *Exil et Souveraineté. Judaïsme, Sionisme et pensée binationale, op.cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Zeev Jabotinsky (born Vladimir Yevgenyevich Zhabotinsky) (1880-1940), Leader of the Zionist Organisation's right wing author of the maximalist Zionist claim of a Jewish State on the two banks of the Jordan river (Palestine and Transjordan). He is the founder of the fascist inspired revisionist party.

As is underlined in Shalom Ratzabi's study<sup>7</sup>, the founders and theoreticians of the bi-national thought were born and raised in a Germanic context and, most of them, had studied in German Universities, and as such, they had developed the position that ideas were superior to reality: values should be determined by their relation to actions in reality. This did not prevent them from having different motivations and objectives. Their relation to Judaism and its system of values partly explains that debate. If they were not practising Jews, they all advocated spiritual Zionism.

Then, *Brit Shalom* developed an attitude of pacifism. However, there was a constant antagonism within the association, between “real pacifism” and tactics or pragmatism. This antagonism and its opaque positions were a matter of concern for personalities such as Judah Magnes. The latter, contrary to many of his colleagues and to the mainstream Zionists, appealed for a “deep theory of pacifism”, not only in Palestine for the Jews and the Arabs, but all around the world and for every people<sup>8</sup>. This corresponded to his personal trajectory as a pacifist during the First World War, when he approved the “neutrality” of the United States. Magnes said that antagonism was the principal cause of his non-adherence to *Brit Shalom*, in spite of his positive view of the association and its goals. He felt that the members of *Brit Shalom* were not inhabited by a “real and strong pacifist” nature<sup>9</sup>. He cited Arthur Ruppin, one of its members who he thought adhered to bi-nationalism and to Arab-Jewish cooperation because of “tactical” reasons<sup>10</sup>. It should be pointed out that this remark by Magnes was revealed as true when, after the riots and the revolt of 1936, Ruppin showed some doubts and even lost faith in an agreement, also when we learn that Gershom Scholem started to criticise the movement after the 1929 riots and adhered to mainstream Zionism in the early 1930s.

Nevertheless, the movement was not divided between two trends perfectly espousing the lines of pragmatism or pacifism as a moral trait. And, most of the time pragmatism and the values they advocated were intermingling rather than

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<sup>7</sup> Ratzabi, Shalom, *Between Zionism and Judaism. The radical circle in Brith Shalom*, *op.cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Magnes, Judah Leon, 'Brit Shalom', in Goren, Arthur (ed.), *Dissenter in Zion. From the writing of Judah Leib Magnes*, Cambridge 1982, pp. 272-273.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Magnes, Judah Leon, “Journal note, 'Brit Shalom'”, September 14, 1928, in Goren, Arthur, *Dissenter in Zion*, *op.cit.*, pp. 272-273.

competing<sup>11</sup>.

## **B. Bi-nationalism: Theoretical framework**

Though themselves members of the Zionist movement, the bi-nationalists did not agree with all its analyses and postulates. First, they developed a strong criticism of messianism, accompanied by similar criticism of the negation of the Diaspora. Second, contrary to mainstream Zionists, they considered the Arab question as part of the “Jewish question” and last but not least, they strongly criticised nationalism, which they thought might strike a blow to Zionism.

### ***Criticism of political messianism***

As underlined by Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Zionist experience raised from the very beginning many problems for practising Jews who had found themselves unable to accept the notion of the “return” of the Jews to Israel before the return of the Messiah. Thus, on a metaphysical level, exile is not ended with the creation of the Jewish state. Indeed, exile is a major constituent of Jewish identity and is supposed to have a therapeutic function, which Zionism endangers in claiming the return to “Eretz Israel”, as only God is able to put an end to exile. This particular criticism was of course prevalent among the orthodox Jews such as the *Haredim*, who were not at all comfortable with the use the Zionists made of the Torah and the concept of the Promised Land<sup>12</sup>.

Following their mentor, Ahad Haam, who had noticed from the first Zionist congress that messianism was inherent to Zionist thought, the members of *Brit Shalom* feared messianism, considering a religious interpretation of Zionism as dangerous, and believing that redemption had to come “through the prophets and not the diplomats”. Furthermore, why create another state, which at its

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<sup>11</sup> Ratzabi, Shalom, *Between Zionism and Judaism*, *op.cit.*, p. 131

<sup>12</sup> Rabkin, Yakov, *L'opposition juive au sionisme*, Quebec 2004, p. 90.

best would resemble a Balkan country, thus endangering the future of all the Jewish people? They considered Zionism as another messianic movement, but one which might be more dangerous; unlike all the other messianic movements that had shown up in history, this one did not present itself as a religious movement but a political one using the religious concepts of return and redemption (in this case, national redemption).

Being Jews – though not practising they believed in the tradition of Judaism – they had conflicting feelings about the conscience and the meaning of “being a Jew” and a constant fear of accelerating redemption. So, even if they adhered to Zionism, the bi-nationalists took their ideas and values from the Jewish tradition, which explains their position towards exile.

### ***Negation of Exile***

The analysis of the discourse on the negation of exile among the mainstream Zionists and the counter-discourse advanced by the bi-nationalists, is in many ways crucial. As a matter of fact, the aspiration to “return” to Palestine and set up a Jewish National Home or a Jewish Commonwealth induces an opposition to life in exile; from then on, political and territorial Zionism may be seen by definition as being anti-exilic. However, what is exile in Jewish and Zionist thoughts? In Zionist thought, redemption means the end of exile in which the Jews were sent away by God and the return to general history or to the world's history. If one speaks of “return to history”, that means that exile not only meant the exile far from the territory but also the exile from/outside history and that all the time the Jews spent in exile, they were not part of the world's history. In that logic, redemption means a new beginning and the erasing of all that had to do with exile. In other words, negating exile<sup>13</sup>. The mainstream Zionists showed themselves very critical towards exile. They believed that life in exile would be non productive and weak, inefficient and above all not worth talking about. Exile, in their view, was “outside History”; the

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<sup>13</sup> See Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *Exil et souveraineté, judaïsme, sionisme et pensée binationale, op.cit.*, pp.26-69. The author devoted two chapters on Negation of exile, redemption and the concept of return to history.



latter ended after the destruction of the temple and started again with Zionism and the return to Israel. Zionist thought constantly compares Jews in exile and the “returnees”, who incarnated the “new man” who, contrary to the “old man”, represented the true pioneer of Israel. Young versus old, strong versus weak, healthy versus sick...

Then, the bi-nationalists believed that the Diaspora had to be maintained, as it was one of the duties of the Jewish people to live among other nations in the world and disseminate its message. In that, they proposed a model that was by essence a rejection of separation and exclusion; it opposed the vision of the majority of Zionists, who claimed the supremacy of the Jewish State and the duty of the Diaspora to move into such a state. They claimed that the objective of Israel was the renewal of Judaism and not the normalisation of the Jewish people by achieving national sovereignty.

As Zeev Sternhell, the critical Israeli sociologist explains, the negation of exile resides in the basis of Zionism<sup>14</sup>. Exile in itself is seen as a sickness that can only find its cure when the Jewish people, once constituted as a nation, achieve sovereignty. Therefore, it does not represent a simple cleavage with the bi-nationalists. Exile according to Zionism would, in the long-term lead to the decline of Jewish identity. Modernity with liberalism had favoured assimilation of the Jews, an assimilation that absolutely had to be totally fought and stopped.

Diaspora endangers the existence of the Jewish nation, so in fact, according to that logic, one has to deny the existence of the Diaspora. Denying it means rejecting it, rejecting any explanation for exile and denying everything produced in exile. As many historians have brought to light, denial of Diaspora has led to fighting it by trying to prove that no life was possible in exile. To develop the Jewish nation, the Jewish people have to isolate themselves and create a proper culture that wouldn't depend on alien culture or concepts. Gershom Scholem, who, though he was a member of *Brit Shalom*, despised assimilation and wrote about solitude. He said that the community seeks loneliness.

*“Only common loneliness is able to found a community. Zion – the source of our people is common loneliness, or even, in an*

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<sup>14</sup> Sternhell, Zeev, *Aux origines d'Israël. Entre nationalisme et socialisme*, Paris 2004, pp.97-107.

*extraordinary meaning, identical to all Jews ... there wouldn't be another place for such a reunion*"<sup>15</sup>.

He went further and stated that in Diaspora,

*"There cannot be a Jewish community that would have any value in the eyes of God"*<sup>16</sup>.

### **The "Arab question", majority, demography and transfer – Zionism's touchstone**

"The bride is beautiful but she is married to another man"<sup>17</sup>. This sentence used by Ghada Karmi as the title of one of her books, *Married to another man*, was telegraphed by two rabbis who were sent by the Zionist Congress on an expedition to Palestine at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From the very beginning, the leaders and thinkers of the Zionist movement have been aware that Palestine was not an empty country; they did however construct their ideology with that idea, ignoring the Palestinians, their history, their culture, their language and their legitimate rights to the land.

We all have in mind the words of Ahad Haam:

*"We abroad are used to believing that Eretz Yisrael is now almost totally desolate, a desert that is not sowed. But in truth this is not the case. Throughout the country it is difficult to find fields that are not sowed. Only sand dunes and stony mountains...are not cultivated"*<sup>18</sup>.

Ahad Ha'am's view on the subject was shared by other Zionists, notably those identified by Yosef Gorny as the "integrative" trend among whom we can cite: Yitzhak Epstein<sup>19</sup>, a Russian born teacher who had settled in Palestine in 1887,

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<sup>15</sup> Scholem, Gershom, "Adieu. Lettre ouverte à Siegfried Bernfeld et contre les lecteurs de la revue *Jerubaal* (1918)", in *Le Prix d'Israël*, *op.cit.*, pp.31-41.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Ghada Karmi, *Married to another man*, London 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Morris, Benny, *Righteous victims*, *op.cit.*, p.42.

<sup>19</sup> Yitzhak Epstein (1862-1943), Concerned by the attitude of the Jews towards the Arabs, he published an article entitled "A Hidden Question" in the Hebrew periodical *Ha-Shiloah*. The article is to be found on Mazen Qumsiyeh's website: <http://qumsiyeh.org/yitzhakepstein/>

Rabbi Benjamin<sup>20</sup>, Nisim Malul<sup>21</sup> or Yosef Luria<sup>22</sup>. They advocated integration of the Jews to Palestine and the Arabs and condemned the intentional ignoring of the Arabs and their opinion<sup>23</sup>. Their views were to be developed by the bi-nationalists who would be among the first Zionists to acknowledge the presence of the Arabs and try to translate this into political action. They were also among the first to evoke the existence of an “Arab question” as part of Zionism and the “Jewish question” and not outside of it; furthermore as a central question. Presenting “the “Arab question”, as linked with the future of the Jews in Palestine, enabled – as Henry Laurens remarks in *La Question de Palestine* – avoiding the transformation of the “Jewish question” into an “Arab question” to be solved independently<sup>24</sup>.

At that time, it was not rare to hear Zionist leaders evoking the non-existence of an “Arab question”. This way of wilfully ignoring the existence of the Arabs was underlined by Gershom Scholem in a note dated from 1931 in which he answered to the polemics around *Brit Shalom* and their Zionist engagement. In that note, he quoted the president of the World Zionist Organization – then Nahum Sokolow – who in the middle of the Arab riots of 1929 said that the “Arab question was not part of reality”<sup>25</sup>.

Nevertheless, the “Arab question” was not always avoided or silenced, and when it was discussed, it was mostly from the angle of demography. The conflict opposing the Zionists to the Palestinian Arabs had become, from the Zionist perspective, a problem of “numbers”, with a vocabulary such as *majority* and *minority* – the minority wanting to become the majority and the majority wanting to stay the majority (numerically but also politically). At that time, the Arabs constituted an absolute majority and the Zionists a minority

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<sup>20</sup> Rabbi Benjamin or Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann (1880-1957), Galicia born journalist and writer who settled in Palestine in 1907 after spending a few years in London where he worked for a literary journal – *Ha Me'orer*. He was later to be one of the founding members of *Brit Shalom*, an association advocating Jewish-Arab understanding and the establishment of a bi-national society and state.

<sup>21</sup> Nisim Malul (1892- ), Tunisian born Sephardi Jew, Journalist and writer. After studying in Egypt where his family was based, he went back to Palestine in 1911. There he worked for the Zionist Office of Jaffa, his main role as described by Abigail Jacobson, was to “respond to anti-Zionist articles which were published in the Palestinian Arab-Christian newspapers *Filastin* and *al-Karmi*”.

<sup>22</sup> Yosef Luria (1891-1937), A Romanian-born journalist and teacher who settled in Palestine in 1907. He was the editor of the Zionist weekly *Der Yid*. Among other things, he was in favour of the strengthening of Yiddish in the diaspora. He was later to be active in *Brit Shalom*.

<sup>23</sup> Gorny, Yosef, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882-1948, A study of ideology*, Oxford 1987, pp.41-49.

<sup>24</sup> Laurens, Henry, Preface to Shlaim, Avi and Eugène L. Rogan, *La Guerre de Palestine 1948. Derrière le mythe*, Paris 2002, pp.5-7.

<sup>25</sup> Scholem, Gershom, *Le prix d'Israël, op.cit.*, p. 45.

who, even on the eve of partition, represented only 20% of the population. The Zionist movement asked for the constitution of a Jewish majority, a demand that was seen as a threat by the Arabs. This was quite an inextricable situation. For their part, and from the very beginning, the bi-nationalists understood that to reach an agreement with the Arabs, they had to abandon the idea of a Jewish majority. They advanced three arguments to support their case. First, on a pragmatic basis, they thought it was impossible to reach a sufficient number, as the difference was too important. Second, they logically considered that no people in the world would let a foreign population become a majority and risk losing, even more than their power in the country – losing their status. Third, they wanted to move beyond classical discussions on demography and make the principle of parity – whatever the ratio – the core principle. However, demography had been too long at the core of Zionist thought regarding the Arabs and, since the movement's inception, transfer was inferred in that thought, as argued by Nur Masalha<sup>26</sup>.

### ***A criticism of the nation-state and imperialism***

Martin Buber and his colleagues adhered to the definition of nationalism according to which it was “the awareness of a lack, a sickness of an infirmity”. For the Jews, nationalism was the awareness of the lack of centre (or state). However, according to Buber – whose definition of the nation was based on perennialism – there were two forms of nationalism. The first, aiming to cure and supposed to disappear after having reached its objective. The second, on the contrary, “a long term and determining principle”; that form becomes independent and continues to exist by and for itself. This was seen by the bi-nationalists as very dangerous, as it depended on the supremacy of the nation, and was potentially made to last and moreover to express itself aggressively.

Just as their identity was determined by their religious and “cultural” belonging, their nationalism took its source in their notion of Judaism. Actually, they believed in certain values that could not fit into “traditional nationalism”.

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<sup>26</sup> Masalha, Nur, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: the concept of 'transfer' in Zionist Political thought, 1882-1948*, Washington 1992.

Moreover, they considered that Zionism had to be ethical to survive. That is why, despite their adherence to Jewish nationalism, the bi-nationalists have shown themselves very critical towards nationalism. For them, it was out of the question to recreate another national movement or, to quote Hugo Bergmann, “the objective of Zionism is not to create another nation-state”. That can, in substance, very well be the motto of the Zionist bi-nationalists. Exempt from imperialist objectives, Zionism had then to be different from traditional or European nationalism.

In a long and quite informative speech that Buber delivered in Karlsbad, he tried to explain why Zionism had to be different from European nationalisms, and he presented the dangers it would have to overcome if it developed following the European model<sup>27</sup>. According to him and his followers, Zionism was a unique phenomenon, indeed, it had the particularity of being linked to and depending on Judaism and as such it had to be different and unique in its tools and goals. They feared, as Buber underlined, the corruption of Zionism, also that the Jewish nation would become like all other nations, that is to say they would aspire to create another state and not a new order, that would emerge from nature and from organic ties between the members of the same people.

Bi-nationalists and especially Magnes – as the pacifist he was<sup>28</sup> – opposed the military conquest of Palestine; he called such a victory the “Joshua way”<sup>29</sup>. All the bi-nationalists thought the Jewish National Home should not be established with “bayonets” and even less if these came from an imperialist country. They really tried to avoid the militarisation of Zionism, but in vain.

Adopting the “dogma of the nations' sovereignty” signified, according to Martin Buber, no more and no less than accepting assimilation<sup>30</sup>.

Martin Buber believed the Jews were the holders of a “supranational mission”. However, he felt and feared that this mission had been abandoned in

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<sup>27</sup> Buber, Martin, “Nationalism (1921)”, in Mendes Flohr, Paul, *A Land of two people: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*, Oxford 1983, pp. 47-57.

<sup>28</sup> Goren, Arthur (ed.), *Dissenter in Zion, op.cit.*, pp.157-200.

<sup>29</sup> JL Magnes used this expression in an address at the Hebrew University in 1929. This is related in Goren, Arthur (ed.), *Dissenter in Zion, op.cit.*, pp. 34-35

<sup>30</sup> Martin Buber, “Examen de l'humanitarisme, du nationalisme et du conservatisme religieux”, in Denis Charbit (ed.), *Sionismes, Textes fondamentaux*, Paris 1998, p. 97. This was also the view Hannah Arendt would later express when writing her famous article “Zionism Reconsidered”, in Kohn, Jerome & Ron H. Feldman (eds.), *The Jewish Writings. Hannah Arendt*, New York 2007, pp. 343-374.

favour of the simple existence of the nation as “an end in itself” that would lead to the willingness to create an empire. Indeed, Buber and his colleagues from *Brit Shalom*, and later the *Ihud*, constantly tried to warn against an approach too nationalistic to Zionism. They believed that if it was important to set the Jewish nation in Palestine, they had to be careful not to fall into “hysteria of power” and that it was even more important to accomplish their supranational mission of creating a fairer world for all nations and peoples. In a speech on nationalism he gave in Karlsbad (Germany) during the 12<sup>th</sup> Zionist congress, he expressed himself as follows:

*“The supranational task of the Jewish nation cannot be properly accomplished unless – under its aegis – natural life is re-conquered. In that formal nationalism disclaims the nation's being based on and conditioned by this more-than-national task; in that it has grown over-conscious and dares to disengage Judaism from its connection with the world and to isolate it; in that it proclaims the nation as an end in itself, instead of comprehending that it is an element, formal nationalism sanctions a group-egoism which disclaims responsibility”<sup>31</sup>.*

The departure of Hans Kohn from the Zionist movement and Palestine raised a series of questions surrounding Martin Buber's conception of Zionism. Hans Kohn had been disappointed by the *Yishuv*'s reactions to the Arab riots and was afraid that the Zionism that was developing was not the one he still adhered to. The morality of Zionism was replaced by extreme nationalism.

If *Brit Shalom* created the theoretical framework for the bi-national thought, it showed itself unable to concretely construct it. There is no record of any continued contact between them and the Arabs. Indeed, none of its members ever sustained regular contacts with the Arabs and the Palestinians, nor did they propose a plan. This was one of the reasons why Judah Magnes, Hans Kohn and Hugo Bergmann called it a “discussion circle” as late as 1928 – three years after its implementation. On this subject, one can find a very interesting letter sent by Magnes to Ruppin in 1936, over three years after the dissolution of the association. Magnes expressed his criticisms as follows:

*“It is daring on your part to state that Brit Shalom entered into negotiations with the Arabs. They were incapable of such action. Furthermore, Brit Shalom was lacking in will and courage to interfere in day-to-day political activities. In that respect also, they remained loyal*

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<sup>31</sup> Buber, Martin, “Nationalism (1921)”, in Mendes Flohr, Paul (ed.), *A Land of two people, op.cit.*, pp. 47-57.

*to you, their spiritual founder. Brit Shalom remained a discussion circle and therefore was condemned to die. [...] Brit Shalom has contributed much to the clarification of the problem*<sup>32</sup>.

Indeed, when looking at the bi-nationalists in *Brit Shalom*, and in the associations that succeeded it (the League for Arab-Jewish Rapprochement and Cooperation and the Ihud) , it is quite striking that there were only a few contacts with the Arabs and that the majority as we are about to see, emanated from Judah Magnes.

### **C. Bi-nationalism vs. Jewish State**

#### ***In search of an agreement with the Arabs, 1929-1939***

Whilst *Brit Shalom* had posed the theoretical bases for bi-nationalism, they had not been very prolific in concrete attempts. Judah Magnes, on the other hand, unceasingly tried to reach a basis for an understanding with the Arabs. He was one of the rare, if not the only, bi-nationalist to develop contacts with members of the high-ranking families of Jerusalem, and to try and gain support from abroad. He kept constant contact with the British authorities, whom he kept informed of his initiatives<sup>33</sup>.

#### ***The Philby-Magnes episode***

Magnes, who had been in Palestine since 1922, had done little else, as he was busy with his responsibilities at the University. He also thought that he should not invest himself in politics. Indeed, following the principle that university should stay neutral and independent, he wrote in his journal that Zionist control would make it partisan and sectarian, whereas it should be the University of "all the trends within the Jewish people". In 1929, he returned to

<sup>32</sup> Magnes, Judah Leon, "To Arthur Ruppin", in Goren, Arthur (ed.), *Dissenter in Zion, op.cit.*, pp. 312-314.

