
Zionist Theories of Peace in the Pre-state Era

Legacies of Dissimulation and Israel's Arab Minority

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In 1950, the Israeli Foreign Ministry published a booklet arguing against the return of Palestinian refugees to the country. Its contention was that any return of refugees would introduce the problem of a national minority, thereby reversing the effects of the war, which had effectively ended the presence of non-Jews within the territory of the Jewish state:

As a result of the war and the flight of the Arabs, Israel has become a State with an ethnically almost homogeneous population . . . The culture of the State is Jewish, the government administration, the army and all its important institutions are almost exclusively Jewish. It would be folly to resurrect artificially a minority problem which has been almost eliminated by the war.

(Gabbay 1959:53)

The claim that there was no Arab minority to speak of inside Israel was absurd, but the implicit belief by the Israeli Foreign Ministry that these absurd claims about Arabs in Israel would not be seen as such is wonderfully instructive. The gap this propaganda line sought to open between image and reality corresponds exactly to the gap between pre-state Zionist promises of "non-domination" of Arabs by Jews in the future Jewish state and the realities of the Jewish majority's treatment of the Arab minority, beginning with the establishment of military rule over Arabs in 1948. It corresponds as well to a larger double discourse in the pre-state period between what Zionist leaders publicly proclaimed as their commitment to Jewish-Arab relations in the aftermath of Zionist success and what they privately expected should and would be the nature of those relations.

Dealing with an "Almost Eliminated" Minority

For Jews in Palestine, the 1948 war was both harrowing and exhilarating. One out of every hundred Jews in the country died in the fighting that began in the fall of 1947 and did not end until early 1949. But the result was not only independence but a much larger territorial expanse than had been granted by the United Nations, and a reduction of nearly 800,000 in the population of Arabs that the Jewish state would have otherwise had to integrate. The flight, expulsion, and enforced exclusion of this mass of Palestinian Arabs was as much a part of the victory as the defeat of Arab armies and the expansion of Jewish-held regions. Chaim Weizmann – the aged, sick, nearly blind elder statesman of the Zionist movement – responded to news of the exodus of Palestinian Arabs as “a miraculous simplification of Israel’s tasks” (MacDonald 1951:176). As removed as he was from operational decisions and realities, Weizmann may perhaps be forgiven if he thought it the result of divine intervention. But those in the trenches of the Zionist project, and the leadership on the ground in Palestine – foremost among them Weizmann’s bitter antagonist, David Ben-Gurion – knew full well how great was the ratio of systematic and brutal effort to happenstance or divine favor in producing massive waves of Palestinian refugees and in preventing those seeking to return from doing so.

Having achieved a Jewish majority through force of arms, the primary concern of the nascent state of Israel was to secure its territorial and demographic gains by preventing the return of Arab refugees and assuming control over “abandoned” land and property for the settlement of new Jewish immigrants. Benny Morris (1993) has written vividly about Israel’s war on refugee “infiltration” from neighboring Arab states in the immediate postindependence period. However, for all the planning that had gone into the displacement of Arabs and their evacuation from Jewish-held areas – and there is substantial evidence of such planning – there was scant planning in the late 1940s for how an Arab minority within the state would be provided for or governed.¹

¹ As documented by Yossi Katz (1997, 1998), there was a brief period in 1938 when the Jewish Agency did discuss plans for a future Arab minority. Katz argues that policies drawn up at this time were echoed in what was implemented in 1948, but his evidence is not consistent with this claim. What is clear is that the Jewish Agency’s thinking on the minority issue (1) only began when it became clear the British would not forcibly transfer Arabs from the proposed Jewish state; (2) was focused entirely on determining the minimum protections to Arabs that could be provided while still being able to claim conformity to League of Nations’ requirements regarding the treatment of minorities;

The Arabs who remained within Jewish-held territory after Israel’s war of independence, whether separated from their homes as “present absentees” or huddled within villages or ghettos in the “mixed cities,” were traumatized and largely leaderless. Looting by both Jewish soldiers and civilians was widespread. The absence of Zionist planning for the existence of an Arab minority in the state they were building was apparent in the absence of any publicly established policy or official guidelines for how to treat Arabs within the jurisdiction of the new State of Israel. In this vacuum low-level Jewish elites acted as they saw fit toward the remaining Arab inhabitants. These included local military commanders, Histadrut officials anxious to control the flow of labor and agricultural products, bureaucrats searching for housing for immigrants, Zionist intelligence operatives or personnel responsible for land acquisition accustomed to operating with or against Palestinian Arabs during the pre-state period, and some officials in the newly established Ministry of Police and the Ministry of Minorities. Despite honeyed phrases about equality for all, top Zionist leaders preferred not to constrain these “men of action,” such as Yehoshua Palmon, Israel’s first adviser to the prime minister on Arab affairs, who described his own approach to the Arabs “as a wolf in sheep’s clothing.” Palmon’s overall assessment was that his policy had failed to achieve a sufficient reduction in the size of the state’s Arab minority (Segev 1986).