<sup>33</sup> As show the amount of correspondence gathered in Arthur Goren's collection of articles.

politics, explaining his return as being motivated by the non-improvement of the situation in Palestine. The movement did not do anything to come to an understanding with the Arabs and it had no plan at all. From the beginning, Magnes had imagined that the United States could play a major role in resolving the conflict, even more so since Europe had been involved in constant conflicts. That vision was to gain increasing importance for him, but also for the Zionist movement, after the arrival in power of the national socialists in Germany.

Just after the 1929 clashes, which gave him the feeling that it was necessary for him to “contribute to the political debate”, he had been trying to contact the Arabs and conduct discussions on the future of Palestine. The events reaffirmed for him that the “Arab question” was a test for Jewish nationalism. He explained that he strongly believed that this went beyond the “Arab question” but it involved Jewish nationalism, its nature and essence. The Palestinian question – characterised in the Zionist discourse by the “Arab question” – would determine the value of Zionism and set it apart from other nationalisms<sup>34</sup>.

That same year, Magnes was introduced to Joseph Levi, a correspondent of the New York Times in Jerusalem, and to Harry Saint John Philby. Philby was a former British diplomat who had served in Mesopotamia from 1915 to 1921, then in Transjordan from 1921 to 1924. He had finally left his responsibilities, under the orders of the colonial administration, to become the political adviser of the King Ibn Saud in Saudi Arabia. Philby, as an Orientalist, spoke Arabic. He proposed to Magnes to serve as a link between him and the King and the Arabs, and more particularly the Palestinians in the presence of Haj Amin al-Hussayni. However, Magnes and Philby represented only themselves and were not accredited by the Zionist movement or the British authorities.

Philby and Magnes decided to work on a proposal for the Arabs that would refer to the Balfour declaration in order to rally (they thought) the Zionist movement but also the concepts of self-determination and democracy<sup>35</sup>. The point of departure for Magnes was that Palestine did not belong to anybody in particular, neither to the Jews nor to the Arabs, and even less to the British, but

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<sup>34</sup> Judah Magnes, *Like all the nations*, Jerusalem 1930.

<sup>35</sup> Menahem Kaufman, *The Magnes-Philby negotiations 1929: the historical record*, Jerusalem 1998.



to all the people of the world, and as it was the holy land for two nations and three religions, there should be no Jewish State. As a pacifist, he thought that an agreement could be reached without the use of bayonets, whether British or Jewish.

After a few meetings, Philby and Magnes were able to propose a plan. They proposed a Palestinian government with a parliament that would function on the basis of two chambers, one that would be democratically elected and would be controlled by the majority and the other that would be elected following the principle of parity between the Jews, the Arabs and the British<sup>36</sup>. He sincerely thought that his proposition would prevent the oppression of the Jewish people; however it was without counting the reactions of the Zionist leadership, which was aiming for the majority in the country, and would never have accepted such a proposition.

The proposal for an agreement dealt with the status of the country and of its inhabitants; Palestine had to be for everyone, including the elections of its government and the status of the British. Magnes wanted to emphasise the rights of both people, the Arabs and the Jews, to live and grow in Palestine; for that, Palestine had to be independent and democratic, but the British commissioner would be its head of state.

Before gaining independence, the representatives should develop a constitution. However, these negotiations were not followed-up, as they were considered invalid by the British authorities and the Zionist leadership. The agreement so wanted by J. Magnes eventually failed to see the light.

*At the service of the Jewish Agency, negotiating bi-nationalism in times of partition talks*

In the aftermath of the 1929 Arab revolt, the bi-nationalists were facing a crisis. Having been unable to propose a clear political programme, some of its members joined the ranks of the *Mapai* and when the latter took over the direction of the Zionist Organisation in the early 1930s, *Brit Shalom* was dissolved. However, some of the movement's loyal members along with

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

notables from the old Jewish families of Jerusalem, as well as Sephardic leaders, established *Kedma Mizraha*, an organisation aimed at rapprochement with the Arabs. The founders of the organisation wished it to be “a non-party association whose aims are knowledge of the East, and the creation of cultural, social and economic ties with Oriental peoples, and the proper presentation of the Jewish people's work in Palestine”<sup>37</sup>. The association however disappeared soon after its creation, and according to Aharon Cohen, this was due in particular to the lack of funds and the rise of partition as a solution in 1937.

In the meantime, Judah Magnes who had been one of the rare personalities to keep contacts with the Arabs continued his efforts to secure an understanding with them. He was to be given an opportunity to arrange for discussions between the Zionist Executive, then headed by Ben Gurion, and the Arabs in 1936. The Zionists had just rejected the Legislative council proposed by the British – that had been accepted by the Arabs – and, the Jewish Agency wished to prove to the British that it was ready to dialogue with the Arabs<sup>38</sup>. To that end, in a tactical move they contacted Magnes to serve as an intermediary. The efforts deployed by Magnes to produce a basis on which to build the discussions show his dedication to the task. So, by April 1936, Magnes had arranged a series of meetings with Georges Antonius, the secretary of the Supreme Moslem Council in Palestine<sup>39</sup>. Magnes set as the starting point of the discussions, the recognition of the principle of the equal rights of “the Jews and the Arabs already present in Palestine”<sup>40</sup>. However, this was not a satisfying basis for acceptable to either Antonius or Ben Gurion, the former stressing the need to limit immigration and the latter the fact that the question concerned all the Jews and all the Arabs and that the Jews were only interested by Palestine<sup>41</sup>. Ben Gurion also refused to give any figures for immigration, which complicated the talks.

Magnes was still devoting himself to his task when the Great Arab

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<sup>37</sup> Cohen, Aharon, *Israel and the Arab world*, Boston 1976, p. 134.

<sup>38</sup> Kotzin, Daniel P., *Judah L. Magnes, an American Jewish non-conformist*, New York 2010, pp.254-255.

<sup>39</sup> Michael J. Cohen, “Secret diplomacy and rebellion in Palestine, 1936-1939”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 8(3), July 1977, pp. 379-404, Mary Ann Fay (ed.), *Autobiography and the construction and identity and community in the Middle East*, New York 2002, p. 132-134.

<sup>40</sup> Michael J. Cohen, “Secret diplomacy and rebellion in Palestine, 1936-1939”, *op.cit.*,

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

Revolt started. When the Royal Commission's report was released, it provoked intense debates among the three actors on the Palestinian scene. Among the spiritual Zionists, the reaction was rejection, and Judah Magnes indeed reacted as soon as the news spread by sending his comments on the conclusions of the commission to the editors of the *New York Times*<sup>42</sup>. Considering that the analysis of the situation was excellent, Magnes was however critical when it came to the analysis of Great Britain's role. Indeed, for him, its failure to explore all the possibilities for a settlement and to lead negotiations, were obvious and the commission's conclusions were too rapidly drawn. He stressed the importance of resuming negotiations to at least arrive at a first agreement that would then secure the ground for other discussions and eventually a long term agreement and recognition<sup>43</sup>. As for the partition itself, he considered that it would only lead to the establishment of two small “toy states”, without Jerusalem, as this would be under International rule, and a Jewish State without Jerusalem was meaningless to him. The bi-nationalists led by Judah Magnes and their allies, particularly in the United States, decided to make their case against partition during the twentieth Zionist Congress. This was the first time Magnes intervened as an official delegate at an official venue. In his speech, Magnes tried to compel the Zionist leadership to envisage an agreement with the Arabs and appealed to the Congress to call for a bi-national state. However, he was laughed at and his warnings against war that would ensue from a partition, were not taken seriously as indeed, the Zionist leadership already considered it was at war<sup>44</sup>. Whilst the congress positioned against partition, it had as we have seen entrusted the leadership with negotiating for a more favourable partition scheme<sup>45</sup>. So, whereas they were already following the road to partition and working on propositions, on the 6th of December 1937, the Jewish Agency gave once again Magnes the authorisation to continue secretly and non-officially the preliminary discussions with the Arab representatives<sup>46</sup>. Two British diplomats – Hyamson and

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<sup>42</sup> Magnes, Judah Leon, “Palestine Peace seen in Arab-Jewish Agreements”, in Goren, Arthur (ed.), *Dissenter in Zion*, *op.cit.*, pp.324-329.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Kotzin, Daniel P., *Judah L. Magnes: an American Jewish non-conformist*, *op.cit.*, p.262.

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter III.

<sup>46</sup> Magnes, Judah, “Judah Magnes to Wauchope”, February 25, 1938, in Goren, Arthur (ed.), *Dissenter in Zion*, *op.cit.*, pp. 347-349

Newcombe – had worked on a proposition for a bi-national solution and this would serve Magnes as a basis for his following proposals, however the amendments made by Magnes and his Arab contacts were considered unacceptable by the Jewish Agency and Magnes' mission finally ended.

Pursuing his search for an agreement with the Arabs, Magnes continued to meet with the Arabs that were open to discuss with him the idea of a bi-national society. On February 6, 1938, Magnes met Browne, an Anglican Archbishop (Jerusalem), Ezzat Tannous, an Arab physician (Jerusalem) and Nuri al-Said Pasha. The latter was opposed to partition, which he feared would only result in “increased poverty, a loss of territory and it would lead the Arab Jews to leave their countries”. He had been visiting England in 1936 and 1937, proposing to the British authorities and the Zionist leaders a scheme for a settlement, but in vain<sup>47</sup>. He was ready to discuss with Magnes the eventuality of a bi-national structure and to help him work on a proposal<sup>48</sup>. He did agree on the basis of a text for the discussions but once again, the friction point was the immigration clause, which he reviewed with Magnes. The two men were in opposition over this matter, indeed, Magnes thought that there should be a temporary agreement over ten years. By the end of that period, the Jews would constitute a minority with 40%. As for Nuri al Said, the Jews had to constitute a permanent minority in Palestine but they would have the possibility to move to other Arab states. The Zionist leadership would not compromise on the immigration question and it wished to keep the partition door open so, it rejected the proposal and recommendations that emerged from these discussions. The latter circulated rumours on Magnes and Browne, according to these, the first had accepted to negotiate along a minority status for the Jews and the second was in fact an ally of the Arabs. After that episode, the Zionist executive repeatedly postponed discussions with Magnes, who finally understood that the Zionist executive had no intention of reaching an agreement with the Arabs<sup>49</sup>. This episode marked the end of Magnes' illusions on the Zionist leadership and its will to reach an agreement with the Arabs<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Magnes, Judah, “Journal entry”, February 6, 1938, in Goren, Arthur (ed.), *Dissenter in Zion, op.cit.*, pp. 344-345

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Magnes, Judah, “Judah Magnes to David Ben-Gurion”, March 3, 1938, in Goren, Arthur (ed.), *Dissenter in Zion, op.cit.*, pp. 349-350.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

*“Those who control the agency and its executive desire the partition, whatever partition and they do not look for an arrangement with the Arabs”<sup>51</sup>.*

### ***A critique of the Biltmore Programme's maximalism***

The adoption by the British government of the 1939 White Paper, which envisaged the creation of an Arab State and limited Jewish immigration, had immediately provoked demonstrations of violence in the *Yishuv*. These events led the bi-nationalists from ex-*Brit Shalom* and Kedma Mizraha, together with a few member of the Zionist movement to regroup and to further bi-national thought and make known their views in the form of a publication: *At the Parting of Our Ways*<sup>52</sup>. Following the release of the book, the participants decided to create a large platform, the League for Arab-Jewish Rapprochement and Cooperation<sup>53</sup>. They were later joined by the Hashomer Hatzair Workers' Party on the basis of the following platform:

- (A) The League believes that the construction of Palestine as a common homeland for the Jewish people returning to it and the Arab people therein residing must be based on lasting mutual understanding and agreement between the two peoples;*
- (B) The principle of the return of the Jews to their historic homeland to build their independent national life in it is unequivocal, as are also the rights of the Palestine Arabs to their independent national life, and their ties with other parts of the Arab people;*
- (C) The League will carry on its work on the basis of its recognition of the right of the Jews to immigrate to and settle in Palestine in accordance with its maximum absorptive capacity to an extent that shall ensure the growth of the Jewish community in Palestine toward a full and independent economic, social, cultural, and political life, in cooperation with the Arab people;*
- (D) On the basis of the immigration principle as defined in paragraph B, agreed immigration quotas may be set for a number of years, it being understood that the League will oppose any aim to perpetuate the position of the Jewish community as a minority in Palestine;*
- (E) The League considers the basic principles for Arab-Jewish accord to be:*

<sup>51</sup> Magnes, Judah, “Judah Magnes to Sol Stroock, 5 June 1938” in Goren, Arthur (ed.), *Dissenter in Zion, op.cit.*, pp. 351-353.

<sup>52</sup> Lee Hattis, Susan, *The bi-national idea in Palestine during Mandatory times*, Haifa 1970, p.212.

<sup>53</sup> Mendes-Flohr, Paul , Introduction to “Et maintenant?”, in Mendes-Flohr, Paul (ed.) , *Une Terre et deux peuples, op.cit.*, p.182.

1. *Acceptance of the right of the Jews to return to their historic homeland, there to build their independent national life; acceptance of the rights of Palestine Arabs to their independent national life and of their ties with other sections of the Arab people;*
  2. *The non-denomination of one people by the other, regardless of their respective numerical strength;*
  3. *A Bi-national regime in Palestine;*
  4. *Positive attitude towards the participation of Palestine as an independent Bi-national unit in a federation with neighboring countries, when the necessary conditions for this will have been prepared, and the basic rights and vital interests of the Arab people living in Palestine, will have been secured;*
- (F) The League shall undertake the following tasks:*
1. *Campaign within the Jewish community and the Zionist movement for a policy of rapprochement, cooperation, and accord between Jews and Arabs.*
  2. *Campaign for the formation of a corresponding Ally within the Arab community on central and local activities without, however, requiring all of them to belong personally to branches of the League.*
  3. *Strive to improve and enhance Arab economic, social, cultural, and political standards.*
  4. *Research.*
  5. *Training people for public work among the Arab population.*
- (G) The local branches of the League will be centers of activity and influence; the parties and groups composing the League will detail some of their members to work on central and local activities without, however, requiring all of them to belong personally to branches of the League*<sup>54</sup>.

During the years following the establishment of the League, in a will to displace the debate within the Zionist movement and *Yishuv*, the members of the League called for cooperation on all levels and in all fields, in particular through work. Then, the League would organise meetings with the Zionist Executive to discuss the idea of cooperation, but above all, they would work on a detailed proposition for a bi-national state.

In the meantime, WWII was declared and the Zionist leadership had decided to launch an offensive to obtain the annulment of the White Paper. It saw only one way to be able to change the balance and that was seeking support elsewhere than in Great Britain. So, the Zionist Executive then turned to the United States. In this task, the Zionists were benefiting from the discovery by international public opinion of the dramatic fate of the European

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<sup>54</sup> Cohen, Aharon, *Israel and the Arab World*, *op.cit.*, pp. 305-306.

Jews. As a matter of fact, from then on, Zionism gained supporters all over the World and notably among the Jewish organisations in the United States, where the World Zionist Organisation adopted the maximalist “revisionist programme”: the Biltmore programme<sup>55</sup>. The Biltmore conference had advocated what most of the Zionist groups wished but did not officially demand: the creation of a Jewish State by calling it a Jewish commonwealth. It was, in many ways, a turning point in the Zionist Movement’s history and political activity, as it was the first time that its objectives were so clearly set out.

As expected, the programme provoked the opposition of all those who had rejected Jewish sovereignty, in particular the former members of *Brit Shalom* and their sympathisers. The latter were indeed, persuaded that such a programme could only be considered as a war declaration by the Arabs<sup>56</sup>. The move started by the Biltmore programme, combined with the still ongoing White Paper, led Judah Magnes, Martin Buber and many of their friends such as Moshe Smilansky, Henrietta Stolz, Ernst Simon and Haim Kalvarisky to establish an independent association which they named *Ihud* (Unity) in 1942. The association became an attempt to create a more active movement, in answer to increasingly aggressive Zionist political activity.

The *Ihud's* targets were the Zionist movement, the international institutions and the Jews abroad. Their tools were their writings, which they translated into English or even directly wrote in that language. The idea was to share, with as many people as possible, their ideas and their plans, which they tried to propose to the British authorities, the Zionist movement and to a much lesser extent to the Arabs (regardless of who they were).

The objective of the association did not differ from that of *Brit Shalom*, i.e cooperation with the Arabs and the establishment of a bi-national state that would be part of a broader Arab federation and in which both peoples would enjoy equal rights. Thus, taking into account the situation of the European Jews, they proposed a solution to the question of minority and majority and their political repercussions. To advance in this direction, J.Magnes once again

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<sup>55</sup> Arendt, Hannah, “Zionism reconsidered”, in Hannah Arendt and Jerome Kohn & Ron H. Feldmann (eds.), *The Jewish Writings, op.cit.*, pp.343-374.

<sup>56</sup> Buber, Martin, “Dialogue au sujet du programme de Biltmore”, in Mendes-Flohr, Paul (ed.), *Une Terre et deux peuples, op.cit.*, p. 212

contacted his American friends and sponsors to obtain funding for the association. To that end, he published articles in American newspapers and magazines<sup>57</sup>.

However, the *Ihud's* ideas were far from raising a consensus. The actions of the Zionist Executive and the unification around it of numerous American Zionist Federations had succeeded in marginalising the association and its leaders, including J. Magnes.

Martin Buber would express their fears as to the Biltmore programme by setting a virtual dialogue between two characters, the Traitor (representing them) and the Patriot, and the former would stress: "Because it is impossible for any length of time to build with one hand while holding a weapon in the other"<sup>58</sup>. In Buber's dialogue, the Patriot argues in favour of the programme and tries to find out why the latter is opposed to it. The Traitor, for his part, argues that the programme as such would only fuel conflicts and transform the Arab Palestinian population into a second rate community by depriving it from "collective political equality". According to him, the programme consecrates the separation of both peoples, one would become the "people of the state" and the other just a people. Such a scheme would inevitably lead to the domination of the people of the state over the other people unless the Jewish state decides to behave according to Jewish moral code. Here was the expression of one of the major components of bi-national thought: morals.

However, the reasons for Buber's rejection of the programme were not only based on moral grounds, indeed, he and his colleagues from the *Ihud* above all, feared that if the Zionist movement persisted in that direction, the British authorities would be pushed into resorting to the old partition scheme. With the Biltmore programme, the questions of numbers and demography were exacerbated, with the maximalist trend eventually winning and becoming the majoritarian trend within the Zionist movement. This very question of the majority-minority had always been a point of friction between the bi-nationalists and the Zionist leadership, the former being in favour of the immigration of the greatest number with the assent of the Arabs. This position would not change

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<sup>57</sup> Notably: Magnes, Judah, "Towards Peace in Palestine", *Foreign Affairs* 21(2), January 1943, pp.239-249.

<sup>58</sup> Buber, Martin, "Dialogue au sujet du programme de Biltmore", in *Une Terre et deux peuples, op.cit.*, p. 212



during the war as the members of the association considered that the question of Palestine was to stay distinct from the question of the European Jews. That period saw a number of speeches and articles on the subject and the members of the *Ihud* rejected the idea that Zionism's objective was the establishment of a dominating Jewish majority in Palestine. They underlined that the cooperation with the Arabs was necessary for the sake of the Zionist enterprise and to reach a moral political settlement.

Martin Buber and Judah Magnes were then both persuaded that educating the Jewish masses on moral grounds, would in the long run produce a fair policy. Indeed, the idea was that whatever was thought by the leadership, the latter's role was to represent the people, so, if the people were educated with Jewish moral, the leadership could not possibly go against it.

Moreover, be it Martin Buber or Judah Magnes, they both distrusted the Zionist Executive and considered that its maximalist policy could only lead Great Britain to impose the partition decision. In their criticism, they predicted that the leadership would accept such a decision in theory but it would not apply it on the ground. The Executive would according to them accept it without accepting it and it would provoke an unprecedented misfortune. Buber also knew that the Arabs would never accept the creation of a Jewish state even on egalitarian grounds.

Hannah Arendt who had joined the bi-nationalists (but was not a member of the associations) in the late 1930's and 1940's furthered the arguments against the Biltmore programme with a criticism of the nation and nationalism. She had already started to think about her book on the Origins of totalitarianism when she joined the movement<sup>59</sup>. For Arendt, the adoption of the concept of nation and nationalism were only the adoption of the concepts that led to the marginalization and persecution of the Jews in Europe. She thought that by making these concepts their own, they would generate the same mechanisms that would lead to the spoliation of the Palestinians.

Arendt was very critical towards Zionism and unlike the others, she never moved to Palestine and was able to observe the situation and the development of the Zionist movement with the required distance. She criticised very

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<sup>59</sup> Raz-Krakotzkin, Amnon, "Jewish Peoplehood, 'Jewish Politics', and political responsibility: Arendt on Zionism and Partitions", *College Literature* 38(1), Winter 2011, pp.57-74.

vehemently the adoption of the Biltmore declaration in 1942, but just two years after that, the American section of the WZO met in Atlantic City and adopted an even more aggressive resolution going beyond the Biltmore programme. Her reaction is presented in an article she wrote in October 1944, entitled "Zionism Reconsidered".

Nevertheless, the *Ihud* and its members were increasingly laughed at within the Zionist establishment, whose argument in demanding a Jewish majority soon became reinforced by the plight of the European Jews.