The short-lived career of the Ministry of Minorities is an excellent indicator of the fundamentally improvisational response by Jewish governing authorities to the “surprising” existence of any Arabs at all within the state shortly after its establishment. The man appointed by Ben-Gurion to head the ministry was Behor Shetreet, who was also appointed as Minister of Police. Instructively, the Ministry of Minorities was the *only* ministerial department not based on preexisting institutions of the *Yishuv* (in Zionist parlance – the Jewish community living in the Land of Israel). Nor had its existence been discussed or even anticipated by the detailed planning work of the Emergency Committee, established in October 1947 to conduct detailed administrative planning for the transformation of Jewish and Zionist institutions into governing authorities (Alsberg 1989). By early 1949, however, the Ministry of

(3) ended by the close of 1938 with the withdrawal of the British partition plan; and (4) resulted in no lasting policy position except a precedent for responding to subsequent United Nations’ requirements in ways that signaled a commitment to minority rights protection emphasizing the formal status of Arabs as citizens but little protection for their rights as such.

Minorities had lost whatever influence over Arab policy affairs it ever had. It was dissolved in March 1949, establishing with unmistakable clarity that the sole authority for governance in Arab areas had been delegated to the *Memshal Tsvai* – military government.

The administrative apparatus of the military government itself evolved disjointedly, shaped by different styles and attitudes of various military commanders and the orientations of those “Arab experts” among the Haganah’s intelligence operation who had close personal or professional ties to Ben-Gurion.² For almost two decades, from 1948 through 1966, suffrage rights for Arab citizens coexisted with severe and systematic restrictions on the Arab population’s civil liberties, economic and cultural rights, and freedom of movement. This regime of pass laws, permits, curfews, harassment, isolation, and petty punishments was enforced by poorly trained army units and administered by Jewish bureaucrats and military officers thought by the rest of the military to be incapable of performing serious military functions.

The military government controlled Arabs by isolating them from Jews, fragmenting them into disconnected villages and regions, enforcing divisions among religious communities, stoking interclan rivalries among kinship groups, enlisting networks of informers, and co-opting traditionalist elites. Overall, the objective was to render the presence of Arabs – a sizable non-Jewish minority in the country – as irrelevant as possible to the life of the Jewish state (Lustick 1980). Officially established in October 1948, the military government’s legal authority was rooted in emergency mandatory legislation absorbed by Israeli cabinet decree following the declaration of statehood in mid-May. The Defense Emergency Regulations “delegated effective sovereignty to the military within a specified territory and authorized its commander to suspend all basic constitutional liberties, including the property and habeas corpus rights, of its inhabitants” (Robinson 2013:33).³ Armed with these and other emergency laws, Ben-Gurion appointed Haganah commander Elimelekh Avner to oversee the military regime that replaced the ad hoc administrations set up by the army in majority Arab areas. Robinson describes the spatial consequences of early military rule:

² Haganah (“Defense”) was the name for the pre-state underground army of the mainstream Labor-Zionist movement and became the basis for the Israel Defense Forces, the Israeli army, after 1948.

³ For a detailed analysis of how the “makeshift” use of a “State of Emergency” was used to establish the military government as the basis for a distinctive regime of exclusion and control of Arabs in Israel, see Mehozay (2012).

By early 1949, the Military Government had divided the Galilee alone into fifty-eight separate ghettos, severing Palestinians from their relatives, their commercial markets, and the urban centers where they had worked, studied, sought medical treatment, [and] taken care of administrative affairs . . . After the annexation of the Little Triangle in May 1949, roughly 90 percent of the Palestinians in Israel lived under military rule.

(Robinson 2013:39)

In addition, the 11,000 Bedouin remaining in the Beersheba area were forcibly concentrated into reserves representing 10 percent of their ancestral lands.