### ***Binationalism: a programme***

As we have seen, until Magnes started his contacts with Arab potential partners for implementing a bi-nationalist programme, no attempts at contact had been made. Moreover, *Brit Shalom* was a discussion circle not a platform for political activism. It was also in order to break with inaction and change policy from the inside that the League for Arab-Jewish Rapprochement and Cooperation had been established in 1939. However, although it had elaborated a detailed programme, the League was not really active. This is partly why the *Ihud* was established, and composed only of individuals, its scope of action was larger than the League's and besides changing the Zionist movement from the inside, the *Ihud* also aimed at exporting the idea abroad, notably among the American Jews. Moreover, the League as large (this is still relative) as it was, was subjected to consensus, a limitation that the *Ihud* did not face.

In 1945, the British government and the United States had decided to compromise over the Palestine Question, in order to reach a final solution. Despite the Jewish Agency's initial call to boycott the commission, a boycott that it wished to see respected by all the fringes of the Zionist movement, *Hashomer Hatzair* and the *Ihud* nevertheless continued against the Zionist leadership's will. The former, which had broken all contacts with the *Ihud* on the question of majority and minority, presented a memorandum in which it spoke of the possibility of "the unification of a Jewish-majority bi-national Palestine with the neighbouring Arab countries, as part of a federation in which

the Arabs would be a majority”<sup>60</sup>. Judah Magnes, Moshe Smilanski and Martin Buber testified on behalf of the *Ihud*. They submitted to the commission a report dealing with the questions of immigration, and offered their vision of a resolution. Indeed, they laid down the basic principles that should lead the coexistence, the political autonomy, the union of Palestine with the neighbouring countries<sup>61</sup>.

First, there were, according to them, two principles that had to be at the basis of any agreement: on the one hand, there should be no Jewish state or Arab state but a bi-national one; and on the other hand, Great Britain should authorise the immigration of 100,000 displaced persons. The second step was to allow the numerical parity whilst respecting the economical absorption capacity, which should mean that the first step would prepare and develop the Palestinian economy. And finally, when numerical parity would be reached, immigration should be discussed within a Palestinian government and a regional union.

Immigration was supposed to follow three periods. Of course the association’s members knew that it would provoke opposition from the Arabs but they considered that they had to intervene in the rescue of the European Jews. They also felt that this number of 100,000 could not represent any danger for the Arabs, who would still constitute the majority.

Concerning political autonomy, the *Ihud* felt there should be a progressive move from autonomy under the mandatory authorities to a regional tutorship through the transfer of the British mandate to the United Nations. The aim was to have a constitution, which according to the *Ihud* members had to be a common project led by the UN. But even such a plan could not function and they thought that in case of refusal by one or both parties, the solution should be imposed, as it would be the less problematic solution on the long term. The plan of the association recommended that eventually Palestine be part of its regional environment on a political level in the form of a confederation.

The committee was rather positive about the solution advocated by the bi-nationalists. And this enthusiasm translated into the commission's decision

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<sup>60</sup> Gorny, Yosef, *From binational to Jewish State. Federal concepts in Zionist political thought, 1920-1990*, Boston 2006, p.140.

<sup>61</sup> *Ihud, Arab-Jewish Unity: Testimony before the Anglo-American Inquiry Commission for Ihud (Union) Association*, London 1947.

to include in part the *Ihud's* demands in its recommendations. For the *Ihud*, this confirmed the accuracy of their analysis. Positive about the conclusions of the commission, the association's members started preparing for the concrete application of bi-nationalism and began making contacts with the Arabs of Palestine.

Parallel to that, Magnes was still trying to get support from Jewish institutions abroad and especially in the United States where, since the war, popular support for Zionism had grown massively. Even in Great Britain the idea of partition was gaining momentum. They thought that it was the only solution that could work. Magnes supposed that as long as neither the Zionists, nor the Arabs wanted partition, there still was hope for avoiding it. Magnes who revealed himself the most active bi-nationalist, wrote to friends in Great Britain and in the United States with the aim of developing groups there. He sought financial and political support, however, if on paper many of his friends agreed with his ideas, in reality only a few were active. During that period, the *Ihud* published collective books in English presenting their views and declaring that the way to bi-nationalism was still open. However, in the meantime, the British had rejected the recommendations of the Committee and were studying another plan with the United States – the Morrison-Grady plan, which advocated the constitution of Arab and Jewish cantons under British tutelage. This plan was in turn rejected by the United States, leading the British to take the case to the UN<sup>62</sup>.

The bi-nationalists had made considerable efforts promoting the bi-national solution and to find the bases of an Arab-Zionist agreement. But they thought that the Zionist leadership was endangering the last chances to find an understanding by asking for a majority in Palestine or for a state or commonwealth, as it could only push the Palestinians to be on the defensive. Finally, before the United Nations, they put forward the same programme in substance as the one they had proposed to the Anglo-American Committee.

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<sup>62</sup> Joseph Heller, *The Birth of Israel, 1945-1949: Ben Gurion and his critics*, Gainesville 2000, p.32; 87.

## **D. Arab attitude to bi-nationalism**

Bi-national thought had been developing and taking shape for more or less a decade when the first contacts with the Arabs in view of transforming the idea into a programme took place. These however, never got beyond the first stage, i.e. the elaboration of a basis for negotiations. And how could they? The Zionist leadership put unrestricted immigration and a Jewish majority as a priority whereas the Arabs sought an Arab dominated government for Palestine.

Although sources and information about Arab and bi-nationalists encounters are scarce and usually arise from Israeli sources, one consistency can be noted, that the discussions with the bi-nationalists, just as those with the Zionist leadership, always came up against the issue of immigration and that of the Arab character of Palestine. Thus there could hardly be a strictly bi-national basis for discussions.

The proposals made by both George Antonius and Nuri al-Said<sup>63</sup> in 1936 and 1937, who envisaged the solution to the Palestine Question in its Arab context, to allow a certain amount of immigration into Palestine and the Arab countries as well as the participation of the Jews in the political life on a proportional basis were swept aside.

The closest to an agreement on a bi-national basis was the one signed between Fawzi al Hussayni and four other Arab Palestinians representing *Falistin al jadida* and the League for Rapprochement and Cooperation. The agreement specified preserving the integrity of the territory, finding a political solution to the question of Palestine according to the principles of total cooperation in all fields between both communities; political equality; Jewish immigration according to the absorption capacities of the country and the future alliance of independent Palestine with the neighbouring countries<sup>64</sup>. Both organisations worked to promote the programme. However, the official strategy

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<sup>63</sup> Nuri Pasha al-Said (1888-1958), An Iraqi politician who started as an Ottoman officer in 1911 he converted to Arab nationalism during WWI after which he participated to the Arab Revolt under the Amir Faisal. After Faisal was deposed by the French, Nuri al-Said followed him to Iraq where he became prime minister in 1930. Dismissed in 1932.

<sup>64</sup> Al-Khalidi, Kamal, *The Arab-Israel conflict: what perspective?*, *op.cit.*, p.33; Cohen, Aharon, *Israel and the Arab world*, *op.cit.*, pp. 187-191.

of the Palestinian national movement, as represented by the Palestinian Arab leadership, was different and Fawzi al Hussayni was murdered on the 23 November 1946.

So, there were contacts but the discussions never, even once, went in the direction of bi-nationalism. The explanation may lie in the fact that, just as bi-nationalism was not taken seriously by the Zionist Executive, neither was it considered a serious and independent proposition by the Arabs. The Palestinian Arab rejection of bi-nationalism would not however, be voiced clearly until the mid-1940s. Indeed, although they believed in the sincerity of its bi-nationalist advocates, the Palestinian Arabs considered bi-nationalism just as, if not more dangerous than partition. As a matter of fact, whilst many contacts had been made in the late 1930s with the Zionist leadership, in particular through the intermediary of Judah Magnes and whilst the Arabs respected Magnes, they vehemently rejected the bi-national option à la *Brit Shalom* and *Ihud/Hashomer Hatzair*.

The Arab opposition to bi-nationalism was on principle as well as for practical reasons, developed in the testimonies and written statements provided to the Anglo-American Committee and the UNSCOP by the Arab Office<sup>65</sup>.

Whilst bi-nationalism presented an alternative to partition, it did not respond to the Arab claim: namely establishing Palestine as an independent Arab state. Moreover, bi-nationalism was founded on a basis that the Arabs could not accept as they were endangering their own. After all, bi-nationalism did not reject Zionism nor its basic assumption that the Jews constituted a distinct nation and that they were legitimately, due to their historic and spiritual attachment to Palestine, entitled to settle in Palestine. The Arabs were thus ready to grant equal individual rights but bi-nationalism meant going further, it meant putting the Jewish community on the same level of national rights as the Palestinian Arabs, and that ultimately meant accepting Zionism and its premises. Furthermore, Zionism was intrinsically expansionist and separatist so whether bi-national or not it would eventually transform the Arabs into a minority and establish Jewish rule.

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<sup>65</sup> The Arab Office, "The Arab case for Palestine: evidence submitted by the Arab Office to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, Jerusalem, March 1946.

Moreover, a bi-national state could, in their view, only exist if “underlying the national differences there existed a deep sense of common interest and common loyalty”<sup>66</sup>. And such a sense had not developed during the years of the mandate, and it was too late for them to develop.

Furthermore, even though they accepted establishing a bi-national entity, they were convinced that the outcome would be the same as if they continued with the *status quo*, that is a Jewish majority leading to the transformation of the Arabs into a minority on its own land<sup>67</sup>.

Beside the principles, the bi-national option offered a set of practical problems that were unlikely to be overcome.

First and foremost, Judah Magnes and his colleagues from *Ihud* did not represent a major trend with the Zionist movement, which rendered their propositions marginal and more likely to be manipulated by the Zionist Executive.

*“There is one final objection to Doctor Magnes’s plan, which is perhaps the most serious of all. Doctor Magnes is a person whose integrity and sincerity none of us doubt, but it is clear to me [that] he only represents a very small section of the Jewish community in Palestine. If his scheme were carried out, it would satisfy Doctor Magnes and his supporters, perhaps, but it would not satisfy the vast majority of Zionists. Perhaps, if a binational state were established, Doctor Magnes and his group would be swept aside and the majority of Zionists would use what Doctor Magnes had obtained for them in order to press their next demands. Doctor Magnes, in other words, might be the first victim of political Zionism”<sup>68</sup>.*

One should keep in mind that the Zionist leadership had indeed, authorised and even encouraged Judah Magnes to keep contacts with the Palestinian Arabs in the 1930s, but that each time he returned with a basis for negotiations, these were unequivocally rejected. Magnes himself was discouraged by the Zionist leadership's attitude and admitted that it did not seek peace and understanding with the Arabs of Palestine.

Second, immigration was also at the core of bi-national thought. As a matter of fact, although they did not view a Jewish majority as a goal in itself – Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin argued that the reason for that was more practical than of

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<sup>66</sup> The Arab Office, *The Future of Palestine*, London August 1947, p.67.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

principle, as they did not believe such an objective as attainable<sup>69</sup> – they were in favour of a sustained Jewish immigration into Palestine. And from the Arab point of view, that was no different from the Zionist leadership's demand. If allowed, it would alter the Arab character of Palestine.

Analysing the last proposal made by Judah Magnes for the *Ihud* to the Anglo-American Committee, Hourani noted that two points were even contrary to the principles raised by bi-nationalism. First, the plan recommended the forcible application of bi-nationalism in Palestine, if Jews and Arabs could not reach an understanding. A measure which, Hourani argued, was destructive, as the very thought of the use of force was contrary to the “moral basis” of bi-nationalism. Then remained the problem of the 100,000 immigration certificates demanded by the *Ihud* for the European Jewish refugees and which at once introduced an imbalance between the Zionists and the Palestinian Arabs.

## **E. The bi-nationalists in Israel 1948-1967**

The decision by the United Nations to implement partition as a solution to the Palestine Question was acclaimed by the Zionist leadership and rejected by the Arabs. Whilst partition put a *de facto* end to bi-nationalism by separating the political fate of both the Arabs of Palestine and the Jews, the bi-nationalists for their part continued to warn against the implementation of the UN decision right up until the establishment of Israel. The bi-nationalists appealed for caution, indeed, they considered partition as a suicidal act<sup>70</sup>. For Buber, who wrote that this was “a fundamental mistake that had to be corrected”, there was no need for a Jewish State to realise the objectives of Zionism. Moreover, he reminded that the policy set up since the Biltmore programme had progressively annihilated the Arabs' trust. A trust that would be difficult to win back, but not impossible.

However, violence and the transfer of thousands of Palestinian Arabs were unlikely to enable the Arabs to trust the Zionists and the newly established

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<sup>69</sup> Raz-Krakotzkin, Amnon, “Jewish Peoplehood, 'Jewish Politics', and political responsibility: Arendt on Zionism and Partitions”, *College Literature* 38(1), Winter 2011, pp.57-74.

<sup>70</sup> Buber, Martin, “Une erreur fondamentale qu'il faudrait corriger”, in Mendes-Flohr, Paul (ed.), *Une Terre deux peuples*, *op.cit.*, pp.284-286.



Israeli state. The reality on the ground was totally altered which made any pacifist solution impossible. Nevertheless, even then, Buber recalled the aims of Zionism and rejected the idea according to which the normalisation of the Jews in a “normal” country could alone provide a satisfactory outcome<sup>71</sup>.

Parallel to that, Magnes was in the United States doing his best to spread the *Ihud's* platform. The United States under the impulse of the State Department – which as mentioned above had been trying to prevent partition – had been trying to postpone the application of the partition resolution and as underlined by Daniel Kotzin, Magnes would then started an anti-partition campaign<sup>72</sup>. He and Hannah Arendt would support the American initiative to nominate a temporary international trusteeship until the achievement of a settlement that would guarantee the rights of the population<sup>73</sup>.

After trying to persuade the Israeli government to reverse their march to sovereignty, and to envisage the constitution of a federation within the Middle East, Buber would eventually reflect on the question of the *Ihud*, its failure, objectives and future<sup>74</sup>. He was in no doubt that the *Ihud* still had a role to play but that it had to adapt to the new situation. The *Ihud* had failed but not the cause it supported and the *Ihud* had to review its orientations. From April 1949, the *Ihud* would express its views in a new magazine: *Ner* (Light) and Martin Buber along with Rabbi Benyamin would remain the leading figures of the movement. The *Ihud* had abandoned the project of a bi-national state and advocated Arab-Israeli cooperation instead, in view – in the best-case scenario – of establishing a federation<sup>75</sup>. Besides that long-term goal, the association would focus on internal Israeli affairs and in particular the policy towards the Palestinian Arabs who remained in Israel, but also the need to authorise the return of those who were expelled<sup>76</sup>. The bi-nationalists had always thought that Zionism had a mission of justice, and now considered that that mission fell upon Israel. It was in this context that Buber and his colleagues transformed

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<sup>71</sup> Buber, Martin, “Deux sortes de sionisme”, in Mendes-Flohr, Paul (ed.), *Une Terre deux peuples*, *op.cit.*, pp.287-289.

<sup>72</sup> Kotzin, Daniel P., *Judah L. Magnes, an American Jewish non-conformist*, *op.cit.*, pp.312.

<sup>73</sup> Raz-Krakotzkin, Amon, “Jewish Peoplehood, 'Jewish Politics', and political responsibility: Arendt on Zionism and Partitions”, *op.cit.*.

<sup>74</sup> Buber, Martin, “Après la défaite politique”, in Mendes-Flohr, Paul (ed.), *Une Terre deux peuples*, *op.cit.*, pp.317-326.

<sup>75</sup> Buber, Martin, “Nous avons besoin des Arabes. Les Arabes ont besoin de nous”, in Mendes-Flohr, Paul (ed.), *Une Terre deux peuples*, *op.cit.*, pp.339-346.

<sup>76</sup> Buber, Martin, “Après la défaite politique”, *op.cit.*, pp.317-326.

their action into a struggle for equal civil rights for all citizens and that was to remain their last fight as Buber died and so did *Ner*.

## **F. Conclusion**

Bi-nationalism emerged as we have seen as a reaction to the Zionist move towards traditional western nationalism at the price of “Jewish morals” and the leadership's refusal to acknowledge the Arab presence and rights. The advocates of bi-nationalism then developed their thought so as to provide an intellectual tool to understand the stakes Zionism faced in Palestine and provide a platform for understanding between Jews and Arabs. However, these members of spiritual Zionism failed to understand that the Zionist movement had changed since the Balfour Declaration, and would never look back. Also, although they failed to acknowledge the profound change in Zionism, and to impose their views on the objectives of Zionism and the “Arab question”, they thought they could transpose their ideas into action and facilitate the contacts between both the Arab and Zionist leaderships. Naturally they failed. Whilst it is true to say that they did not have a (strong) counterpart among the Palestinians it would be short-sighted to consider that this was the unique reason of the programme's failure. Indeed, the bi-national option was, from a mainstream Zionist perspective, a programme that carried too many limitations to be attractive. Moreover, from the moment the idea of partition had emerged, the Zionist leadership jumped on the opportunity and conceived a strategy revolving around it. From the Arab viewpoint, what the bi-nationalists offered was not that different from the Zionist mainstream vision, as both required the abandonment of Arab sovereignty over Palestine and could lead to the disappearance of its Arab character through the establishment of a Jewish majority, by means of sustained immigration. Moreover, none of the bi-nationalists could claim to represent the views of the Zionist Executive. Neither Martin Buber, nor Judah Magnes were representative figures within the Zionist movement, and this was fully acknowledged by the Arabs who could not take

their propositions seriously. Arab fears were confirmed in 1942 as the Zionist movement took the one-way road of the Biltmore programme.

The many attempts by the *Ihud* to change the evolution of the Zionist project on the internal level failed, leading its members to advocate their solution within the successive international committees in the crucial mid 1940s. The advent of partition was an expected blow to their project, , the principles behind it however, were still alive and the establishment of Israel displaced the question on the frontiers of Israel where they provided a platform for the struggle for equal civil rights.

Beside the “external” factors contributing to their failure, looking carefully at the writings of the intellectuals we mentioned earlier, one can point out numerous internal contradictions and limits.

They were essentially supporting the 'sake of the Jews' and were very concerned with the future of the Jews and the consequences of their actions on the “Jewish ethics”. Even their way of approaching what they have called the “Arab question” was directed by their Jewish being. In a sense, because they were Jews and believed in Jewish morals, for the sake of “Israel” they had to be parsimonious with the Arabs.

In addition to that, and what appears as the most striking element, although they criticised the evolution of Zionism, they never questioned Zionism in itself, and its stated goal in an already populated Palestine. In fact, accepting and adhering to the general idea that Zionism could only have positive consequences for the Palestinians and the Arabs, Buber misjudged and underestimated Palestinian nationalism. He adhered to the Zionist myth according to which the people were manipulated by the landowners<sup>77</sup>, feeling threatened themselves by the “socialist values of the Zionist pioneers”. Here, Buber showed himself unable to properly analyse the Palestinian situation and the reasons of the “Arab refusal”. However sincere their initiative might have been, they were not innocent of Orientalist thoughts. Whereas critical towards nationalism and Zionism, they did think that these ideologies were what the people made of them and after all adhering themselves to Zionism, they could see the Orientalist implications of the thought and the structural discrimination

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<sup>77</sup> Buber, Martin, “Lettre à Gandhi (1939), in Mendes-Flohr, Paul (ed.), *Une terre, deux peuples*, *op.cit.*, p 62.

it implied.

Maybe one of the most striking examples is presented in an address Magnes made at the Hebrew University on November 18, 1929:

*“It is one of the great civilizing tasks before the Jewish people to try to enter the promised land, not in the Joshua way, but bringing peace and culture, hard work and sacrifice and love, and a determination to do nothing that cannot be justified before the conscience of the world”<sup>78</sup>.*

Despite all their flaws, however, the bi-nationalists with their will to find a solution based on cooperation and understanding instead of separation and partition as a way to secure national and territorial sovereignty, have introduced and developed anti-partitionism as the moral and fair stance. The establishment of the State of Israel led them to re-evaluate their action and adapt to the existence of a Jewish State. From then on, the bi-nationalists developed a discourse of civil rights in continuity of their anti-separatist engagement.

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<sup>78</sup> Magnes, Judah Leon, "Opening address of the academic year of the Hebrew University", October 29, 1929, in Goren, Arthur (ed.), *Dissenter in Zion, op.cit.*, pp. 357- 365.



## Chapter Six: The Democratic non-sectarian State option 1948-1988

After the Nakba, the Arabs of Palestine were thrown into limbo. Dispersed all over the region, social and political ties were quite impossible to safeguard and develop. As a consequence, for many years, no political programme could emerge whatsoever. They did however all share one constant goal: return and take back all of Palestine from the Zionists.

As a matter of fact, after the Nakba and the United Nations' decision to partition Palestine, the Palestinians continued to reject the partition officially, until 1988.

This chapter examines the Palestinian political evolution from the rejection of partition in 1948 to its acceptance in 1988 through the adoption of the strategic objective of a Democratic State in all of Palestine.

First, I will present the major political trends within the Palestinian camp through two organisations that were to shape Palestinian political thought, the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) and the Palestinian Liberation Movement (Fatah). Then, I will focus on the debate over the *Kiyan* that was to lead to the formation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Second, I will explore the first years of the existence of the PLO and the emergence of the Democratic State objective in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Third, I argue that acknowledging the existence of an Israeli Jewish community and inspired by the revolutionary processes in the Third World, the Palestinians elaborated a one-statist solution under the slogan of “a democratic state”. In this shift in their position, member organisations of the PLO also started to move closer to some very marginal socialist Israeli groups such as *Matzpen* with whom it would start a dialogue in view of launching a common

vision. However, it was only after 1974, and the elaboration of the phased programme, that contacts would materialise.

Finally, after rejecting United Nations resolution 242 for a few years, the mainstream faction of the PLO, recognising the facts on the ground, materialised the shift in its objectives from the liberation of Palestine to national sovereignty.

## **A. The Struggle for the Palestinian Entity (the Kiyan), 1948-1964**

### ***The Palestinian national movement: Birth and evolution of the major political movements***

Dispersal of the Palestinians was profound and it deeply altered all the components of the Palestinian people, from the largest groups (villages, clans) to the smallest ones (the family). All the national structures that had existed before 1948 had disappeared during the course of the war – apart from the AHC, which was still operating from exile – and the political elites were dispersed. This situation made it impossible for the Palestinians to deal effectively in a Unitarian framework with their fate and, more importantly to form a serious political response to the loss of their territory.

As a result of their situation, and contrary to the much conveyed idea that Palestinian nationalism (re-)emerged at best with the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, or in other words after the defeat of the Arab armies in 1967 and through the highly militant and violent attacks led by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – *Al-Jabha al-Sha'abiyyah li-Tahrir Filastin (PFLP)* – , or Fatah – *Harakat al-Taḥrir al-Waṭani al-Filastīni* – , the Palestinians were already thinking of the recovery of Palestine as soon as they were out of the country. From 1949 on, a few “small clandestine groups”, often un-organised, untrained and with rudimentary equipment, based in the Gaza strip, Syria and Jordan began launching operations in Israel<sup>1</sup>. Those who initiated such

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<sup>1</sup> Quandt, William, Ann Lesch, and Fuad Jabber, *The Politics of Palestinian nationalism*, London 1974 p. 50

operations were called the “infiltrated”, and later, they constituted the first ranks of the *fidaiyyun* organisations<sup>2</sup>. Although the *fidaiyyun*, proposed no clear and formulated political strategy, they had at least the merit of existing, making of the Palestinian people – who were lacking a political entity – an existing human “entity”. Progressively, new organisations rooted in the refugee camps and their new environment came to replace the traditional political elite movements<sup>3</sup>. In reality, the Palestinians, wherever they were, founded or integrated Arab nationalist structures, others had also formed new groups specifically based on “Palestinianism” just as the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) which was officially launched in 1959 but came to aggregate all the Palestinian students unions that existed since the British mandate or the General Union of Palestine Workers (GUPW) in 1963.

#### *Arab nationalism and Palestine liberation: the case of the ANM*

The dominant ideology in the 1950s, and probably until the 1967 defeat, was Arab nationalism, in a different form to the one from before 1948. Indeed, the majority of the Arab countries had by then, just attained their independence or were in the process of attaining it and Arab states were established, in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt... Palestine had not and as such, it became a central issue in Arab nationalism.

Among the Palestinian Arab nationalists, we find two major trends, one that sought Arab unity as the only way to liberate Palestine, and another that advocated the liberation of Palestine as a prelude to the unified Arab state. The ANM was part of the first trend whereas Fatah initiated the second. I will here present the first trend.

The Arab Nationalists Movement – *Harakat al Qawmiyyn al Arab* (ANM) was to be formed shortly after the war, in the years 1951-1952<sup>4</sup>. Among its founders were Palestinians as well as Arabs from other countries and as for the majority of the movements emerging during that period, they were students or young professionals. At the core of the movement we could find Georges

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<sup>2</sup> Sayigh, Yezid, “Reconstructing the paradox, the Arab nationalist movement, armed struggle and Palestine, 1951-1966”, *Middle East Journal* 45(4), Autumn 1991, pp. 608-629.

<sup>3</sup> Lindholm Schultz, Helena, *The Reconstruction of Palestinian nationalism*, Manchester 1999, p 43.

<sup>4</sup> Sayigh, Yezid, “Reconstructing the paradox, the Arab nationalist movement, armed struggle and Palestine, 1951-1966”, *op.cit.*, pp. 608-629.



Habash, a Palestinian whose family, originally from Jaffa, was expelled in 1948, Hani al Hindi, a Syrian who had volunteered in the Arab armies in 1948, and Wadi Haddad<sup>5</sup>. All were students at the American University of Beirut (AUB), which was to become the base for the ANM. There, they became acquainted with the history professor, Constantin Zurayk, and his work, which would define their ideological and political development<sup>6</sup>.

Moved by Arab nationalism, they considered that Palestine could only be liberated through a common effort by the Arab regimes. That meant that there needed to be a revolution, a change of regimes that would lead to Arab unity, which eventually would help achieve Palestine's total liberation<sup>7</sup>.

Georges Habash and Waddi Haddad soon moved their medical and political activities to the refugee camps in Jordan where they started training future militants and publishing *al-Rai*, the press organ of the organisation<sup>8</sup>.

Until 1956, the ANM focused on the reinforcement of its structure and in developing its networks in Lebanon, Kuwait, Iraq and Jordan but later on also in Libya, Yemen and the Gulf countries<sup>9</sup>. By 1956, the organisation adopted a number of resolutions that in substance called for the continuation of the armed struggle (which the movement encouraged unofficially and massively and had started after the arrival of Habash and Haddad in Amman in 1951, through infiltrations) and the application of the right of return<sup>10</sup>. The anti Baghdad-pact stance in the Nasserist discourse, the nationalisation of the Suez canal and the subsequent attack led by the French, British and Israeli coalition were as many founding elements in the rapprochement between the ANM and Gamal Abd al-Nasser. Nasser whom the organisation's members saw as the leader of Arab

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<sup>5</sup> Hadad was later to become the head of the executive committee of the ANM and as such he had the military wing under his responsibility.

<sup>6</sup> Baumgarten, Helga, "The three faces/phases of the Palestinian struggle", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34(4), Summer 2005, pp. 25-48.

Constantin Zurayk, *The Meaning of the disaster*, Beirut 1956. First published in Arabic and later in English.

<sup>7</sup> Georges Habache, *Les révolutionnaires ne meurent jamais, conversations avec Georges Malbrunot*, Fayard, 2008, p. 33.

In that, the ANM showed a common view with some Arab regimes and on the first plan with Egypt.

<sup>8</sup> The critical content of the journal towards Glubb Pasha, the British officer at the head of its army and as the counsellor of the King, caused the suspension of the organ which was relocated in Damascus and Georges Habash followed.

<sup>9</sup> Sayigh, Yezid, "Reconstructing the paradox, the Arab nationalist movement, armed struggle and Palestine, 1951-1966", *op.cit.*, pp. 608-629.

<sup>10</sup> Sayigh, Yezid, "Reconstructing the paradox, the Arab nationalist movement, armed struggle and Palestine, 1951-1966", *op.cit.*, pp. 608-629.

unity, a place that would be confirmed by the proclamation of the United Arab Republic which gathered Egypt and Syria. However, the collapse of the UAR in 1961 came as a shock for the ANM which saw the unity between Arabs as the only way to achieve independence in all the Arab lands and of course the liberation of Palestine. One of the repercussions of the failure of Arab Unity, and although the ANM was starting to slowly sink into oblivion, was that “in an effort to counter the rising competition from the new Palestinian activist groups, a new current had begun developing within the ANM to refocus directly on the Palestine problem”<sup>11</sup>. Here again, we see the beginning of the passage from *Qawmiyya*, pan-Arabism, as a way towards the liberation of Palestine to *Wattaniyya* as a means to reach Arab unity. By mid-1965, the ANM re-centred its policy on Palestine and the Palestinians as we can see in the Yearbook of Palestine cause<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, it announced that the struggle for Palestine was “at the very heart” of the organisation's struggle “for the realisation of the Arab nation's objectives: unity, liberation, socialism, and the redemption of Palestine”.

The early 1960s would also set the scene for internal conflict within the movement, between the trend led by Nayef Hawatmeh and Mohsen Ibrahim and the one led by Georges Habash and Wadi Haddad. These conflicts already announced the future split. In his biography, Habash was to blame them for their liberal ideas, their “moderation concerning the armed struggle” and their criticism of the organisation's relations with Gamal Abd al-Nasser. Nasser had indeed become a central figure in the ANM circles and this was to be the case until the 1967 defeat.

The policy of unity first and liberation thereafter as well as the inherent social question, which was conducted by the ANM drew harsh criticism. It has been regarded as the main reason for its failure in becoming the leading Palestinian movement. That place was taken by Fatah, which was first, since its emergence to advocate the liberation of Palestine and had put aside the social question. Second, Fatah called for a 'Palestinian struggle for Palestine'. Fatah's vision on that point was to gain legitimacy after the collapse of the AUR and the defeat of the 1967 war.

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<sup>11</sup> Baumgarten, Helga, “The three faces/phases of the Palestinian struggle”, *op.cit.*, pp. 25-48.

<sup>12</sup> Yezid Sayigh, “Reconstructing the paradox: the Arab nationalist movement, armed struggle and Palestine, 1951-1966”, *op.cit.*, p. 619.

### *Fatah and the 'Palestine first' slogan*

The group that was to become the Palestine national liberation movement (Fatah) made its *debut* in the late 1950s and became a dominant force after the 1967 war and especially after the *Karameh* battle in 1968, where it gained consideration. The leaders of the movement started their political training in the early 1950s within Palestinian students unions. Among the founders, we could cite for example, Yasser Arafat who was the leader of the Students Union before founding Fatah, Salah Mesbah Khalaf or Abu Iyad, who was to become the chief of Intelligence and Khalil Ibrahim Al Wazir (Abu Jihad), who was to become the commander of the Armed branch.

Just as for the ANM, the Suez war in 1956 constituted a major event in Fatah's development and constitution. The movement developed in the Gaza Strip, first, as an underground cell, then, its members studied in Cairo's universities to finally find employment in the Gulf countries especially in Kuwait, where Fatah was officially established in 1959. Like the ANM, Fatah's inspiration came from the Suez Canal war, the independence struggle in Algeria led by the FLN (*Front de Liberation Nationale* – National Liberation Front), and the Marxist revolution in Cuba. All these struggles were seen as models of success and played a major role in the motivation and then in the development of the movement and its thinking, as suggested in an editorial published in *Filastinuna* – the organisation's press organ – in 1960:

*“Revolutions all over the world are inspiring us. The revolution in Algeria lights our way like a bright torch of hope. When the Algerians took up their revolution in 1954, they were only some hundred Arabs facing 20,000 French troops and well- armed settlers [...] The revolution in Algeria proved to us that a people can organise itself and build its military strength in the very process of fighting”<sup>13</sup>.*

Nevertheless, unlike the ANM, Fatah was not to take part in local or global struggles but only take inspiration from them, although non-interference in internal affairs of the Arab states was a slogan that did not prevent them from publicly criticising the Arab regimes<sup>14</sup>.

Contrary to the ANM however, Fatah called for a Palestinian entity which it

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<sup>13</sup> Baumgarten, Helga, “The three faces/phases of the Palestinian struggle”, *op.cit.*, pp. 25-48.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

considered as a “basic demand and a legitimate right”<sup>15</sup>. It was then logical that Fatah would also become the first organisation to call for a proper Palestinian state. Helena Cobban summed up the objectives of the movement in four points, the Palestinians had to take their responsibility and organise themselves autonomously; they had to keep in mind the major objective that was the liberation of Palestine as the pre-condition for the Arab unity; the liberation could only be achieved by the means of armed struggle and if the major force in this struggle was the Palestinians themselves, they would have to work closely with “the other Arab and international forces on the basis of equality to help achieve the goal”<sup>16</sup>.

From 1958 to 1965, Fatah focused on its organisational development and numerous cells were created in cities and villages of the West Bank, the movement even developed military training sessions for its members. Contrary to other structures and on foremost the ANM – that sought the establishment of a mass movement as the basis and support tool for the armed struggle – Fatah considered the armed struggle as the major tool for the Palestinian people to recover its identity and for constituting a mass movement<sup>17</sup>.

### ***The Palestinian Kiyān and the establishment of the PLO***

The lack of solution for the Palestine problem, the establishment of numerous more or less coherent Palestinian groups in the fifties and the infiltration operations from the neighbouring countries to Israel were all facts on the ground that the Arab States and the Arab League had to deal with. And, whilst the Palestinian cause was central to the Arab governments, the latter were not prepared to enter a new open conflict with Israel, a conflict the infiltrations were threatening to precipitate. Parallel to that, since its creation, the Arab League had been approaching the Palestine question without success and showed itself unable to make any effective decision.

This is the context in which the question of the Palestinian *Kiyān*, namely

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<sup>15</sup> Shemesh, Moshe, “The founding of the PLO, 1964”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 20,(4), October 1984, pp. 105-141.

<sup>16</sup> Cobban, Helena, *The Palestine Liberation Organization: people, power and politics*, cited in Kimmerling, Baruch and Migdal, Joel S, *The Palestinian People: A History*, op.cit., p.244.

<sup>17</sup> Picaudou, Nadine, *Le Mouvement national palestinien, genèse et structures*, Paris 1989, p. 116.

the Palestinian entity arose in the late 1950s and it was to lead to controversy and conflict within the Arab League. In 1959, the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Arab League Council (ALC) was held, and was the occasion that the United Arab Republic in the person of Nasser chose to raise the question of the Palestinian entity. For the record, one should know that Fatah was the first in 1958 to call for a Palestinian entity<sup>18</sup>. The complexity of the question made the ALC call for a high-level Arab conference to examine it and redefine the terms of the struggle for Palestine<sup>19</sup>. Until then, the ultimate goal was to liberate Palestine, but there was no clear idea of the shape of its political structure<sup>20</sup>. Not that the term of *Kiyan* was any more clear, but it had at least the merit to state that the Palestinians constituted a definite entity and that Palestine was theirs. It also left the questions of the structure and the framework open. Would it be attached to a larger Arab state with Syria and Lebanon? Would it be part of Jordan? Or perhaps eventually would it be a Palestinian independent and sovereign state? It was not yet decided and when the problem of the Palestinian entity was discussed, it raised great controversy.

Behind the question of the Palestinian *Kiyan*, lay the inability of the Arab regimes to cope with the Israeli military power in the event they were to enter a military conflict, but also a political concern. Indeed, creating that entity would remind everyone and constitute a proof of the existence of the Palestinians as a people having nationalistic aspirations<sup>21</sup>.

General Abdel Karim Qassem, president of the Iraqi council, went on proposing a Palestinian entity under the form of an Arab Republic of Palestine. This idea, as much as it pointed to a real and decisive question, also constituted a jab at Egypt and Jordan whom he accused of attributing themselves parts of Palestine. As expected, Jordan, which considered the western part of Palestine as a part of its own territory, considered the Iraqi proposal as a threat to its sovereignty and as an attack. Egypt, that had made the harshest

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<sup>18</sup> Shemesh, Moshe, "The Palestinian society in the wake of the 1948 war: from social fragmentation to consolidation", *Israel Studies* 9(1), Spring 2004, pp. 86-100. The source of the information is an unpublished notebook on ideology and strategy, dated from 1958, Cairo and probably written according to Shemesh by a PLO member.

<sup>19</sup> Shemesh, Moshe, "The founding of the PLO, 1964", *Middle Eastern Studies* 20(4), October 1984, pp. 105-141.

<sup>20</sup> Shemesh, Moshe, *The Palestinian entity 1959-1974. Arab politics and the PLO*, London 1988, p.xi-xii.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

condemnations against Jordan when it announced it would annex the West Bank, considered it as a criticism of its regime.

The Iraqi programme consisted of calling for a Palestinian Republic and creating a Palestinian army – in which every Palestinian would have the possibility to enrol – which would liberate the country hand in hand with the other Arab armies.

In March 1960, Nasser announced the establishment of a Palestinian National Union (PNU) that would gather all the Palestinians present in the United Arab Republic<sup>22</sup>. The Gaza strip, which was under Egyptian military rule, and later Syria were to be bases for mini institutions of the PNU preparing the way for the implementation of the Palestinian entity. However, the UAR collapsed in 1961, and the measures taken by Nasser were to be applied only in the Gaza strip. The Palestinians in Gaza for example, were even to be given a “temporary constitution” in May 1962, a constitution that was to be replaced in the future by “the constitution of the Palestinian state”<sup>23</sup>.

The collapse of the UAR was to create a shock in the fervent Arab nationalist circles and above all within the ANM, which explained the event by the inability of the UAR to consult the people. The leaders of the ANM – those from the trend of Georges Habash – always thought that the people had to be mobilised as only the people could “impose Arab Unity”, and this was eventually Nasser's conclusion too<sup>24</sup>.

In June 1963, the representative of the AHC and former representative of the All-Palestine Government died and this raised the problem of Palestinian representation. Indeed, the AHC had slowly during the previous years lost its representativeness and was regarded as an anachronistic institution, so, what was to replace it, who was to be the representative of the Palestinian people? This question was to be raised during the ALC meeting in September. Nasser and Qassem who had presented competing proposals wanted to facilitate an agreement and finally found a consensus. They invited Ahmad al-Shuqayri who presented his proposals for a Palestinian entity and Palestinian elections, these

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<sup>22</sup> Baron, Xavier, *Les Palestiniens, un peuple*, Paris 1984, p.83.

<sup>23</sup> Shemesh, Moshe, *The Problem of the Palestinian entity, 1959-1963*, *op.cit.*, p. 7

<sup>24</sup> Habache, Georges, *Les révolutionnaires ne meurent jamais, Conversations avec Georges Malbrunot*, *op.cit.*, p.57.

served as a basis for the discussions. Jordan however, was against the formation of a Palestinian entity and the principle of Palestinian elections. Despite the rejection by the Jordanian Government, which feared that the Palestinians would claim a territorial sovereignty over the parts of Palestine it occupied, the ALC made the decision “to organise the Palestinian people in order that this one plays its role in the liberation of its country and can decide of its future”<sup>25</sup>. It passed two resolutions. The first designated al-Shuqayri as the Palestinian representative at the ALC and the international institutions – that is to say at the UN where until then the AHR represented the Palestinians – until the Palestinians could meet and elect their representatives. The second underlined the primacy of the Palestinians in their struggle<sup>26</sup>.

The first Arab Summit conference was held in January 1964 in Cairo, and dealt with the representation of the Palestinians, the Palestinian entity and the problem of water raised because Israel was pumping the waters of the Jordan river. The Conference approved the two resolutions passed by the ALC and confirmed Ahmad al-Shuqayri as the responsible for the establishment of Palestinian institutions, thus going further in the *nationalisation* of the Palestine question<sup>27</sup>. The Palestinians were now given responsibility over their fate and to defend their national rights.

### *Transition*

In the aftermath of the Nakba, the dispersed Palestinians nourished only one idea, take back what had been seized by the Zionist militias and find their way back home. As we have seen above, they have started to organise despite their dispersion however, among the multitude of organisations, associations and armed groups there seemed to develop no concrete political programme and none that clarified the future of Palestine after its liberation from the hands of the Zionists. The latter were after all settlers who had dispossessed the Palestinians and the Arabs from part of the *Watan al 'Arabi* and they would be fought and eventually they would have to return from where they came. So, the

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<sup>25</sup> Kadi, Leila, *Arab Summit Conferences and the Palestine problem (1936- 1950)-(1964-1966)*, *op.cit.*, p.100; Xavier Baron, *Les palestiniens un peuple*, *op.cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Kadi, Leila, *Arab Summit Conferences and the Palestine problem (1936- 1950)-(1964-1966)*, *op.cit.*, p.102.

situation did not leave any space for thinking a common future with the settlers who did not seem to wish to live with the Arabs anyway. In brief, the Arabs and Palestinians were indeed anti-partitionists but the colonial fact would not enable them to voice unitarian propositions. The settlers had gained control of part of Palestine thanks to the United Nations and that despite the indigenous will, then, they seized by force part of the rest of Palestine and still they could proclaim their independence without raising any opposition apart from the non western countries. In conclusion, on the one hand, the dispersion and exile themselves rendered impossible the elaboration of such a political programme let alone one including a Zionist presence, on the other hand Palestine and the Palestinians had become a mere humanitarian issue in the eyes of the international instances which thus would not consider the political rights of the Palestinians. However, the policy of the *Kiyan* marked the beginnings of a new era, one that would consecrate the search for statehood.

## **B. The PLO charter and the one-state solution**

The decision by the Arab League to provide the Palestinians with proper representation and institutions in order to pursue their goal of liberation of Palestine and establish their future entity would timidly initiate a move towards the independence of the Palestinian struggle and eventually of a Palestinian nation vis-à-vis the Arab regimes. However, it would also consecrate the formal fragmentation of the Palestinian cause and the separation of the Palestinians from the rest of the A Palestinian Congress was summoned by al-Shuqayri and it started working on gathering the numerous and different Palestinian groups and associations. A nation was under formation, although it would organise in exile.

In May, the PLO released a document that was its 29 article national covenant defining the Palestinian struggle and its objectives<sup>28</sup>. After stressing the non-religious foundations of the Palestine Question, the covenant focused on four main subjects.