Although loosened gradually between its establishment in 1948 and its abolition in 1966, in its first decade the military government controlled nearly every aspect of daily life in Arab areas. Formal military permits were required for opening a shop, harvesting crops, seeking medical treatment, finding a job in a Jewish city, traveling to work, or simply moving between villages for visitation. To turn the spigots of cheap Arab labor on and off when and where it was necessary for the Jewish economy, only a fraction of all Arab requests for work permits were granted. Arab farmers were not allowed to independently market their produce but rather were forced to sell it at below-market prices to state-created monopolistic marketing firms. Blacklists were used to deny politically affiliated Arabs development loans and travel authorization (Lustick 1980:184).⁴

Complementing severe restrictions on the daily lives of Arab citizens were efforts to advance Jewish state-building in heavily Arab areas in the north by settling Jewish citizens in their midst. The “Judaization of the Galilee” (*Yehud ha-Galil*), as this effort was known, made ample use of the Emergency Defense Regulations that animated the military government. Of particular utility was Article 125, which empowered the defense minister to declare any area under martial law a “closed area” and to prohibit entry. In combination with the Cultivation of Waste Lands Ordinance, which authorized the expropriation of uncultivated farmland, Article 125 became a key legal tool in the state’s efforts to transfer Arab-owned land in the Galilee to Jewish agriculturalists. Shimon Peres, then director general of the defense ministry, openly acknowledged the

⁴ The blanket of restrictions the military government imposed on Arabs was so intricate, comprehensive, and (usually) mean-spirited, and the level of corruption among military government officials so high, that in 1967 Defense Minister Moshe Dayan decreed that no officer who had served in the military government inside of Israel would be eligible for service in the newly occupied territories.

government's conscious use of this technique in 1962: "By making use of Article 125, on which the Military Government is to a great extent based, we can directly continue the struggle for Jewish settlement and Jewish immigration" (Lustick 1980:178). The state employed a similar approach when in 1954 it expropriated 1,200 dunams of Arab-owned land to create the Jewish city of Upper Nazareth. The purpose of this new settlement on the outskirts of Israel's largest Arab city, according to the northern military governor at the time, was to "swallow up" Arab Nazareth and "transfer the center of gravity of life . . . to the Jewish neighborhood" (Forman 2006:350). Most important were the political purposes served by the military government, purposes that featured decisively in repeated rejections of internal recommendations to abolish it (Ozacky-Lazar 2002). At the international level, preventing the fate of the Arab minority – and particularly the expropriation of their property – from becoming a highly visible issue was considered vital by the Foreign Ministry in its effort to reverse the initial decision of the United Nations to reject Israel's application for membership. For Ben-Gurion and his Mapai Party, an even more important political function of the military government was as a machine capable of translating intimate ties with the desperate and utterly dependent *mukhtars* and other traditional elites into mass voting for Mapai and its "affiliated Arab lists." As Korn (2000) explains, "In exchange for a new permit or a renewal, Arabs were expected to show their loyalty and behave in a politically correct manner. The latter was expressed by refraining from any independent form of political activity and by voting for the ruling party, Mapai" (Korn 2000:169).

Finally, although the UN Partition resolution had required Israel to include citizenship and voting rights for all its inhabitants, accomplishment of all its other objectives with respect to the Arab minority meant that their formal citizenship had to be prevented from having any domestic political meaning. In Israel's multiparty, proportional representation system, a united Arab party representing more than 10 percent of the country's voters could have had a real impact on coalition politics. Accordingly, the military government was called upon to prevent the formation of any independent and united Arab political movement:

[M]ilitary government officers outlawed political organizations, restricted the movements of political activists, confined them to their [villages], exiled them to Jewish towns, subjected them to house arrest or administrative detention, and obligated them to report to police stations several times a day. Villages where political meetings were scheduled to take place

were proclaimed closed military zones, access roads were blocked and "undesirables" without permits were denied entry.

(Korn 2000:168)

Although led by Jews, the Communist Party was the closest thing to a legal vehicle for protest and organization the Arab population had. Accordingly, the military government treated the party as a dangerous enemy. In 1957, the rationale behind the military government was explained: "If we cancelled the restrictions, the Communist Party would invite Arab refugees to squat on their ruins, demand their lands back . . . [and] the return of the refugees. They will form organizations, parties, fronts, anything to make trouble" (Robinson 2013:45). Absent an Arabic newspaper or publication independent of a Jewish-controlled party, the Communist Party's Arabic-language organ, *al-Ittihad*, was a crucial source of information and analysis. Copies were smuggled into Arab villages to avoid confiscation by the military authorities. The military government sought to intimidate Communist activists, prevent villages with strong Communist Party presence from receiving various services or administrative authorizations, and purge schools of teachers suspected of sympathy with the party. Arab schools were forced to engage in Zionist indoctrination, including enactment of elaborate rituals of devotion to the Jewish state. Severely under-resourced, they were pressured to inculcate an apolitical Arab cultural identity that precluded national identification with other Palestinians or Arabs beyond Israel's borders (ibid.:138–143).