First, the Arab character was a founding principle and as such, it was

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<sup>28</sup> The text of the Charter is available at: <http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/palestine/pid/12363>



stressed in the preamble as well as in several articles of the covenant. That meant that Arab Unity was an objective common to all the Arabs but also that Palestine was a central issue for all the Arabs.

Second, the covenant insisted on the indivisibility of the territory of Palestine (in its mandatory boundaries) and the specificity of the Palestinian “personality”. Once this was stated, the charter called for the struggle against all threats to the unity and the Arabness (al-'Uruba) of the territory to the liberation of the homeland.

Third, the membership of the Jews of Palestinian origin to the Palestinian people was regarded as a core principle provided that they were “willing to live peacefully and loyally in Palestine”. This is to be read as a setback compared the Arab Office's statements regarding the question of the Jews in Palestine in 1946 and 1947<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, this instead of proposing a solution to the Zionist Question, it proposed a solution for the non or anti-Zionist Palestinian Jews present in Palestine.

Finally, the covenant rejected the Balfour Declaration and Zionism and refuted the partition of Palestine as an illegal act committed by the International institutions. As such, it was decided to be null and void and they called for the de-partition of Palestine, however, no state was yet envisaged.

The first Palestinian National Council, held from May 28 to June 2, 1964, gathered 388 delegates, among whom 242 were Palestinians from Jordan and 146 representatives of Palestinians from Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, Qatar, Kuwait and Iraq. To these, should be added observers from *Fatah* and the ANM. Indeed, both organisations were suspicious towards the new organisation, which they considered as too close to the Arab regimes and feared could fall under Jordanian control. However, they were conscious that they could not leave that space, either for the sake of the cause, or for their own sake as organisations. Fatah and the ANM decided to participate in the conference but not in the institutions about to be created<sup>30</sup>. At the end of the meeting, Ahmad al-Shuqayri was confirmed as the chairman of the PLO, which to the AHC's regret was then officially established. Indeed, in June, the AHC, which understood that it would put an end to its existence, announced that it would not recognise the

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<sup>29</sup> See Chapter Four, the Arab case presented to the Anglo-America Committee.

<sup>30</sup> Habache, Georges, *Les révolutionnaires ne meurent jamais, Conversations avec Georges Malbrunot*, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

PLO. However, all the Arab states did recognise it as the Palestinians' representative organisation. It was the end of the old leadership, which saw its central office in Iraq closed and left the PLO as the only representative of the Palestinian people.

The creation of a Palestinian entity/*Kiyan* and of the PLO as the Palestinian people's representative, were approved by the second Arab summit which took place from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1964<sup>31</sup>. Egypt, who had carried the initiative of the debate about the *Kiyan* a few years earlier, reacted favourably to the creation of the PLO. One of the main problems faced by the PLO and its representative, al-Shuqayri, was the problem of true representation and legitimacy. The Organisation aspired to be the representative organ but was facing a huge challenge: it had no territory and the population it sought to represent was dispersed all around the Arab world and beyond. The Palestinian national movement as incarnated in the PLO had to prove more than any other movement its representativeness. In response to that, the PLO's principles stated that each Palestinian, independently of gender or socio-economical background, was a "natural member of the PLO"<sup>32</sup>. To achieve such a unity, al-Shuqayri invited all the Palestinian organisations to join him.

The PLO eventually formed the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), and the armed struggle, one of the pillars of the Palestinian struggle, started in a more or less organised fashion<sup>33</sup>.

The establishment of the PLO and the PLA opened another chapter of Palestinian and Arab history, it would prefigure the decline of pan-Arabism, the further development of a "Palestinian particularism" and the Palestinians' struggle for the liberation of their homeland. But, it also announced the challenges the Palestinian national movement would have to face as the latter was engaging on the road to national and territorial sovereignty.

The 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which marked the defeat of the Arab armies and consecrated the occupation of all Palestine as well as territories of Syria, Egypt and Lebanon, would lead the Palestinian resistance organisations to

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<sup>31</sup> Kadi, Leila S., *Arab summit conferences and the Palestine problem, (1936-1950)-(1964-1966)*, *op.cit.*, p.127.

<sup>32</sup> Baumgarten, Helga, "The three faces/phases of the Palestinian struggle", *op.cit.*

<sup>33</sup> The first officially recognised operations as we have seen were led by *Al Assifa* (the Storm) which would be known later as the armed branch of the Fatah. *Al Assifa* launched ten simultaneous attacks on the night of the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1964.

redefine their strategy and objectives. From the crisis engendered by defeat, these organisations would decide to reshuffle the PLO and transform it into a framework for “national unity”<sup>34</sup>. This was the occasion to gradually welcome the main Palestinian political compounds as well as smaller groups and reaffirm its role in the liberation of Palestine.

Profound changes were then set in the 1968 PLO charter. Contrary to the previous charter, the new one clearly insisted on the specific role of the Palestinians in the liberation struggle and it amended the article on the Jews. Whilst until then, only the Jews of Palestinian descent were allowed to stay, the 1968 Charter enlarged the category by including all the Jews (and their descendants) who were in Palestine “before the Zionist offensive”<sup>35</sup>.

### ***Fatah and the elaboration of the democratic state project***

The changes evoked above were made possible by the military defeat of 1967 which encouraged first Fatah and then the other Palestinian organisations to adopt – or in the case of Fatah, to develop – the “Palestine first” slogan. Until then, and as mentioned in length above, Palestine's liberation was closely linked with and dependent on Arab unity.

Whilst the liberation of Palestine continued to constitute the major objective of the Palestinian resistance movement, 1967 defeat of the Arab option had also introduced the need for a more specific political programme. The concept of liberation was indeed far too vague to be carried forward and communicated about. Fatah was then in contact with many revolutionary and liberation movements and its thinking probably benefited from that. Indeed, as explained by Abu Hatem, the Fatah representative in Paris at the time, when questioned by Alain Gresh, it was further to discussions with Arab and non-Arab political forces that the need of an objective, a specific goal emerged<sup>36</sup>. He also explained that the idea of the democratic state then emerged as a logical one as it was also part of Palestinian history. So, whilst Fatah had started discussing

<sup>34</sup> Gresh, Alain, *OLP, Histoire et stratégies. Vers l'État palestinien, op.cit.*, p.23.

<sup>35</sup> Berque, Jacques and le Groupe de Recherche et d'Action pour le règlement du problème palestinien (GRAPP), *Palestiniens et la crise israélo-arabe 1967-1973*, Paris 1974.

The text of the 1968 Charter is available at: <http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/palestine/pid/12362>

<sup>36</sup> Gresh, Alain, *OLP, Histoire et stratégies. Vers l'État palestinien, op.cit.*, p.23.

the possibility of a democratic state immediately after the Arab defeat of 1967 and the occupation of the rest of Palestine by Israel, the organisation would wait until 1968 to present publicly its programme in the form of three articles which insisted on the meaning/significance of the Democratic State, i.e. “the sole progressive humanitarian solution that appeared on the Palestinian scene since the racist and colonial Zionist conquest”<sup>37</sup>. Then, on January 1, 1969 it finally adopted a resolution in that direction<sup>38</sup>. In the aftermath of the war, the United Nations had appealed, in resolution 242, for the restitution of territories captured by Israel, thus reaffirming the principle of partition. This marked a setback for the Palestinians, as the UN was not referring at all to what had happened since 1947. So, the resolution passed by Fatah filled two purposes. First, it expressed the rejection of resolution 242, which ignored the national rights of the Palestinian people. Second, it stated that the final objective was the “restoration of the independent democratic State of Palestine, all of whose citizens will enjoy equal rights regardless of their religion”<sup>39</sup>. Besides, it stated two basic principles. On the one hand, it recalled the Arab roots of Palestine which once liberated and constituted as a State would contribute to the edification of a united and progressive Arab society<sup>40</sup>. On the other hand, it announced that Fatah did not

*“fight against the Jews as a religious and ethnic community. It fights against Israel as an expression of a colonisation based on a racist and expansionist technocratic system, an expression of the Zionism and the colonialism”<sup>41</sup>.*

The resolution of Fatah was “revolutionary” on two levels. First it called for a state, the very thing that was consensually opposed by the main factions of the resistance organisations and the Arab States. Second, it referred to the Jews, all of them, thus contravening the Charter which as mentioned above only evoked the Jews who lived permanently in Palestine “before the Zionist invasion”. Fatah's proposal would open the way to a series of often heated debates between the member organisations of the PLO and their discussions in

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<sup>37</sup> Rasheed, Mohammad, *Towards a democratic state in Palestine*, Beirut (Palestine Liberation Organisation), November 1970.

<sup>38</sup> Fatah, “Déclaration du comité central du Fatah”, January 1, 1969.

<sup>39</sup> Fatah, “Non à la résolution du 22 novembre 1967, oui à la lutte de libération des peuples, Déclaration du Comité Central du Fatah”, January 1, 1969, in Khader Bishara & Naim (eds.), *Textes de la révolution palestinienne 1968-1974*, Paris, 1975 pp. 159-160.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Fatah, “Non à la résolution du 22 novembre 1967, oui à la lutte de libération des peuples, Déclaration du Comité Central du Fatah”, *op.cit.*

the framework of the PNC, but also among its own ranks.

### **C. Towards adopting of the Democratic state as the main strategy**

On the inter-Palestinian level, *Fatah's* proposal did not fail to arouse controversy. The discussions were lively, but it was the principle of a “democratic society” and not of a “democratic state” in Palestine that was to be adopted by the PLO during its fifth congress in September 1969. Indeed, the Arab nationalist vision was still very strong and the Palestinian leadership would not yet call for a state. From 1970, a number of positions would emerge, affirm and contribute to the debate. Whilst different positions were to appear, it is important to note that all the PLO member organisations did agree on one point at least, the refusal of an independent state in the West Bank or the occupied territories.

#### ***The debates over the democratic and non-sectarian state: A general overview***

The debate within the PNC reveals that the Democratic State created an ideological rift between the main organisations, which left space for the emergence of three major positions.

Favourable to the objective set by the *Fatah*, and the Syrian Baath affiliated organisation, the *Saiqa*, immediately aligned with it. However, the major supporter of the idea was indeed, the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DPFLP)<sup>42</sup>. The latter fully supported *Fatah's* proposal and went on to say that this was the only way forward for the revolutionary Palestinian national movement. On the occasion of the Sixth NPC, it submitted

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<sup>42</sup> The DPFLP as we will see resulted from a secession from the PFLP. The PFLP is itself an organisation that was created just after the 1967 war and is the result of a merger between three Palestinian Marxist-Leninist groups, *Abtal al-Audah* (Heroes of the Return), a commando group established in 1966 by the ANM, Youth for Revenge, and Palestine Liberation Front led by Ahmad Jibril (who was later to split from the PFLP to form the PFLP-GC or General Command).

a draft resolution in which it rejected what it called all “chauvinistic and reactionary” reactions, wherever they came from. It argued that the liberation of Palestine, prerequisite to the establishment of the Democratic State, would be achieved through armed struggle and finally, not so unambiguously according to Alain Gresh<sup>43</sup>, the DPFLP twice used the term “nationalist” as an adjective to describe the Arabs but also the Jews. However, for the DPFLP, the Democratic State was above all a way to bring a solution to the Jewish question and the way to that state was seen as being the establishment of an Arab unity through socialism<sup>44</sup>. The DPFLP would also prove to be the first organisation to launch a dialogue with a small and marginal Israeli organisation, the Socialist Workers Organisation better known by the name of its publication, *Matzpen*.

The idea was opposed by the Arab Liberation Front (ALF) - which envisaged no settlement outside of the Arab nation<sup>45</sup> - and by the AHC. The latter, ousted by the Arab League and replaced by the PLO, which it did not recognise as legitimate, published a critical text on the term, on March 12, 1970. Combining objective and subjective criticism the AHC stated several reasons why a democratic state would be doomed to failure. Including, on the one hand, the inherently exclusivist character of Zionism and on the other hand, the Zionist claim to a Jewish state in which Palestinians would have no place. It recalled that Zionist thought had produced the expulsion of the Palestinians (which was a logical outcome). Going further in its reasoning, the AHC continued by stating that the demographic data had changed, making the Palestinians a minority if a such a state was ever to be established<sup>46</sup>.

More reluctant than in opposition, other organisations accepted and adopted the principle of coexistence but proposed a refinement of the slogan *Democratic State* and questioned the proposed framework. This was the case of the PFLP, whose Public Information Office published in 1970, a brochure of three texts and interviews with the movement's leaders, including George

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<sup>43</sup> Gresh, Alain, *L'OLP, histoire et stratégies. Vers l'État palestinien*, op.cit., p.64

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Quandt, William, Jaber, Fuad and Ann Moseley Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian nationalism*, op.cit., p104.

<sup>46</sup> Arab Higher Committee for Palestine, *Statement on the Palestinian democratic state and the co-existence with the Jews*, Beirut March 12, 1970. (Arabic)

Habash on the question of the Democratic State<sup>47</sup>. The publication essentially dealt with the struggle against Israel as a state in connexion with Imperialism, a struggle that ought to be launched by the Palestinians in connection with the Arab masses. Thus, the PFLP proposed to replace the Palestinian question in its Arab context through a revolutionary vision. Furthermore, these texts also addressed the need to discuss directly with the "exploited and deceived Jewish masses" so that they could become aware of their interest in living in peace with the Palestinians and the Arabs. What it meant however, was that they rejected the principle of separation and called for dialogue. For the PFLP, the term "democratic" contained in the term was subject to questioning only to remind that "no progressive national liberation movement is responsible for finding a democratic solution to a situation of aggression", and therefore the democratic solution was in fact a solution to the "Jewish question". Thus, in order to liberate the Jews from the imperialist enterprise to which they were subjected, it might be worth considering a call for the establishment of a democratic state, but always in the context of a liberation struggle of all masses of the region<sup>48</sup>.

In a similar vein, fearing that by adopting the slogan of a democratic and secular state, the PLO would disengage from the Arab countries by providing a Palestinian solution to the "Jewish question" and creating a new non-Arab identity, some members of the Fatah also criticised the term<sup>49</sup>.

As a consequence of the debates, Fatah started to refine the terms of its objectives. In an article in *Middle East International*, Nabil Shaath (Fatah) offered their vision of the Democratic State, which could be summed up as follows. First, it would be "on the whole of Palestine". Second, to attain liberation, the "Zionist state must be destroyed" leaving its place to a "non-racialist, non-sectarian progressive, secular Palestine that would "be part of the Arab revolutionary movement and future federated Arab land" not as a bi-national state but as a unitary one<sup>50</sup>.

This debate of ideas did reflect on the resolutions of the PNC issued between 1969 and 1973. These would sometimes highlight the watchword,

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<sup>47</sup> PFLP (Information Department), *Palestine: towards a democratic solution*, Beirut, 1970, 42pp. (Arabic). The exact date of publication is unknown, however it was most certainly after May as indeed, among the documents is an interview dated from May 23.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Gresh, Alain, *OLP, histoire et stratégies. Vers l'État palestinien*, *op.cit.*, p.57.

<sup>50</sup> Shaath, Nabil, "Planning for the future", *Middle East International* (7), October 1971, pp.32-33.

sometimes – and mainly on issues related to the political situation and the particularly the situation of the Palestinian resistance Organisations in Jordan – they did leave it aside.

### ***Towards the PNC's adoption of the Democratic State***

Willing to safeguard their historical rights and to repair the injustice undergone while taking into account the reality on the ground, the Palestinian organisations in their majority claimed the establishment of a Democratic State on all the territory of historic Palestine. The adoption of that objective marked a major turning point in Palestinian politics. The eighth PNC estimating that the political developments related to the Arab regimes had nothing to do with the issue of Israeli Jews, finally adopted the slogan. Whilst this decision was sanctioned by an overwhelming majority, it had gone through different stages from the fifth PNC to the eleventh. In this process, Fatah and the DPFLP played a major role just as they would play a determining role in the 1973 discussions that would lead to the adoption of the phased plan in 1974. Besides placing the democratic state as the objective of the Palestinian struggle, the PNC resolutions also stressed the rejection of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories, as proposed in the peace plans that emerged after the 1967 war, notably the Roger plan.

The six day war had in many ways introduced major changes in the Palestinian resistance movement and as a consequence in the PLO. As a matter of fact, the Palestinian resistance organisations and the top ranks of Fatah, had taken the opportunity to consolidate their power over the PLO and constitute the new charter in 1968. The Palestinian resistance organisations would eventually take over the PLO during the fifth PNC in February 1969, which confirmed Fatah's prominence. The high representation of Fatah only reflected the low representation of the PFLP which then decided to boycott the meeting. In the meanwhile, Fatah had proposed that the PNC adopt the establishment of a democratic state as the objective of its struggle and in the absence of the PFLP which had already voiced its reservations on the idea, it



was easily able to pass the principle. The delegates would eventually during that meeting introduce and adopt the establishing of a:

*“free democratic society in Palestine encompassing all Palestinians, including Muslims, Christians, and Jews ... and rescuing Palestine from the hegemony of International Zionism”.*

The next PNC would re-affirm the control of Fatah, with the election of Yasser Arafat as chairman of the PLO's Executive Committee, as well as the DPFLP boycott which nevertheless sent an observer. Moreover, the other group that expressed its rejection of the Democratic State, the Arab Liberation Front was also absent from the discussion. Once again, the debate over the Democratic State was conducted without the main opponents to the idea. In the meantime, the DPFLP had emerged from an internal crisis opposing George Habash and his followers and Nayef Hawatmeh and his. Indeed, Hawatmeh who had already expressed dissenting views, was now claiming that the DPFLP was turning into a “petit bourgeois” organisation and that it should reconsider its evolution to what he considered political conservatism. Moreover, Hawatmeh considered the party focussed more than necessary on military matters whereas it ought to develop as a grass-roots movement and concentrate on the elaboration of a revolutionary ideology<sup>51</sup>. He demanded clear engagement with what he called the popular revolutionary forces throughout the Arab world, which he could not obtain from George Habash. Indeed, the latter argued that the bourgeoisie was part of the Palestinian people and that, although the direction of the party should not be led by bourgeois, the party could not simply ignore them<sup>52</sup>. Hawatmeh's trend eventually split from the PFLP into a new organisation, the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DPFLP)<sup>53</sup>. The latter would then, rejoin the PLO. The DPFLP did thus, participate in the debates of the sixth PNC and it did not come empty handed, on the contrary, it made a proposal for a resolution that went even further than the one presented by Fatah at the former PNC. Besides bringing back to the

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<sup>51</sup> These views were notably developed in the text resulting from the first clandestine meeting (in August 1968) of the faction led by Hawatmeh: “Organiser la lutte populaire armée, Manifeste du premier congrès clandestin”, 1968, in Khader and Naim Bishara, *Textes de la révolution palestinienne, op.cit.*, pp.251-259.

<sup>52</sup> Georges Habache, *Les révolutionnaires ne meurent jamais, Conversations avec Georges Malbrunot, op.cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>53</sup> Kimmerling, Baruch and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian people, a history, op.cit.*, p.256.

foreground the idea of an independent Palestinian *State* (which had been replaced by *society* in the previous resolution), it rejected “all chauvinistic positions” coming from the western states or from the resistance organisations themselves, and most importantly it acknowledged equal national rights to both Arabs and Jews:

*“a popular and democratic solution to Palestine's and Israel's problems [...] such a solution means the establishment of a Palestinian popular and democratic state for the Jews and the Arabs who would enjoy the same rights. Both Arabs and Jews shall live without discrimination and will be granted the right to develop and promote their respective national (watani) culture. [...] [The Democratic State] will include Arabs and Jews enjoying equal national rights and duties”<sup>54</sup>.*

However, as already underlined by numerous observers, one should take the meaning of national rights carefully as indeed, whilst the DPFLP recognised national rights to the Jews, it would not yet accept the principle of a Jewish State. Thus in contravention with its own political background<sup>55</sup>. Of course, the statement provoked intense debates, far more heated than before, notably because of the reference to national rights. Nevertheless, despite its reservations, the PNC would set the establishment of a Democratic State (and no more society) in Palestine as the strategic goal of the PLO. However, the regional situation, namely the growing tensions between the Palestinian resistance organisations and the Hashemite government, would propel the question to a secondary level. The decision would then, develop no further during the seventh PNC, which was held in Cairo from May 30 to June 4, 1970, although we can note that the PNC gave authority to the Executive Committee to set up a commission to further study its content<sup>56</sup>.

As a matter of fact, since 1968, the relations between the Palestinian resistance organisations and the Jordanian government had started deteriorating. Indeed, although the PLO's charter stipulated abstention from any interference in the Arab affairs, the Palestinians who were leading their resistance from the Arab countries de-facto interfered in the political life<sup>57</sup>. Furthermore,

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<sup>54</sup> Quandt, William, Jaber, Fuad and Ann Moseley Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinians nationalism*, *op.cit.*, p104.

<sup>55</sup> Alain Gresh explain that marxist-leninist obedience, to which referred the DPFLP was clear on the fact that all the nations should enjoy their right to self-determination and of a state of their own. Alain Gresh, *OLP, histoire et stratégies. Vers l'État palestinien*, *op.cit.*, p.63.

<sup>56</sup> Hamid, Rashid (ed.), *PNC resolutions, 1964-1974*, Beirut 1975, p.162.

<sup>57</sup> Khalidi, Rashid, *The Iron cage*, *op.cit.*, p.146.

Jordan was in a particular situation as it contained a large number of Palestinians, who after all constituted a second Power in place. Then, after King Hussein's visit to the U.S and Egypt, he decided to restrain even more the Palestinian organisations activities in Jordan, this, followed by Egypt's and Jordan's acceptance of the Rogers Plan that only advocated Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied after 1967 and the restitution of the West Bank to Jordan, dealt the final blow and provoked violent clashes between the resistance organisations and the Jordanian troops. This was to be exacerbated by the more aggressive struggle method adopted notably by the PFLP, DPFLP and Fatah – including hostage taking and plane hijacking notably on Jordanian soil<sup>58</sup>. The response of King Hussein was rapid: decreeing a military government and launching in September 1970, a deadly offensive against the Palestinian resistance organisations. The offensive did in reality end up with a massacre – Black September – and later the expulsion and resettlement of the Palestinian resistance organisations in Lebanon. In the meanwhile, the PLO had become nearly all-encompassing as the PFLP was re-integrated to the organisation.

After the stabilisation of the situation (although there still were on-going combats in north-western Jordan), the eighth PNC was convened from February 28 to March 5, 1971 and among its decisions, it reaffirmed the goal of a Democratic State and this time, it was endorsed by all the organisations of the PLO. This move eventually consecrated the shift towards the adoption of the national sovereignty paradigm.

*“The armed struggle of the Palestinian people is neither a racial nor a religious struggle directed against the Jews. That is why the future state to be established in Palestine liberated from Zionist imperialism is the democratic state of Palestine. Anyone interested can live in peace with the same rights and the same duties within the aspirations of the Arab national liberation and total unity [...] especially on the unity of the people of both sides of the Jordan”<sup>59</sup>.*

This plebiscite for the Democratic State went hand in hand with the rejection of all projects to establish a Palestinian State over part of Palestine, probably as a response to rumours that the United States supported the establishment of such a state in the West Bank and Gaza<sup>60</sup> and to the attempts

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<sup>58</sup> Khader, Bishara, *L'Europe et la Palestine. Des croisades à nos jours, op.cit.*, pp.226-229.

<sup>59</sup> Hamid, Rashid (ed.), *PNC Resolutions, 1964-1974, 1975, op.cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>60</sup> Quandt, William, Jaber, Fuad and Ann Moseley Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinians nationalism,*

by West Bank local personalities to obtain autonomy or even a Palestinian State along side Israel<sup>61</sup>. Then, the Council also proclaimed the unity of the Jordanian-Palestinian people. This stemmed from two considerations, first the events had proven that the Jordanian people needed to get rid of the regime and establish a Democratic government, second, the very partition between Palestine and Jordan was considered as a colonial fact and as such it was artificial. After "Black September", the PNC would of course adopt a harder line against King Hussein. This line would be developed further during the ninth PNC, during which the DPFLP made a long statement on the necessity of overthrowing the Jordanian regime in the face of an increasingly stronger secessionist front<sup>62</sup>. By 1972, however, Hussein having heard of discussions between the United States and Israel in view of a plan based on the establishment of a Palestinian State in Jordan and the West Bank, set up his own plan for a federation between the West Bank and Jordan under the form of the United Arab Kingdom<sup>63</sup>. The Jordanian plan being based on the informal recognition of Israel, the Palestinians vividly rejected it during the Tenth PNC in April 1972<sup>64</sup>. A rejection shared by the Arab States which saw it as a unilateral attempt to find only a partial solution to the Palestine Question<sup>65</sup>.

Until 1972, the Palestinian resistance movement was rather consistent in its refusal of a state on part of Palestine and this was translated notably in the decisions of the PNC which simultaneously advocated a Democratic State and rejected all the peace plans based on the recognition of Israel and of resolution 242. However, the 1973 war introduced a change in the course of action and the political positions of some of the most important organisations of the PLO

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*op.cit.*, p134.

<sup>61</sup> Among these personalities, Aziz Shihadeh played a major role, and that directly after Fatah's announcement of its new strategic goal. See: Shihadeh, Aziz, "Fatah does not speak for democratic Palestine: a reply to Yasir Arafat, *The New Middle East* (6), March 1969.

<sup>62</sup> Gresh, Alain, *OLP, histoire et stratégies. Vers l'État palestinien*, *op.cit.*, p.124.

<sup>63</sup> Khader, Bishara, *L'évolution du mouvement de résistance palestinienne de 1967 à 1979*, Louvain-la-neuve, 1988-1989, p.11.

Extracts of the speech of King Hussein in which he presented his project are to be found in "Documents and Source Material: Arab Documents on Palestine February 16, 1972-May 15", 1972, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1(4), Summer 1972, pp.165-190.

<sup>64</sup> "Reply by the Spokesman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Mr. Kamal Nasser, to King Hussein's Proposed Plan for the West Bank", Beirut, March 16, 1972, and, "Interview with the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Yasser Arafat", Published in al-Muharrir (Beirut), April 27, 1972, in "Documents and Source Material: Arab Documents on Palestine February 16, 1972-May 15", 1972, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1(4), Summer 1972, pp.165-190.

<sup>65</sup> Lukacs, Yehuda, *Israel, Jordan and the peace process*, New York 1997, pp.119-120.

and thus, introduced the debate over a state on part of Palestine as a – temporary – solution to the Palestine question<sup>66</sup>. Moreover, we can also observe a growing interest in the affairs of the West Bank notably after the announcement of municipal elections by Israel. Nevertheless, despite growing debates, the eleventh PNC that took place in 1973, reiterated once again its rejection of a state in the occupied territories<sup>67</sup>.

Before analysing the evolution of the positions of the PLO and the main Palestinian resistance organisations, I will tackle in more detail the question of the Jews in Palestinian revolutionary thought.

#### **D. Dialogue with Israeli Jews**

The strategic objective of a Democratic State as it had been elaborated by Fatah and had come to develop and be accepted within the PLO was about civic and political rights. It called for the liberation of Palestine from Zionism and the destruction of the structures of the Israeli State for the liberation of Palestinians and Israelis alike. This, of course, raised sharp criticism and rejection from Israelis who saw the slogan of a democratic state as no more than a tactical move to appease the international community. Thus, Yehoshafat Harkabi<sup>68</sup> published several articles on the subject in which he warned against the sectarian logic that was supposedly hiding behind the terminology. In fact, he affirmed, that the Palestinians had in mind to expel the Israelis and that they did not aspire to any coexistence but rather to the transformation of the Jewish population into a minority that would be under their control<sup>69</sup>. In the 1980s, however, Harkabi would adapt to the changes in the Palestinian camp. He would change his views and become one of the first Israeli supporters of a dialogue with the PLO and of the establishment of a Palestinian State along

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<sup>66</sup> Hawatmeh, Nayef, “Les tâches et les mots d'ordre de la lutte populaire palestinienne dans l'étape actuelle”, December 1973.

<sup>67</sup> Muslih, Muhammad, “Towards Coexistence: An Analysis of the Resolutions of the Palestine National Council”, *op.cit.*, pp. 3-29.

<sup>68</sup> Yehoshafat Harkabi was a Former Chief of Israeli Intelligence Services (1955-1959).

<sup>69</sup> Harkabi, Yehoshafat, *Three articles on the Arab slogan of a democratic state*, Tel Aviv, 1970.

side Israel<sup>70</sup>.

The PLO's project of a democratic state was unnoticed in Europe and the United States – except by a few socialist groups – where the existence of Israel had been long accepted and even acclaimed and the sole solutions they proposed did not take into account the objectives or aspirations of the Palestinians.

### ***The Democratic State and the Jews***

Whilst by the end of the mandate, the Arab Palestinian proposals included the Jews permanently settled in Palestine, after the Nakba, the disarray born out of the transfer of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and the seizure of more than half of the territory attributed to the Arab State by the UN, led the Palestinians to call for the return of the refugees and the total liberation of Palestine, meaning also total liberation from the Jewish settlers. The PLO Charter of 1964 introduced a change of policy, the Jews of Palestinian descent would be welcome to stay, but the 1968 Charter would enlarge that category and state that the Jews who were in Palestine before the Zionist invasion – and their children – could stay. Gradually the Palestinian resistance organisations would take on the question and in light of the debates it conducted within its ranks and with intellectuals from all over the world coming to meet the *fiddaiyun*. Soon Fatah would take a step and mark the difference between Judaism and Zionism, a differentiation that had not been made since the advent of the Nakba. Fatah would also be the first Palestinian organisation to invite the Jews to join them in their armed struggle and the revolutionary process<sup>71</sup>. After the lively debates on the question of the Democratic State in 1968-1969, Fatah would try to develop and enrich its views. Views that it shared in a long article entitled “Palestinian revolution and the Jews” as early as 1970<sup>72</sup>. This was the first exercise of its kind and as such it is worth lingering on.

After recalling that the Jews had lived in peace with the Arabs for centuries, a

<sup>70</sup> Harkabi, Yehoshafat, “Israel's Fateful Hour”, An Interview by Robert I. Friedman, *World Policy Journal* 6(2), Spring 1989, pp. 357-370.

<sup>71</sup> Gresh, Alain, *OLP, histoire et stratégies. Vers l'État palestinien*, op.cit., p.52.

<sup>72</sup> Fatah, “La révolution palestinienne et les juifs”, March-June, 1970. Available at: <http://etoilerouge.chez-alice.fr/palestine/revpalest1.html>

concrete experience that proved it to be possible, Fatah introduced the principles on which the Democratic State it envisioned would be based. First, the future state would have to reject racism (all kinds) and would have to be non-sectarian. Second, all Jewish settlers would be welcome to stay, thus making it clear that it considered as obsolete article 6 of the Palestinian National Covenant. Third, the Palestinians would have to develop education and the learning of Hebrew as ways of avoiding chauvinistic discourses and attitudes. Fourth, contacts would have to be made with progressive Jews who also would be invited to participate in the armed struggle.

Although the text was ground-breaking, it would only superficially address the question of the coexistence with the Jews and the question of Zionism as a social given among Israeli population. And this may have been one of the greatest weaknesses of the Democratic state project. It stayed a principled stand and lacked profound elaboration and thinking about the imbrication of Zionism within Israeli Jewish identity. Moreover, it failed to address the other dimensions of Judaism, other than the religious one and as such it could not provide a satisfactory platform for non Zionist Jews.

The question was then subject to further development when the DPFLP adopted the Democratic State's objective. As we have seen in the previous section, even though its position was tainted with ambiguity, the PLO held radical ideas compared to its fellow organisations in the resistance. In an interview published in 1969 in the organisation's press organ, Nayef Hawatmeh, also called the progressive Israeli forces to join them in the struggle against Zionism and Imperialism, as without them and the Arab masses there was no possibility of victory<sup>73</sup>.

An important step was also taken by Fatah and the DPFLP in seeking to introduce an amendment to article 6 of the 1968 Covenant dealing with the Jews. It wanted to enlarge the right to remain in Palestine to "all Jews liberated from colonialist views". The amendment was however, never made due to the political developments.

Later on, in 1974, Nayef Hawatmeh would even give an interview to be

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<sup>73</sup> BDIC, FD1404/1, Hawatmeh, Nayef, "Interview", *Al-Hurriya*, November 3, 1969. (French translation)

published in an Israeli newspaper, calling for dialogue and “peaceful relations between Palestinians and Israelis”. This would open the way to further rapprochement with the anti-Zionist Israelis and to the launching of contacts with Zionist personalities who had expressed themselves in favour of a dialogue with the PLO and for a peace settlement.

### ***Examples of contacts and collaboration***

After 1967, and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the first contacts to take place between Israelis and Palestinians occurred between the Palestinian section of the Jordanian Communist Party in the West Bank and the Israeli Communist Party (*Rakah*) which encompassed an Arab majority<sup>74</sup>.

Theory was one thing and practice another, and indeed, whilst the Palestinians in the course defining their strategic objectives had come to vie the non-Zionist or anti-Zionist Israeli Jews as potential partners, in reality however, contacts were rather difficult to establish. Firstly, the latter only represented a tiny part of Israeli population and second, the resistance organisations were based outside the West Bank and Israel. So, contacts and debates were most likely to occur outside the region, most notably in Europe and the United States in the frame of conferences or meetings with the foreign Socialist organisations and peace movements. There, together, they would play a major role in the transmission of knowledge about the Palestine Question<sup>75</sup>.

*Matzpen*, played an important role in the Palestinian organisations overture to Israelis. Indeed, *Matzpen*, which was created in 1966, was openly anti-Zionist, and although it was a very small and marginal group, it became for years public enemy number one in Israel. The negative attention it enjoyed there made it also known abroad, where its members were invited by numerous Socialist organisations and Arab and Palestinian students' organisations and by Palestinian resistance movements with which they developed contacts.

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<sup>74</sup> Rakah (acronym for *Reshima Komunistit Hadasha – New Communist List*) has grown out of *Maki*, the Original Israeli Communist Party from which it split in 1965. Contrary to the other branch of *Maki*, Rakah was anti-Zionist although it was pragmatic and had supported the UN partition resolution. It was recognised by the Soviet Union as the official Communist Party in Israel.

<sup>75</sup> Turbiner, Eran, *Matzpen*, 2003, 53min. (Documentary Film)



*Matzpen* however, had its limits, and whilst it called for the de-Zionisation of Israel, the return of the Palestinian refugees and condemned the discriminatory policy of Israel, it also called the Palestinians to recognise the self-determination right of the “Hebrew nation”<sup>76</sup>.

*“In this united and liberated Arab East, recognition will be granted to the right of self-determination (including the right to a separate state) of each of the non-Arab nationalities living in the region, including the Israeli-Jewish nation. As part of the struggle for this revolution, Matzpen struggles for the overthrow of the Zionist regime and the abolition of all the institutions, laws, regulations and practices on which it rests. Matzpen strives for a living-together of Arabs and Jews, based on full equality; and for the integration of this country’s two peoples – the Israeli-Jewish and the Palestinian-Arab peoples – in the regional socialist union, on the basis of free choice. Matzpen works towards the development of internationalist consciousness among both peoples, which would make such integration possible”<sup>77</sup>.*

So, before the adoption of the phased or temporary programme, these notions were difficult to overcome as they were in direct contradiction with the goals of the Palestinian resistance. However, after 1973-1974, contacts were to develop with the Israeli “democratic forces”, notably with the Israeli Communist Party, which had adopted a half-way position. Indeed, although it rejected Zionism, *Rakah* recognised UN resolution 181 and from the mid-1970s on, it had adapted its discourse to the facts on the ground by calling for Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the establishment of a Palestinian State along Israel<sup>78</sup>. The PLO was to meet *Rakah* officially in 1977 in Prague<sup>79</sup>.

Thus after 1976, the mainstream wing of the PLO would even start discussions with Zionist Israeli organisations, discussions that would open the way to negotiations and *de jure* acceptance of Israel<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> The Socialist Organisation in Israel (Matzpen), The Palestine problem and the Israeli-Arab dispute, May 18, 1967. <http://98.130.214.177/index.asp?u=120&p=doc1>

<sup>77</sup> This forms the twelfth point of the fundamental principles of Matzpen which were adopted in 1973 and amended in 1978. Available on Matzpen’s website: <http://98.130.214.177/index.asp?p=principles>

<sup>78</sup> Rouhana, Nadim N., *Palestinian Citizens in an Ethnic Jewish State: Identities in Conflict*, Dexter (Michigan) 1997, p.103.

<sup>79</sup> Baron, Xavier, *Les Palestiniens, un peuple, op.cit.*, p.389.

<sup>80</sup> Alain Gresh, *OLP, histoire et stratégies. Vers l’État palestinien, op.cit.*, pp.216-217.

Actually, members of Fatah had already tried to engage – non-officially – in a contact with Israeli officials since 1974.

## **E. From rejection of the two-state solution to its acceptance: the fading of the Democratic State solution**

### ***The Twelfth PNC, a turning point***

Paradoxically, the 1973 war and the non-defeat of the Arab States led some of the major political organisations in the PLO to start envisaging the establishment of a Palestinian State on part of Palestine as a step towards the ultimate strategic goal, the Democratic State.

Following the October war, the United Nations called for a General Assembly meeting in Geneva to find a solution to the *Arab-Israeli conflict*. The new international developments required a special attention from the PLO, which wished to avoid any settlement that would be reached without them. Indeed, the war and the awareness of the Arab States and Palestinian resistance limits, combined with the lack of interest for the Democratic State notion, and above all the worldwide status of the PLO at the very moment when there was an increase in peace efforts at an international level, hindered any advance on the diplomatic scene. Furthermore, this meant that it was unable to avoid bilateral agreements that would without any doubt be made at the expense of the Palestinians. To this, came to be added the demand by the Palestinian National Front in the Occupied Territories that the PLO participate in the Geneva Conference and demand a national authority in the West Bank<sup>81</sup>. Thus, the PLO was faced with a dilemma: acknowledge the new reality, adapt and impose its views on the international scene to avoid any settlement that would lead to the “liquidation” of the Palestine question, or reject any external political settlement and continue its previous policy. This dilemma was to be at the core of discussions between the leading organisations of the PLO between October 1973 and June 1974 date of the Twelfth PNC. Once again, the schism in the PLO opposed on the one hand, the DPFLP – which was the first to

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<sup>81</sup> Palestinian National Front in the Occupied Territories, “Letter to the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation”, December 1, 1973, in “Documents and Source Material: Arab Documents on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3(3), Spring 1974, pp. 187-205.

discuss national autonomy issues – with Fatah and the Saiqa, and on the other hand, the PFLP, the ALF and the PFLP-GC<sup>82</sup>. The latter would eventually constitute the “rejectionist” front as opposed to the “moderates”<sup>83</sup>, a schism which would reveal to be far more difficult to overcome than previously.

The “moderates” advocated the position according to which the PLO had to acknowledge the new reality by proposing realistic solutions, a phased programme towards the attainment of the strategic final objective, the Democratic State, but above all, by refusing to leave the Palestine Question to the care of others<sup>84</sup>. For them, the PLO could maintain its policy of refusal as long as the state of war prevailed between the Arabs and Israel, however, that state of war they thought would soon end, making urgent the need for a “new formula” that would enable them to continue the struggle although the best tactical step at the moment was to prevent the state of war from coming to an end<sup>85</sup>. For Nayef Hawatmeh, such a formula had to avoid what happened with the All-Palestine Government, which had become an empty shell. So, for that purpose, it had to propose a “concrete programme which would make it possible to frustrate action involving surrender and liquidation and to frustrate the annexationist and expansionist plan whether expansion on the part of Israel or annexation on the part of King Hussein”<sup>86</sup>. This meant that the Palestinians had to struggle and not surrender and unambiguously demand a national government in part of Palestine. To them, that struggle had to be conducted at the Arab and international levels because the Geneva Conference would not give it up. Such a struggle seemed to be more feasible for the time being as the idea was to liberate a portion of Palestine, which was indeed only inhabited by Palestinians. This, insisted Abu Iyad (Fatah) was not the final objective but a stage. There was no intention of choosing a settlement, as it would go against

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<sup>82</sup> The PFLP-GC (al-Jabaha al-sha’abiyyah li-Tahrir Filastin-Qiyada al-‘Am) is another group created in November 1968, after a split within the PFLP on the matter of Palestinian inference in the Arab States’ affairs. Headed by Ahmad Jibril, it is considered to be historically close to Syria.

The PFLP-GC’s website: <http://www.palestinesons.com/>

To those, we could add the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF).

<sup>83</sup> Muslih, Muhammad Y., “Moderates and Rejectionists within the Palestine Liberation Organisation”, *Middle East Journal* 30(2), Spring 1976, pp. 127-140.

<sup>84</sup> Abu Iyad, “Après octobre, la nouvelle stratégie palestinienne”, in Khader Bishara and Naim, *Textes de la révolution palestinienne*, *op.cit.*, pp.189-194.

<sup>85</sup> Interviews with Resistance Leaders Nayef Hawatmeh, Zuhair Mohsen, George Habbash and Abu Iyad, in “Documents and Source Material: Arab Documents on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3(3), Spring 1974, pp. 187-205.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

the “basic principles” of the resistance organisations. So, the issue was not about the goal of the resistance, which was known and unchanged, but what “may be imposed on us and how to confront it, and naturally we shall not accept anything that involves surrender”. The idea then, was to draft a programme that would address the current problems and hold “fast to the historical right and to future long-term problems”<sup>87</sup>. However, for this to be effective, the programme to be adopted should include all organisations of the resistance in order to show a united front to Israel. The “moderates” vision was also shared by a growing number of organisations and individuals within the West Bank itself where they demanded the end of occupation.

For the PFLP, nevertheless, the international move was important but not decisive, and it analysed the international powers' rush to reach an agreement as a will to preserve their interests that were constantly endangered by the state of war<sup>88</sup>. Moreover, it considered that the best that could happen for the Palestinians and the Arabs on the International scene would be a resolution that would take on the terms of the USSR's proposal itself based on resolution 242, and this was very unlikely to happen in view of the Israeli and American pressure. And even then, the problem would still persist with the continued existence of Israel. Continuing in that direction, Habash advocated a position detached from the USSR's and made known the Palestinian decision to refuse to make any concession<sup>89</sup>. For Georges Habash and his *courant*, a national democratic jurisdiction over the occupied territories presented by factions of the PLO would be impossible without the de-facto recognition of Israel, the signature of peace and the establishment of a diplomatic representation and thus constitute a deep contradiction with the PLO's rejection of resolution 242. Furthermore, even if it decided to go ahead, the PLO would find it impossible without redrawing its programme (political, economic and military). Finally, it rejected this position and underlined that Israel would never withdraw from the West Bank unless it could hand over to “a reactionary force or a force that is

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Habash, George, “Non à la négociation et à un État provisoire”, 1974, in Khader Bishara and Naim, *Textes de la révolution palestinienne, op.cit.*, pp.237-244.