For nearly two decades, the military government was instrumental in stripping the Arab minority of its remaining physical assets and depriving it of an independent political base from which it could promote its national, cultural, and economic interests. This was not only its effect but its *raison d'être*. The long-term consequence of this policy was noted by Peleg and Waxman (2011:34): "The extreme socio-economic inequality between Jews and Arabs is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, problems that affects minority-majority relations in Israel . . . A wide range of socio-economic measures testify to this inequality; [including] poverty levels, unemployment rates, average incomes, and occupational structure and types of professions."

From this brief account of the military government's establishment and its operation, three things are obvious. First, Israel not only had a non-Jewish minority from the very moment of its establishment, it was a significant minority, with more privately owned land under its

control than was in the hands of Jews, an important share of agricultural production, and territorial contiguity in areas beyond the UN Partition lines, whose fate was still uncertain. Second, Israeli leaders were fully aware of the presence of this population and were ready to authorize extensive measures to minimize its interference with the state's ability to accomplish the security, immigrant absorption, ideological, partisan-political, economic, and state consolidation tasks it had set for itself. Third, unlike just about every other domain, when it came to dealing with non-Jewish citizens of the Jewish state, Israel's leaders had neither doctrine nor institutions available from the pre-state period to transition into place. If we then return to the Foreign Ministry's 1950 declaration that the state was "almost exclusively Jewish" and that the problem of a non-Jewish minority had been "virtually eliminated," we can pose the following question: what explains this striking gap between the palpable reality of a substantial, problematic, and intensively controlled Arab minority and the public claim of its irrelevance and virtual nonexistence?

Origins of a Double Discourse

While the Ottomans ruled Palestine, most Zionists considered the local Arabs as having no separate political identity and therefore posing only limited challenges to Jewish economic development and the achievement of Jewish demographic predominance. Reflecting these attitudes, Weizmann and other Zionist leaders sought to "satisfy Arab aspirations outside Palestine in exchange for Arab support of a national homeland in Palestine" (Kolatt 1983:10). However, with the onset of the British Mandate, Zionist leaders became acutely aware of the importance, indeed the centrality, of the challenge to their ambitions for Palestine represented by its Arab inhabitants. At a crucial meeting in Kibbutz Ein Harod, following Arab-Jewish violence in 1921, the leadership of the Socialist Zionists debated a proposal by Shlomo Kaplansky to endorse a binational state in Palestine for both Arabs and Jews. The proposal was firmly rejected, both on substantive and tactical grounds. Substantively, both the rank and file, and the leaders of the movement (Ben-Gurion, Tabenkin, Ben-Tzvi, and Katznelson) were already fundamentally committed to the transformation of Palestine into a sovereign Jewish state. Tactically, they saw no profit in public recognition of the seriousness of the brewing conflict with the Arabs. The result was a posture

described by Anita Shapira as "the defensive ethos" – an odd phrase meant to convey avoidance of explicit, honest, and public engagement with the Arab question (Shapira 1992:83–126).

This stance differed sharply from that of right-wing Zionists, later to break away from the World Zionist Organization on this issue. Their leader, Vladimir Jabotinsky, insisted on open and forceful declarations that Zionism's intent was to transform all of Palestine into a Jewish state and that this would entail a zero-sum fight with the Arab population. Not until the early 1940s would the Labor and General Zionist parties who dominated the Zionist movement officially proclaim the actual goal of a Jewish state in all of Palestine. Aside from alienating possible gentile supporters by going beyond the Balfour Declaration's formula of "a Jewish National Home in Palestine," the mainstream leadership feared reducing Jewish immigration by frightening those fearful of bloody conflict with the Arabs. They also preferred not to disturb cherished beliefs that theirs was a cause of pure justice, sullied by neither malign intentions nor inevitably tragic consequences (Shapira 1992).⁵

But there was one setting, the international arena, including public testimony before British commissions established to find a solution to the "problem of Palestine," in which Zionist leaders were more or less forced to say something official about the long-term objectives of the movement. In light of obvious, violent, and entrenched Arab enmity to Jewish immigration, land transfers to Jews, and especially to any talk of Jewish rule of the country, questions inevitably arose as to why the international community should back Zionist efforts if it would mean oppression of local Arabs and endless war. What these, usually sympathetic, questioners wanted to hear was a Zionist theory of peace – not a guarantee of the disappearance of Arab opposition but some statement of Zionist aims and plans for eventual peace and stability in the country that imagined the accommodation of Arab requirements and Arab sentiments.