<sup>89</sup> Interviews with Resistance Leaders Nayef Hawatmeh, Zuhair Mohsen, George Habbash and Abu Iyad, in “Documents and Source Material: Arab Documents on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict”, *op.cit.*, pp. 187-205.

ready to surrender”<sup>90</sup>. Moreover, Habash was persuaded that the only state that would be presented to the Palestinians, if they ever were to be presented a state at all, would be a “rump state”, dominated by the Arab reactionaries, Zionism and Imperialism<sup>91</sup>. These views were shared by the General Union of the Palestinians Students (GUPS), one of the most important organisations of the PLO<sup>92</sup>.

Following these debates, and although no consensus seemed to emerge, by February, Fatah, the DPFLP and the *Saiqa* signed a common document calling for a phased solution as a working basis for the Executive Committee of the PLO. Their considerations had been reinforced by the Arab States, notably Egypt – where Sadat even invited the PLO to participate in the Geneva Conference – and Syria, as well as the Arab Summit in November 1973 which, besides recognising the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, stated that the immediate objective was the liberation of the occupied territories<sup>93</sup>. To that, should be added the influence of the USSR, a PLO ally, which as we have seen called for a political settlement. As a consequence of the discussions on the basis of the document presented by the three organisations in favour of a national authority, and after heated debates, the PNC adopted its Ten-Point Programme in 1974. Of particular interest here are the following points:

*1. To reaffirm the Palestine Liberation Organisation's previous attitude to Resolution 242, which obliterates the national right of our people and deals with the cause of our people as a problem of refugees. The Council therefore refuses to have anything to do with this resolution at any level, Arab or international, including the Geneva Conference.*

*2. The Liberation Organisation will employ all means, and first and foremost armed struggle, to liberate Palestinian territory and to establish the independent combatant national authority for the people over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated. This will require further changes being effected in the balance of power in favour of our people and their struggle.*

*3. The Liberation Organisation will struggle against any proposal for a Palestinian entity the price of which is recognition, peace, secure frontiers, renunciation of national rights and the deprivation of our people*

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.; Habash, George, “Non à la négociation et à un État provisoire”, 1974., *op.cit.*,

<sup>91</sup> Habash, George, “Non à la négociation et à un État provisoire”, 1974, *op.cit.*.

<sup>92</sup> Gresh, Alain, *OLP, histoire et stratégies. Vers l'État palestinien*, *op.cit.*, p.165

<sup>93</sup> Secret Resolutions of the Algiers Summit Conference, *Al-Nahar*, Beirut, December 4,1973. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1947-1974/19+Declaration+of+the+Arab+Summit+Conference+at+Al.htm>

*of their right to return and their right to self-determination on the soil of their homeland.*

*4. Any step taken towards liberation is a step towards the realisation of the Liberation Organisation's strategy of establishing the democratic Palestinian state specified in the resolutions of previous Palestinian National Councils.*

*8. Once it is established, the Palestinian national authority will strive to achieve a union of the confrontation countries, with the aim of completing the liberation of all Palestinian territory, and as a step along the road to comprehensive Arab unity*<sup>94</sup>.

The Twelfth PNC was a turning point, and afterwards, the PLO would be granted a status of observer at the United Nations. In the meanwhile, the Arab States had asked for a session on the Palestine Question with the presence of a representative of the PLO, this would produce the famous speech by Arafat on November 14, 1974. A speech during which, he reiterated that the Jews were part of the Palestinian perspective for a Democratic State<sup>95</sup>.

Moreover, following the Twelfth PNC, the PLO had been invited by the General Assembly of the United Nations to participate in its works as an observer. Furthermore, the latter had voted resolution 3236 which recognised the “inalienable rights of the Palestinian people”, its right to self-determination and to independence and sovereignty. From then on, the PLO would call for the International Peace Conference of Geneva and even announced that it would participate. Immediately after the adoption of the Ten-Point programme, the PFLP had expressed its rejection of it, indeed, the original text it had agreed to sign stipulated the rejection of negotiations, a mention that disappeared from the adopted programme. Then, it was clear that the PLO's agreement to participate in the international forum meant the growing acceptance of a political settlement at the expense of armed struggle<sup>96</sup>. As a consequence, the PFLP decided to withdraw from the Executive Committee of the PLO although not from the PLO itself.

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<sup>94</sup> UNISPAL, Political Programme of 9 June 1974, 12th Palestine National Council, June 9, 1974.

<sup>95</sup> Speech by Yasser Arafat before the United Nations General Assembly in Geneva: <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/cahier/proche-orient/arafat74-en>

<sup>96</sup> Muslih, Muhammad, “Towards Coexistence: An Analysis of the Resolutions of the Palestine National Council”, *op.cit.*, pp. 3-29.

## ***From the Ten Point Programme to the Palestinian Declaration of Independence***

Actually, as argued by Rashid Khalidi, long before 1988, the PLO had already endorsed the two-state solution although not yet officially<sup>97</sup>. Indeed, firstly, the PNC had ruled on the question of “national authority” vs “state” by adopting the latter during its meeting in 1976<sup>98</sup>, and secondly, one episode, documented by Xavier Baron, even shows that as early as 1977, as a consequence of the direct talks that started in 1976, the PLO was ready to content itself with sovereignty over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip<sup>99</sup>. However, we could highlight four main events that would shape the PLO's march towards the formal acceptance of partition and of the two-state solution: Sadat's visit to Israel and the consequent Camp David agreements, the Fahd plan, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon followed by the Reagan Middle East Initiative and the first Intifada.

Whereas the war in Lebanon was raging, Sadat decided to start negotiating with Israel without any consultation with the Arab States or the PLO. His decision was received as a blow to Arab Unity, and he was rapidly condemned, by all the Arab States. Nevertheless, the United States were soon to intervene in this new “peace process” that would eventually end up in 1979, with the Camp David Agreements, which, beside being based on resolution 242, made no mention of the self-determination rights of the Palestinians, nor the right of return and excluded the Palestinians from the discussion. Rather, it proposed a “self-government by the Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan”, meaning in the frame of a confederation with Jordan<sup>100</sup>. The PLO rejected the Agreements during its Fifteenth PNC. The deterioration of the Palestinians' situation in Lebanon with the determination of the Israelis to put an end to the PLO, led Saudi Arabia to present its own peace plan in August 1981. The latter was introduced as a basis

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<sup>97</sup> Khalidi, Rashid, “The Palestinian Dilemma: PLO Policy after Lebanon”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15(1), Autumn 1985, pp. 88-103.

<sup>98</sup> Baron, Xavier, *Les Palestiniens, un peuple*, *op.cit.*, p.382.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.387-389.

<sup>100</sup> “The Reagan peace plan, September 1, 1982”, in Rabinovitch, Itamar and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), *Israel and the Middle East, documents and readings on society, politics and foreign relations, pre-1948 to the present*, Lebanon (U.S) 2008, pp.394-398.

for negotiations, and established a de facto acceptance of resolution 242 and 181:

- *“Israel to withdraw from all Arab territory occupied in 1967, including Arab Jerusalem.*
- *Israeli settlements built on Arab land after 1967 to be dismantled, including those in Arab Jerusalem.*
- *A guarantee of freedom of worship for all religions in the Holy Places.*
- *An affirmation of the right of the Palestinian Arab people to return to their homes and compensation for those who do not wish to return.*
- *The West Bank and the Gaza Strip to have a transitional period under the auspices of the United Nations for a period not exceeding several months.*
- *An independent Palestinian State should be set up with Jerusalem as its capital.*
- *All States in the region should be able to live in peace in the region.*
- *The United Nations or Member States of the United Nations to guarantee the carrying out of these provisions.<sup>101</sup>”*

The reception of the plan within the organisations of the PLO was mixed. Fatah itself was divided on the question, as a matter of fact, its Central Committee's twelve men core supported it whereas the other members of the Committee rejected it. This led them to discuss the matter during their Revolutionary Council meetings but even then, they could not reach a clear position and make a decision. For the PFLP, the proposal implied recognition of Israel, so it rejected it immediately. The traditional rift within the PLO was insurmountable so that no decision could be made<sup>102</sup>. This indecision would be confirmed during the Arab Summit in Fez in November of that same year<sup>103</sup>. Soon would Israel invade Lebanon – June 1982 – with the stated objective of definitively getting rid of the PLO and installing a more favourable Lebanese regime<sup>104</sup>. The chaos and massacres perpetrated in the Palestinian camps by Christian militias under the watch of Israel would once again prove to be a turning point in the PLO's life and evolution. The leadership would once again

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<sup>101</sup> UNISPAL, “Eight Point Peace Plan by Crown Prince Fahd ibn Abd al-Aziz of Saudi Arabia”, August 7, 1981.

<sup>102</sup> Cobban, Helena, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: people, power and politics*, New York 1984, pp.13-115.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Morris, Benny, *Righteous victims, op.cit.*, p.509.



be expelled this time to settle in Tunis, far away from Palestine. The crisis created by the expulsion from Beirut would inspire the Reagan peace initiative and bring back the Fahd plan among the Arab institutions. However, the former was only a mere reformulation of the Camp David Agreements with a reiteration of the exclusion of the PLO, the rejection of a Palestinian State and a reminder of the Jordanian option as it envisaged the merging of the occupied territories with Jordan<sup>105</sup>. It was thus, rejected by the PLO and the Arab States<sup>106</sup>.

Responding to the Reagan Middle East initiative, Saudi Arabia re-submitted the Fahd Plan at the Fez Arab Summit in September 1982<sup>107</sup>. This plan was adopted unanimously by the PLO during its Sixteenth PNC, that same year, although it had tried to downplay it, describing it as the "minimum for the political activity of the Arab states". From the acceptance of the two-state solution to its proclamation there was only a step. And by the Eighteenth PNC, the Fahd plan or the Fez Plan, was presented as "the framework for Arab action at the international level to achieve a solution to the Palestine question and to regain the occupied Arab territories"<sup>108</sup>. Then, the greater colonisation of the West Bank and the situation it had led to eventually gave rise to the first Intifada, bringing the Palestinian question back to the forefront of the international scene, a moment that was then chosen by the PLO to definitively break with its objectives of liberating Palestine and establishing a Democratic State, introducing a shift from the struggle to national liberation to national sovereignty. This shift is eloquently expressed in Arabic when considering the move from the idea of *Watan* to *Dawla*, from Homeland to Statehood and Chairman Arafat made it clear when the PLO arrived at the end of the road in 1988 and accepted the principle of partition:

*"The situation in our Palestinian homeland (Watan) can bear no more waiting. Our people and our children, leading our march to liberty, holding aloft the torch of freedom, are being martyred daily for the sake*

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<sup>105</sup> Khader, Bishara, *L'Europe et la Palestine*, pp.240-241, Tessler, Mark, *A history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict*, p.603.

<sup>106</sup> PLO, Report of the PLO Central Council, November 25, 1982, in "Documents and Source Material: Documents on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 12(2), Winter, 1983, pp. 199-236.

<sup>107</sup> Final statement of the Twelfth Arab Summit in Fez, September 9, 1982, in "Documents and Source Material: Documents on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 12(2), Winter, 1983, pp. 199-236.

<sup>108</sup> "Resolutions of the eighteenth session of the Palestine National Council (PNC), Algiers, April 26, 1987", in Quandt, William B., *The Middle East. Ten years after Camp David*, Washington 1988, pp.480-483.

*of ending the occupation and laying the foundation of peace in their free, **independent homeland**, and in the region as a whole. For this reason, the Palestine National Council, taking into consideration the circumstances of the Palestinians and the Israelis and the need for a spirit of tolerance between them, built its resolutions on foundations of realism. The United Nations bears a historic, extraordinary responsibility towards our people and their rights. More than forty years ago, the United Nations, in its Resolution 181, decided on the establishment of two states in Palestine, one Palestinian Arab and the other Jewish. Despite the historic wrong that was done to our people, it is our view today that the said resolution continues to meet the requirements of International legitimacy which guarantee the Palestinian Arab people's right to **sovereignty and national independence**"<sup>109</sup>.*

Chairman Y. Arafat's speech at the UN in 1988 is representative of this change of political position. When advancing the historical rights of the Palestinian people, Yasser Arafat used the term "*Watan*"; he then operated a shift in semantics and used the terms "sovereignty and national independence". This move in semantics tends to reflect the move in the PLO's policy – the shift from *Watan* to *Dawla* – and represents the end of the official discourse of alternatives for a Unitarian solution and a united Palestine, which prevailed until then<sup>110</sup>.

## F. Conclusion

After the Nakba, the idea of a common state in a united Palestine disappeared. As we have seen in the previous chapter, as soon as the State of Israel proclaimed its independence, the bi-nationalists abandoned their idea of a bi-national state. As for the Palestinians, they did not measure up to the Zionist movement in their lobbying work. For numerous reasons explained above, they failed to attract the sympathies of the United States although the Department of State had been trying to keep an objective position driven only by the US interests. pushed into forced exile and saw their lands fall under and political

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<sup>109</sup> Excerpt from Yasser Arafat's speech at the United Nations General Assembly in Geneva on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 1988.

<sup>110</sup> Whereas all the parties involved in the PLO traditionally positioned against partition, in favour of a Democratic State, with the move towards an acceptance of partition – acceptance sanctioned with the advent of the Oslo Agreement – emerged the idea of Palestine united under an Islamic government.

Neither the bi-nationalists nor the Palestinians' projects of a united Palestine with a common state could survive the Nakba.

While the Israelis were consolidating their power over seventy eight percent of Palestine and putting the Palestinians that could not be expelled under military rule, the Palestinians and Arabs nourished only one idea, take back what had been seized by the Zionist militias and find their way back home. As we have seen above, they have started to organise despite their dispersion however, among the multitude of organisations, associations and armed groups there seemed to develop no concrete political programme and none that clarified the future of Palestine after its liberation from the hands of the Zionist settlers.

So, while the Arabs and Palestinians refused to recognise the *de facto* partition of Palestine, the colonial fact would not enable them to voice unitarian propositions.

However, the re-organisation of the Palestinian people notably through the structure of the PLO from the mid-1960s onwards would introduce a qualitative change as it would give back the Palestinians a representative organ and open the way to political dialogue and programme elaboration. This, added to the conclusions of the debate about the *Kiyān al Falistini* in the late 1950s among the Arab leaders would lead the Palestinians to search for a clear and more pragmatic political programme. Such a programme would start to emerge in the successive charters of the PLO in 1964 and 1968. The PLO's 1964 charter would reintroduce the Jewish question by stating that the Jews from Palestinian descent would be welcome to stay as members of the future Palestinian entity. A step further was taken when the second charter was adopted in 1968.

Fatah would shaken the Palestinian political class when it would for the first time advocate a democratic state for all its citizens as the only progressive solution to the Palestine question. Introducing the idea of a unified independent Palestinian Arab state as the frame for Palestinian revolution and considering the Jews as possible citizens of such a state, the movement would open a debate and polemics that would end with the adoption by the PLO of the principle of a democratic non-secular state in 1971. Fatah had indeed, been followed by the PDFLP, the PFLP and soon the PLO in its entirety endorsed the

same objective: the de-partition of Palestine and the raising of a democratic and non sectarian state. However, the regional political situation and the absence of interest among the anti-Zionist Israeli fringes cut short the debate and no detailed programme could emerge. Nor could the “Jewish question” be properly addressed.

In the aftermath of the 1973 war, the project of a democratic state was already sinking and partition in view of proper sovereignty started to be discussed as a possibility although a temporary one. A possibility that progressively started to appear as a desirable one too. Fearing that the Palestine question would be discussed and addressed in its absence, all the more with resolution 242 at the core of the discussions, the PLO eventually decided to participate to any international conference that would take place. Thus, it de facto recognised the legitimacy of Israel as a party to the discussions. Then after, subject to unbearable pressure from the United States at a moment when its ally, the USSR was itself passing through a great crisis, the PLO – out of pragmatism – decided to adopt partition as a basis of future negotiations.



## Epilogue

### ***From the “historical compromise” to Oslo***

The historical compromise made by the PLO in 1988, opened the way to discussions between the PLO and the United States, and later to a secret channel of negotiations between Israel and the PLO in Oslo. The direct talks resulted in the Oslo Agreements which made no mention of a Palestinian State or of the Palestinians' rights<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the agreement consecrated the dichotomy between the principle of self-determination and the right of return<sup>2</sup> by separating the Palestinians into groups with incompatible rights: the Palestinians from the OPT, the refugees whose fate lied in the final status negotiations, and the Palestinians living in Israel who were totally absent from the talks<sup>3</sup>.

The core issues of the Palestine Question, among which the refugee problem, the occupation, the territorial borders, Jerusalem and the settlements were left for the final status negotiations, supposed to take place within a maximum of three years<sup>4</sup>.

The negotiations led two years later to the creation and recognition of the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority in charge of dealing with the transfer of power issues as well as the division of the Palestinian territories into three areas – A, B, and C. Area A was under exclusive Palestinian control, area B was under Palestinian civil authority but Israeli military control and area C was under exclusive Israeli control<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Oslo Agreements (Oslo I) were reached in September 1993. It contained two parts, the first being the mutual recognition between the Israeli State and the PLO in the form of Letters and the second, a Declaration of Principles (DoP), which was in fact “an agenda for negotiations on Palestinian self-government in the OPT (Occupied Palestinian Territories), beginning with Gaza and Jericho”

<sup>2</sup> Nabulsi, Karma, “Justice as the way forward”, in Hilal, Jamil (ed.), *Where now for Palestine?*, *The demise of the two-state solution*, London, 2007, pp. 233-252.

<sup>3</sup> Massad, Joseph, “Return or permanent exile? Palestinian refugees and the ends of Oslo”, 1998, in *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question. Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians*, New York, 2006, pp.114-128.

<sup>4</sup> Unispal, A/48/486 S/26560, “Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements”, September 13, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> This is known as the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip or Oslo II which was signed in September 1995.

The peace process in lieu of putting an end to the occupation and colonisation in the OPT, accelerated them through its “matrix of control”<sup>6</sup>. This “matrix” rested on the two dimensions that had always driven Zionist and later Israeli policy: territory and demography. So that, by the late 1990s, Jerusalem was completely encircled by settlements and the West Bank and Gaza were perforated with colonies<sup>7</sup>. And indeed, the stipulations of the DoP had left plenty of time for Israel to continue its colonisation policy in the West Bank. A policy that was without respite, even during the negotiations<sup>8</sup>.

Extensions of the Israeli territory, the settlements enjoy all the services and goods available in every city and this, separately and independently from their Arab Palestinian environment. Indeed, the settlements are linked together by bypass roads which, as well as being reserved for the exclusive use of the settlers, are also a means of confiscating more land, dividing the territory and separating villages and cities, leading to cantonisation<sup>9</sup>. To these, should also be added the check-points, which ensure control over the movement of people and goods. These measures grant Israel with total control over the OPT<sup>10</sup>. Besides enabling Israel to control more land and expand its territory, geographical and territorial control, allowed it to substantiate the fragmentation of Palestinian society and thus of Palestinian political life with the inability to produce a comprehensive political and resistance strategy. Cantonised into “ethnic reservations”<sup>11</sup> or *bantustans*. This is what Salah Abd al-Jawad has addressed as the sociocide, whilst other political scientists have addressed the situation in terms of politicide, spaciocide, apartheid or matrix of control<sup>12</sup>.

As a consequence of the situation in the OPT, the Palestinians launched what has come to be known as the second Intifada. This was to put an end to

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<sup>6</sup> Khalidi, Rashid *The Iron cage*, *op.cit.*, p.200.

<sup>7</sup> Figures and numbers may be found in B'Tselem, “Land Grab: Israel's Settlement Policy in the West Bank”, May 2002, pp. 16-17. Document available at: [http://www.btselem.org/download/200205\\_land\\_grab\\_eng.pdf](http://www.btselem.org/download/200205_land_grab_eng.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Khalidi, Rashid, *The Iron cage*, *op.cit.*, p.197.

<sup>9</sup> Said, Edward W., “Facts, facts and more facts”, December 1993, in *Peace and its discontents*. *op.cit.*, pp.26-31.

<sup>10</sup> Betsalem, “Closure”, January 1, 2012. [http://www.btselem.org/freedom\\_of\\_movement/closure](http://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/closure)

<sup>11</sup> Leila Farsakh, Interview by Eyal Sivan, Summer 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Abdel Jawad, Salah, “A Palestinian sociocide?”, Presentation during the Fourth session of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, New York, October 6-7, 2012.

Abdel Jawad explains that besides the ethnic cleansing of 1947-1949, there has, since 1967, been an on-going process of destroying the Palestinians, “not only as a political national group but also as a society”.

the “peace process” but also lead to reinforced colonisation of the OPT.