Within the general category of Zionist theories of peace are claims concerning the character of relations between Arabs who remained within the boundaries of the Jewish state and the Jewish majority that Zionism was fully committed to establishing. As Ben-Gurion told one Palestinian leader in the early 1930s, "Our final goal is the independence

⁵ These concerns largely vanished with the rise of Hitler and the desperate search by European Jews for places of refuge.

of the Jewish people in Palestine, on both sides of the Jordan River, not as a minority, but as a community numbering millions" (Teveth 1985:130). *Ipsa facto*, this meant Zionism's success would produce an Arab minority in Palestine, no matter what its geographical dimensions. In light of our sketch of the fate of the Arab minority in Israel, and the process by which policies toward it were chosen and implemented, close attention to pre-state pronouncements by Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, and others on this topic will help explain the sharp contradiction we have identified between the Israeli government's official claim of the nonexistence of the Arab minority and its actual behavior toward it. Expressed in Wittengensteinian terms, we may say that when it came to the Arab problem, Zionist "ordinary language" (actual belief, lived reality, and practice) was virtually unconstrained by Zionist "grammar" (that which was officially said to be the case).

Zionist Theories of Peace

Iron Wall Logic

On the question of how peace with the Arabs could be achieved, the most common theme in Zionist testimony before British or international investigating commissions was endorsement of the logic made famous by Vladimir Jabotinsky's formula of *kir habarzel*, "the iron wall." As noted, practical Zionists avoided speaking forthrightly about Zionism's goal of transforming Palestine into a Jewish state. Jabotinsky attacked these "vegetarians" who shrank from admitting that a deep conflict of real interests was at the core of the conflict between indigenous Arabs and the "alien settler" Jews.⁶ He warned against seeking negotiations or a basis for cooperation until the last "gleam of hope" that Zionism could be uprooted was removed from Arab eyes. This would be accomplished by repeated and overwhelming military defeats. While recognizing the reasonableness of Arab opposition, the requirement of adjusting Zionist demands was not to be considered. Combined with the justification for using force to impose Zionism's minimum requirements, Jabotinsky's practical proposal for coercive pedagogy

⁶ For a close analysis of Jabotinsky's language and argument regarding "the iron wall" as a long-term political strategy and the reasons for its successes and failures, see Lustick (1996).

quickly filled the void that was Zionism's official policy on the Arab question.

Though rivalry between Jabotinsky's "Revisionists" and the Zionist mainstream was intense, filled with mutual vilification and occasionally violence, the overwhelming majority of Zionists found it convenient to use at least portions of Jabotinsky's argument. Even Chaim Weizmann, the most diplomatic of Zionism's leading spokesmen in the 1920s and 1930s, regularly invoked the iron wall logic, if not the actual phrase. Repeatedly he called upon the international community in general, and the British in particular, to express categorical support for Zionism, or use force in unmistakable ways. Were they to do so, Arabs inside and outside of Palestine would realize that acquiescence in the Jewish National Home and cooperation with Zionism was their only sensible course of action.

Testifying before the Peel Commission in December 1936, Weizmann said that peace could grow out of an arrangement giving the Jewish minority in Palestine administrative "parity" with the Arab majority under the British Mandate, accompanied by unlimited Jewish immigration.⁷ The Arabs could agree, he said, but they "will never come to terms if they feel that they will get what they want out of the Royal Commission, or the government" (Weizmann [1931] in Litvinoff 1984b:226). Weizmann argued that a policy based on the real meaning of the Balfour Declaration had not failed. Such a policy had never *really* been tried because the British had never been categorical in their commitment to the transformation of Palestine: "In a sense the Mandate has never been given a chance . . . The population has never been made to understand the Mandate has come to stand or the policy has come to stand and it is going to be carried out" (ibid.:220). In further testimony before the Peel Commission, Weizmann was unusually graphic in his suggestion for how the signal of definitiveness could be sent:

I think it was in Bombay recently, that there had been trouble and the Moslems had been flogged. I am not advocating flogging, but what is the

⁷ This was the formula worked out for public distribution by the World Zionist Organization in the early 1930s. It combined effective public relations use of the term "parity" with avoidance of political recognition of the Arab majority (hence the emphasis on administration rather than a "legislative council"). It also provided for separate development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine until immigration would produce a Jewish majority capable of controlling the shape of the political order there once the British Mandate came to an end (see Kolatt 1991:22; Teveth 1985:116).

difference between a Moslem in Palestine and a Moslem in Bombay? There they flog them, and here they save their faces. This, interpreted in terms of Moslem mentality, means: "The British are weak; we shall succeed if we make ourselves sufficiently unpleasant. We shall succeed in throwing the Jews into the Mediterranean."

(*ibid.*:143)⁸

During World War II, Weizmann, speaking to American diplomats, insisted that the mistake of indecisiveness made by the League of Nations after World War I could be corrected after World War II:

[N]ow since the world was going to be remade afresh, there is a new opportunity to settle the matter; that if the Arabs were told that the United Nations mean business, that they considered this solution just, that Palestine should become a Jewish National Home open to vast Jewish immigration – with the United Nations ensuring that the Arabs' legitimate rights are protected – [that] may open a new period which may subsequently become a period of cooperation.

(Weizmann's report to the Zionist Political Committee, New York, January 28, 1943, in *ibid.*:506)

As mainstream Zionism shifted toward explicit pursuit of Jewish statehood, both Weizmann and Ben-Gurion offered exceedingly optimistic images of how suddenly demonstrations of Zionism's indestructibility by the establishment of a state would trigger peace. Asked in 1938 by British prime minister Neville Chamberlain whether a Jewish state would inevitably mean war with the Arabs, Weizmann responded with his opinion that "on the morrow of the establishment of the state there would definitely be peace" (*ibid.*:308). In 1940, Weizmann sought to persuade his New York audience that the logic of the iron wall was beginning to work:

I think [the Arabs] are beginning to learn the futility of destruction . . . with a little looking around one can see that there may be something in the Arab mind which, if I were to put it into words, would read something like this: The Jewish National Home is here, whether we like it or not. We have tried to eradicate it, with no particular success. Well, what is the good of fighting?

(Weizmann's speech delivered on January 14, 1940, in *ibid.*:389)

⁸ A month later, responding to a question about why Arab opposition to Zionism was continuing, Weizmann again pointed to flogging in India as an object lesson for the British in Palestine (see Litvinoff 1984b:181). In the same vein, Weizmann told the commission of what he described as a standing joke among the Arabs, "that for one Arab who dies from a bullet, two Arabs die of laughter; laughing at the performance of the British" (*ibid.*:233).

Likewise, Ben-Gurion, in the years just prior to the establishment of the state, theorized to outside observers that Arab grievances would simply dissipate once the international community had decisively put its foot down, giving rise to robust Arab-Jewish cooperation. An official memorandum submitted by the Jewish Agency to the 1947 UN Special Commission on Palestine rebuts charges that internal Arab opposition would doom a future Jewish state to permanent instability:

In a Jewish State immigration policy and constitutional policy would have been decided in advance and embodied in the very purpose of the State. They would no longer be outstanding as issues of conflict between its inhabitants; and once these issues were decided – *with the full weight of international authority behind the decision* – the relations between Jews and Arabs would depend on matters of economic progress and social welfare in which a mutual interest would quickly be perceived.

(The Jewish Agency for Palestine 1947b:324, emphasis added)

The Material Benefits of Peace

The second most prominent theme in Zionist evocations of eventual peace was of the irresistible opportunities Jewish Palestine would provide for Arab economic advancement. The best known of these depictions is contained in Theodore Herzl's (1960) utopian novel *Old-New Land*. After being away from Palestine between 1902 and 1923, Dr. Friedrich Loewenberg, a Jew, and his rich German patron, Kingscourt, return to a thriving Jewish national home. With the appreciative testimony of a prosperous Arab landowner, Reschid Bey, Herzl depicts the material benefits Zionism would bring to Palestine, the embrace of Western capitalist values by Muslims, and the decisiveness of these economic and civilizational contributions to the neutralization of potential political animosity.

"We Jews introduced cultivation here."

"Pardon me, sir!" cried Reschid Bey with a friendly smile. "But this sort of thing was here before you came – at least there were signs of it. My father planted oranges extensively" . . . "I don't deny that you had orange groves before we came," thundered Steineck, "but you could never get full value out of them."

Reschid nodded. "That is correct. Our profits have grown considerably. Our orange transport has multiplied tenfold since we have had good

transportation facilities to connect us with the whole world. Everything here has increased in value since your immigration.”

(Ibid.:121)

Many Zionist spokesmen followed Herzl's lead, contending that Arabs would benefit so handsomely in the economic realm that Arab recognition of Jewish rights would inevitably result. After World War I, the American-staffed King-Crane Commission was sent to the Levant under the terms of the Versailles Treaty to determine the will of the area's inhabitants in accordance with principles of Wilsonian self-determination. The commission visited Syria, including Palestine, Transjordan, and Lebanon. In the report of the commissioners, the petitions and testimony presented on behalf of the Zionist movement were summarized as follows:

The coming of the Jews, it was said, would materially benefit the local inhabitants. It would not injure them in any way, for in the past, relations between the Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors had been very friendly. With the coming of the Zionists, Western culture would be brought to the land of the ancients and transmitted to the Arabs, as in the medieval Christian era the Arabs had transmitted the culture of the ancients to Western Europe.

(Howard 1963:97)

This public relations position existed in substantial tension with the explicitly colonialist formula used by Herzl and others (including, at times, Chaim Weizmann) to the effect that Zionism would build a “rampart” in the Middle East to help protect Europe from barbarism.⁹ Taking an opposite tack, Zionist spokesmen often publicly predicted a Jewish Palestine would function as a transmission belt to the region for the benefits of European-style modernity, as a bridge between East and West, not a bridgehead. Harry Sacher, in 1919, wrote that “Jewish Palestine . . . will strive to replace the broken tyranny of the

⁹ Herzl famously promised that were the Zionist movement to be given Palestine, “we could constitute part of the wall of defense [often translated as ‘rampart’] against Asia; we would serve as an outpost of civilization against barbarism” (Herzl 1896/1970:52). For Max Nordau's proposal to build a Zionist-Ottoman alliance to protect the Ottoman Empire against Arab nationalism, see Kolatt (1983:9). In their testimonies before the Peel Commission both Ben-Gurion and Weizmann expressed the view and hope that Britain would rule Palestine for 50 years, if not permanently (Esco Foundation 1947). After World War II Weizmann portrayed a Jewish state in Palestine as a bulwark in defense of democracy against the totalitarian proclivities of Arabs and Muslims (Litvinoff 1984b:427).

Turk by a harmonious cooperation between Jew, Arab, and Armenian. It will read the riddle of the West to the East, and the riddle of the East to the West” (Sacher 1919).

Weizmann often held out a vision of the eventual inevitability of Arab-Jewish cooperation and mutual economic benefit: “I feel that the inexorable logic of economic pressure on both sides of the Jordan will eventually make for common endeavor between Jews and Arabs” (from a speech in London at the Jewish Agency banquet, March 2, 1933, in Litvinoff 1984b:25). Zionists would work diligently to demonstrate their project's material benefits for Arabs until the fruits of peace from that effort could be harvested.

[I]t is not true – no, it is not true – that we have uprooted the Arabs. We have not uprooted them; we have shown them the way to a better life, and we shall continue to do this until they understand that we have a common interest in reviving the Middle East, and that this task can be achieved only on the basis of a strong Jewish Palestine.

(Weizmann's address to the 19th Zionist Congress in Lucerne, Switzerland, August 27, 1935, in *ibid.*:81)

Although Weizmann admitted that the Arabs of Palestine would probably be the last of the Arab peoples to see the light, the Arabs in general “will have to negotiate with us when we come to business because they know we have something to offer which they cannot get from anywhere else” (testimony to the Peel Commission, December 23, 1936, in *ibid.*:232). Indeed, Weizmann stressed, the Arabs would find no one else except the Zionists from whom they could secure the benefits of modern civilization and economic development.