### ***Post-Oslo anti-partitionism***

The persistence of anti-partitionism has however been largely ignored and relegated to the dustbin of History in favour of a solution which has proven impossible to implement as it bore within it the reasons and the seeds of its failure. Indeed, failing to acknowledge and tackle Zionism as a settler colonial movement, the international community, by engaging in the partition of Palestine, has legitimised colonialism there. And indeed, more than sixty years after the 1947 partition resolution, the colonial fact has come to invalidate the geographical criteria through what Virginia Tilley has called “the immovable obstacles on the ground”<sup>13</sup> and has brought the demographic criteria<sup>14</sup> back to the forefront. As we are about to see, just as the strategy of Israel is in direct continuity of the strategy of the Zionist movement, the arguments of the post-Oslo anti-partitionists mirror those of the anti-partitionists both during the mandate era and after.

Criticisms of the Oslo Accords and their consequences have led to the denunciation of the two-state solution and partition and to the re-emergence of anti-partitionist and one-statist reflections as a way of forming a political solution that meets the reality on the ground. Today, proponents of the single state are essentially to be found in three groups, Palestinian citizens of Israel; Palestinian refugees and those in the OPT; and anti-Zionist Israeli Jews. Using reality on the ground as a tool to criticise and condemn Zionism as a colonial ideology, the anti-partitionists support a return to pre-1948 Palestine as the only way to encompass all the dimensions of the Palestine Question and develop a fair solution – and not just to end the occupation and colonisation of the OPT. Thus, the colonial paradigm becomes the only possible starting point for addressing the Palestinian Question<sup>15</sup>. Such a return, in itself, highlights the rejection of separation and partition, the countering of the demographic discourse and the need for de-Zionisation and decolonisation of Israel.

The reality on the ground, as underlined by all the proponents of a one-

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<sup>13</sup> Tilley, Virginia, *The One-state Solution: a breakthrough for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock*, Manchester, 2005, pp.19-51.

<sup>14</sup> Ilan Pappé, Interview by Eyal Sivan, Summer 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Nadim Rouhana, Interview by Eyal Sivan, Summer 2011.



state solution, is that there is only one ruler in Palestine, the Israeli State, which has decision making power not only over everything that happens in Israel but also in the OPT, with one Supreme Court, one army and one parliament<sup>16</sup>. All this, making “the Green Line a psychological border rather than a physical one” as on the ground the West Bank and Gaza were annexed in 1967 and partition experienced only on a temporary basis between 1948 and 1967<sup>17</sup>. Israel's control over all of historical Palestine has led – as we have mentioned above – to the disintegration of the Palestinian space, a disintegration that started, as we have seen in Chapter Three, after the 1967 war, but that accelerated considerably after the start of the so-called “peace process”, thus creating the fragmentation of the Palestinian society through a process of sociocide or apartheid<sup>18</sup>.

As a consequence, this reality reveals that partition and the two-state solution have been for the most part a mere discourse. As underlined by Ruchama Marton, one of the present proponents of a common or single state, Israel's view of partition, i.e. “what is mine is mine and what is yours is mine”, is not partition<sup>19</sup>. It could not have been otherwise, according to the proponents of a one-state solution: Zionism is inherently expansionist. Thus, the model of partition is seen by the one-statists as neither logical nor ethical. Yehuda Shenhav argues that “this model is not moral, it is racist. It does not take into account the lack of correspondence between territory and population”. Following Hannah Arendt, Shenhav's main criticism concerns the lack of critical analysis of the concept of sovereignty on which the two-state solution is based.

*“This is a European colonial concept. It permits to cleanse an area from its population and to eliminate purify an area of population and to eliminate a race. [...] If the wish is to have a total adequation of the territory, the sovereignty and the identity, then there is no other choice than transfer. This model leads to transfer.”<sup>20</sup>*

This is also the conclusion drawn by Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin who explains that

*“partition is based on the separation of the Palestinians into different categories. The second-zone citizens of Israel, those who live in the demilitarised Palestinian State provided that we can qualify it for a full*

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<sup>16</sup> Hassan Jabareen, Interview by Eyal Sivan, Summer 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Meron Benvenisti, Interview by Eyal Sivan, Summer 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Leila Farsakh, Interview by Eyal Sivan, Summer 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Marton, Ruchama, Interview by Eyal Sivan, Summer 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Yehuda Shenhav, Interview by Eyal Sivan, Autumn 2011.

*state, and even though we considered it as a state. Finally, there are the refugees who have no rights at all. Partition implies anyway the denial of rights. This is what underlies it". Moreover, he continues, "Every partition implies transfer. Establishing the State of Israel as a Jewish State, necessarily implied the expulsion of the Palestinian population"*<sup>21</sup>.

So, the focus on the return to 1948, also allows us to address the Question of Palestine as a whole and reintroduce all the sections of the Palestinian people into the debate – the refugees, the Palestinians who stayed in Israel and those who were reintegrated in the Israeli “matrix of control” after 1967. This therefore, places the struggle for equal rights and especially for the right of return, which was never addressed in the numerous peace agreements and discussions, at the centre of the question<sup>22</sup>. As argued by Ilan Pappé, “there is no geographical dimension any more, but a strong demographic dimension. If one considers that dimension outside the nationalist, ethnic, religious or Zionist perspectives, then the question of the right of return becomes much less thorny. It becomes a simple practical question”<sup>23</sup>. For the Palestinian advocates of a one-state solution, this calls for a popular Palestinian re-appropriation of reflection on the right of return<sup>24</sup> and all other questions so as to create a real movement for a common state.

Once the terms of the conflict are transposed from a question of territorial sovereignty inside a two-state paradigm to a one-state paradigm, through the de-Zionisation of Palestine, and the de-partition of the discourse on peace is finalised, then, and only then, may real progress towards the unification of Palestine begin.

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<sup>21</sup> Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Interview by Eyal Sivan, Summer 2011.

<sup>22</sup> The centrality of the right of return is a feature of all the advocates of a one-state solution. Nevertheless, we could quote Hassan Jabareen: “The conflict revolves around two things. The Law of Return and the Right of Return, the rest are footnotes”. Interview by Eyal Sivan, Summer 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Ilan Pappé, Interview by Eyal Sivan, Summer 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Sandi Hilal, Interview by Eyal Sivan, Autumn 2011.

## Conclusion: The persistence of anti-partitionism

Developments on the ground and the obvious failure of the “peace process”, besides enabling Israel to continue its seizure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, also led to the resurgence of an anti-partition discourse. A resurgence in which Edward Said played a central role, first through his constant critical analysis of the Oslo agreements and then, in his analysis of Zionism as an obstacle to coexistence. He rather advocated the establishment of a bi-national Israeli-Palestinian state as the only way to achieve peace.

*“Given the collapse of the Netanyahu Government over the Wye peace agreement, it is time to question whether the entire process begun in Oslo in 1993 is the right instrument for bringing peace between Palestinians and Israelis. It is my view that the peace process has in fact put off the real reconciliation that must occur if the hundred-year war between Zionism and the Palestinian people is to end. Oslo set the stage for separation, but real peace can come only with a binational Israeli-Palestinian state”<sup>1</sup>.*

Said addressed the impossibility of finding a solution to the Palestine question as long as Zionism prevailed and he supported developing the concept and the practice of citizenship as “the main vehicle for coexistence”<sup>2</sup>.

Said's position was not new and it finds some echoes in history, as diverse forms of unitarian anti-partitionist perspectives rose out each time partition imposed itself on the local, regional and international scene. So, as we have seen throughout this thesis, anti-partitionism has always been part of the equation from the very first appearance of the principle of partition in the Middle East.

As we saw in Chapter I, as early as 1915, Sharif Hussein was strongly opposed to the exclusion of certain parts of the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire – including Lebanon and Palestine – from the McMahon pledges. His opposition that was shared by the Arab Nationalists' societies has the particularity to directly stem from a unitarian vision that prevailed before the

<sup>1</sup> Said, Edwards W., “The One-State Solution”, January 10, 1999, *New York Times*.

<sup>2</sup> Said, Edward, “The One-state solution”, *The New York Times*, 10 January 1999. His arguments would find echoes by Azmi Bishara, Omar Barghouti, Leila Farsakh and numerous others.

colonial introduction of France and Great Britain, it was a reaction to the discriminatory and separatist Young Turks policy in the Ottoman Empire. The opposition to partition grew further when it appeared after WWI and during the Paris Peace Conference, that the Great Powers and the League of Nations would not support Greater Syria's independence as a unitary state and would instead adopt the principle of partition as a way to secure the colonial aims of Great Britain and France together with a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Moreover, the Zionist movement's claim over Palestine, supported by the British government, had further contributed to the fragmentation of the Arab territorial space and this despite great mobilisation in the Arab nationalist movements in Syria and the letters of protest from the Arab Muslim-Christian Association in Palestine to the OETA and the League of Nations. Once the partition of Greater Syria was sanctioned by the League of Nations, the weakened Arabs were left with no choice than to acknowledge the colonial fact of partition and to focus on their local struggles.

However, Zionism was a settler colonial national movement and it carried in it a separatist ideology as well as a potential for "elimination"<sup>3</sup>, which was soon expressed in the development of a separate economy and society and the conquest of Labour. Separatism was not however, shared by all the members of the Zionist movement. In fact, a minority among the movement took a dim view of the separatist and maximalist policy of the Zionist leadership. This group – the bi-nationalists – were in favour of cooperation with the Arabs as the only morally justifiable way of establishing the Jewish National Home. However, bi-nationalism was doomed to failure, largely due to the internal dynamics of Zionism to which the bi-nationalists continued to adhere (Chapter Five).

Continuous British attempts to reach an agreement between the Zionist movement and the Palestinian leadership, and the various proposals to establish a mixed Legislative Council eventually failed, despite the Palestinians' readiness in the early and mid-1930s to participate in a democratic mixed Legislative Council. Indeed, this initiative was rejected by the Zionist movement. The on-going Zionist colonisation, the economic and political development of the *Yishuv*, and the worsening of the Palestinian situation in all fields, led to the

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<sup>3</sup> As we have seen in the introduction, for Patrick Wolfe, "Settler colonialism is inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal". Wolfe, Patrick, "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native", *Journal of Genocide Research* 8(4), December 2006, pp.387-409.

Arab Great Revolt in 1936 and eventually to the British government adopting the principle of partition, as by then it was looking for “a way out”. Partition had become desirable to the Zionist leadership as a step towards full sovereignty over all of Palestine. By the 1930s, the latter started to study and enquire in order to propose to the British government a partition plan that would be favourable to the Zionist territorial objectives (Chapter Three). However, the Arabs' total rejection of partition and the impossibility of implementing partition according to clear lines of separation without contravening the conditions of the mandate, led the British government to abandon partition as a solution to the Palestine question. It rather went back to its pre-1936 policy and proposed the establishment of a unitary state, which would be Arab due to the majoritarian position of the Arabs of Palestine, and the Jews would be granted equal civil rights (the 1939 White Paper - Chapter Two). Once again, this unitarian proposal was rejected by the Zionist leadership that had set its mind on a Jewish State and advocated partition as a way to reach sovereignty. Despite its inability to implement the 1939 White Paper, which would not be revoked until the departure of the British from Palestine, the British government would try to avoid partition and impose a unitarian solution. As for the Zionist movement, it would respond to the White Paper by adopting the Biltmore programme, which envisaged the establishment of a Jewish State all over mandatory Palestine. Parallel to its maximalist programme, however, the Zionist leadership would do its best in the international forum to obtain partition and secure Jewish sovereignty. The bi-nationalists as well as the Arabs of Palestine would fight both the principle of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine and that of partition. The first proposed a bi-national state where both national communities could share equal rights (Chapter Five). The latter proposed establishing a democratic state where the Jews would be welcome as individuals – not as a nation, meaning that they would not be granted national rights – and would enjoy the same rights as the other Palestinians (Chapter Three). Under pressure from the Zionist movement and the United States, partition was however, eventually sanctioned by the International community. The British government, which viewed partition as its own failure, abstained.

Bi-nationalism as a political project to establish a bi-national state was then to slowly disappear, adapting to the new situation by turning its demand for

a bi-national state into a demand for equal civil rights (Chapter Five). As for the dispersed Arab Palestinians, they would, for a few decades, re-organise and call for the liberation of all of Palestine. As a matter of fact, the Arab proposition for a unitary state as advanced in the 1940s had faded away in favour of a simple will to liberate the watan. It would not be until the late 1960s that the idea of a united Palestine as the home of all its inhabitants, Arabs and Jews of foreign descent would re-emerge. In the meanwhile, the Palestinian resistance movement continued to reject all “peace plans” based on partition that were presented by the United States, Israel, the USSR or the Arabs. They notably rejected UNSC resolution 242 which overlooked the pre-1967 situation by calling on Israeli to withdraw from the territories conquered in the “recent conflict”. In need for a political programme and in response to the presence of the Israelis as a fact on the ground, they instead, developed the idea of a Democratic State in which all inhabitants could live in peace with equal rights and obligations. The major idea was the de-Zionisation of Israel and the Israelis, Zionism being analysed as a racist, sectarian and imperialist ideology (Chapter Six). If the idea was a strong and original one, the Palestinians were nevertheless unable to address questions relative to Jewish identity and culture. Furthermore, they were faced with at best indifference but mostly with doubtfulness and rejection from the part of the Israelis even the anti-Zionist ones.

In the aftermath of the October war however, the Palestinians were weakened and faced a growing number of international initiatives to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict that gave them no direct involvement. This led the PLO to consider participating in the Geneva Conference and the United Nations debates, thus in discussions with Israel and the United States and in considering the question of sovereignty. This was however, opposed by a fringe of the PLO which founded the “rejectionist front” and rejected the definitive partition of Palestine. Under international pressure and the absence of any progress in the Palestinian struggle, the PLO eventually recognised Israel, and thereby, the principle of partition.

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, I have defined as anti-

partitionism the rejection of the principle and practice of partition and separation combined the proposal of unitarian schemes and political models. Anti-partitionism as I have argued, is not recent, indeed, each time there has been the expression of partitionism, anti-partitionism had emerged to counter argue and propose unitarian schemes. More than a reaction, however, anti-partitionism has been a political expression of the will of unity that animated the Arabs, the bi-nationalists and even the believers in the British empire. Just as there are several reasons to propose partition in a given country or territorial space, there are several reasons to reject partition. Thus it means that the expressions of anti-partitionism are diverse and that, we have seen it throughout the previous pages.

When in the advent of WWI, France, Great Britain and Italy tried to get their share of the Ottoman Empire's territories, this was out of greed and the motivations behind the partition of the Arab territories were mostly economical. Moreover, as argued by Radha Kumar, partitions often happen when there is a transfer of power and indeed, transfer of power there was in favour of France in Syria and Lebanon, and in favour of Great Britain in Palestine. By that time, the Zionist movement favoured partition for its own colonial objectives. Similar in means, yet of another nature, the Zionist movement's motivation was to get a favourable British administration in Palestine to enable the creation of a Jewish National Home.

At the time of this first partition, the Palestinians and Arabs were forced to accept it, they did it out of necessity but were not partitionists as such as they did not favour it or gain anything from it. They rather viewed it as a wrong for a good, as a temporary thing.

After the distribution of the mandates and until the mid 1930s, the three actors, this time in Palestine in its mandate borders, would show a common anti-partitionist stand. As a matter of fact, it is only in the mid-1930s that partition would emerge in the British ranks as a way out of what it had come to consider as an inextricable situation. Before that however, the British government had always considered Palestine as an indivisible unit and for that purpose it tried to manage Palestine for its best interest. In reality, however, it managed the two communities separately thus creating a de facto separation

on the ground. While allocating privileges to the Zionist movement and enabling it to develop as an autonomous and independent society with its own banks, schools, trade unions etc... Thus while it officially considered Palestine as one country, Great Britain let communitarianism developed.

In the wake of the first partition plan proposal, the given changed and despite the internal oppositions the Zionist movement adopted partition as a favourable outcome in its march towards the seizing of the whole country. The conclusions of the Woodhead commission's report led the British government to look for a solution that would not include partition. It tried to reach a common ground with the Zionist movement and the Palestinians leadership, in vain. Furthermore, although reluctant to partition, the pro-Zionist members of the British government were ready to support partition even though it was neither in the interest of Britain nor of Zionism according to them. The decision of the Zionist leadership to call for the partition of Palestine was as we have seen opposed by part of the movement on the ground that the Jews could and had to live among the Arabs as part of the Jewish endeavour. However, although anti-partitionists, these were subject to contradictions and limits as they were unable to think their projects outside Zionist ideology thus there could be no possible collaboration with the Arabs. The former advocated anti-partitionism animated by what O'Leary defined as the possibility of bi or multi-nationalism while the latter rejected the rupturing of national unity and believed that partition would likely worsen rather than reduce violence<sup>4</sup>. The former believed in the legitimacy of Zionism whereas the latter considered it as a pure settler movement and could not consider the Jews as a nation, they rather proposed to regard them as Palestinians. Thus, anti-partitionism as it developed during the mandate era the Palestinian and Arab ranks on the one hand and in the Zionist ranks on the other hand had no other similar ground than the rejection of the territorial partitioning.

In the wake of the Nakba, as developed above, bi-nationalism sank into oblivion and so did the democratic state thought by the Palestinian leadership. It would take nearly two decades for a unitarian anti-partitionist movement to emerge, and this will be the PLO as the representative of all the Palestinians that will advocate and propose it. Revolutionary in many ways, although it failed

<sup>4</sup> See the typology set by Brendan O'Leary.



to develop a programme and address some of the major questions related to the Jews' rights, the PLO's democratic state has been a unique experience as it proposed as stressed by Fatah at the time to unite under one same political entity "aggressor" or perpetrator and "victim".

To conclude, the willingness to gain partition as shown by the Zionist movement in the 1930s and 1940s movement as for it could however be compared to the Palestinian progressive adoption of the principle of partition in the mid 1970s until the late 1980s. As a matter of fact, similar dynamics were at work in both movements which had come to look at political sovereignty as a priority.

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### **Interviews:**

These interviews have been recorded by Eyal Sivan – Reader at the University of East London – during the Summer and Autumn 2011, and are part of an archive (in construction) on the common state : [www.commonstate.net](http://www.commonstate.net).

These are original and non-edited source recordings.

**Ariela Azoulay**: Professor of visual culture and contemporary philosophy. Translator and Film-maker.

**Omar Barghouti**: Author and founding member of the Palestinian Campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI).

**Meron Benbenisti:** Political scientist. Former deputy mayor of Jerusalem (1971-1978). Founder of the West Bank Database Project.

**Khulood Badawi:** Former chair of the National Union of Arab Students on behalf of *Hadash* (The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality), is a field researcher of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI).

**Rozeen Bisharat:** Film-maker. Founding member of *Palestinema* in Jaffa.

**Eliaz Cohen:** Poet, literary editor. Founding member of *Yerushalom* for the dialogue between Palestinians and settlers and of *Eretz Yoshveyha* (Land of its inhabitants).

**Layla Farsakh:** Associate Professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts and Bir Zeit. Co-director of Jerusalem 2050 Project.

**Sandi Hilal:** Architect and professor. Adviser to the UNRWA and founding member of the Decolonizing Architecture Institute (DAAR)

**Nurit Peled Elhanan:** Professor of education at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Sakharov Prize for Freedom of thought 2001.

**Ala Hlehel:** Writer, scriptwriter and editorialist for numerous Arabic journals in Israel. Founder of the cultural magazine: [www.qadita.net](http://www.qadita.net)

**Haim Hanegbi:** Journalist et writer. Founding member of *Matzpen*, first anti-colonial movement in Israel.

**Hassan Jabareen:** Professor of Law, Founder of Adalah (The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel)

**Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin:** Historian and professor of Jewish history at Ben Gurion University. Director of the department of inter-disciplinary studies.

**Yael Lerer:** Editor and writer. Founder of Andalus Editions in Tel Aviv. Ex-collaborator of Azmi Bishara

**Gideon Levy:** Journalist, *Haaretz*

**Ruchama Marton:** Psychiatrist. Founder and president of PHR (Physicians for Human Rights). Co-founder of numerous feminist and human rights organizations .

**Hisham Nafaa:** Editor and journalist at Al-Itihad – newspaper of the Israeli communist party. Editorialist at the Beirut based Al Akhbar.

**Salman Natour:** Writer and translator of Hebrew literature into Arabic. Member of the board of directors of Adalah.

**Ilan Pappé:** Figurehead of the Israeli new historians. Professor of contemporary history of the Middle East and director of the European Centre of Palestine Studies at the University of Exeter.

**Nadim Rouhana:** Professor of political science at the University of Boston. Founder-Director of Mada al Carmel (Haifa) Arab Center for Research in Social Sciences.

**Yehuda Shenhav:** Sociologist, professor at the University of Tel Aviv. Editor of *Organization Studies* and editor in chief of the Israeli magazine *Theory and Criticism in Context*. Co-founder of Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition.

**Ayelet Tzvieli:** Teacher and masters' student at Tel Aviv University. Member of *Eretz Yohveyha* (Land of its inhabitants).

**Michel Warchawski:** Journalist, essayist. Former militant of the Socialist Organization in Israel (*Matzpen*). Co-founder of the Alternative Information Center (AIC).

**Khaled Ziada:** Co-founder and co-director of the London Palestine Film Festival. Co-founder of the Palestine Society and of the One-State group at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

**Haneen Zoabi:** Member of Knesset representing Balad (National Democratic Assembly), an Israeli Arab political party in Israel.

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