We have to cooperate with you [the Arabs] as you have to cooperate with us . . . make no mistake about this: you cannot stand on your own feet unaided. You will not escape the influence of modern culture and progress. In this world of ours there is no room for those who stand alone. You need the power of development which the Jews bring with them. We bring it to you without any of those political designs which are generally associated with Western influence in this part of the world.¹⁰

(Address to rally in Rehovot, Israel, January 1938, in *ibid.*:297–298)

The confidence Weizmann expressed in such images of how and why Arab opposition to Zionism would end was rooted in a particular

¹⁰ For the Peel Commission, Weizmann elaborated his theory that Arabs acted on economic interest rather than political commitment because of the weaknesses of Arab culture and the artificiality of Arab nationalism.

depiction of Arab rationality. Two reasons this rationality could be depended on were (1) the artificiality and inauthenticity of Arab nationalism, and (2) the inconstancy of the Arab mentality. Weizmann often characterized local Arab opposition as not particularly "deep" and, therefore, relatively easily reversed (testimony to the Peel Commission on November 25, 1936, in *ibid.*:132, 154).

From the beginning of the British Mandate, public Zionist statements had stressed the boost a Jewish Palestine would give to Arab living standards and how that would foster cooperative and peaceable relations between Jews and Arabs in the country and in the region as a whole. However, as cycles repeated themselves – from violence to committees of inquiry recommending limits on Jewish immigration, to Zionist success reversing those limits, to more violence – a key public relations question arose. Why, if the Arabs stood to gain so much from Zionism, were they so slow to realize it and to respond to offers for rapprochement?

Peace through Democracy and Modernization

A third theory of peace attributed Arab recalcitrance to the underdevelopment of Arab society. Eventually, modernization would free Arabs from oppressive leaders whose anti-Zionist agitation blinded the masses to their true interests. The most important version of this argument was cast in socialist terms, presented by Ben-Gurion in the early 1920s. He used it to justify rejecting negotiations with the Arab *effendis* (because they were oppressive and disingenuous leaders of an undeveloped Arab society). To make peace, Zionists would need to wait until Arab workers organized themselves properly as potential political interlocutors: "We have no shared program with the Arab ruling class. But we do share a program with the Arab workers" (Ben-Gurion 1931:74). Still, that "shared program" was never described. Instead Ben-Gurion, supported by other leaders of *Achdut Ha'Avoda* – Berl Katznelson, Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi, and Yitzhak Tabenkin – emphasized the separate and autonomous framework within which Jewish workers should organize in order to strengthen the Zionist project (Teveth 1985: 67–71).

In 1929, Moshe Beilinson offered an extended analysis of the reasons for violent Arab opposition and the inadequacy of Zionism's positive economic impact on Arab Palestine as a whole. Longtime editor of the Labor Zionist newspaper *Davar*, Beilinson identified the prime factor responsible for "this situation" as "the low

level of development of the Arab Yishub" (Beilinson 1929:174). Beilinson's treatment was considerably more detailed than the analysis provided by most Labor Zionist leaders.¹¹ Beilinson emphasized the role of British policies supporting the exploitative Arab rulers but also criticized ineffective Zionist policies for inhibiting progress toward "social and democratic advance." The result was domination of Arab society by a "reactionary force that was not known ten years ago" (*ibid.*:175). Beilinson warned against reaching an agreement with this class, since in the long run it was doomed. By making peace "on the basis of social reaction and social enslavement, we would not be gaining much for any length of time. On the contrary, we would be preparing with our own hands the dreadful catastrophe that is sure to come on the appointed day both for them and their rule" (*ibid.*:177). To forestall this catastrophe, the Zionist movement should urge the British to carry out a revolutionary agrarian reform. In addition, massive projects of redistribution, public works, education, and social engineering would "liberate the Arab Yishub from the rule of its tyrants," building up in its stead "another class, a free-holding peasantry, as the foundation of the Arab society" (*ibid.*:187–188). This would lead to a revolt by the "young Arab generation" who would then "come to demand from us their reward for agreeing to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in this country" (*ibid.*:190; see also Hazan 1936:239).

Since commissioners posing questions to Zionist leaders were unlikely to care about the fine points of socialist theory, these were not lines of argument prominently displayed in the testimony before investigating commissions. Nevertheless, the argument that social backwardness was the taproot of Arab opposition to Zionism was an important line taken by Weizmann in his testimony to the Peel Commission. His (non-socialist) formulation emphasized, not the *effendis*, per se, but the "townsmen," including the urban-dwelling leaders of the dominant Palestinian Arab clan networks, and the intellectuals who served them.

¹¹ For parallel treatments of *effendi* rule of Arab Palestine as the pathology whose removal Zionism both required and would help accomplish, see Arlosoroff (1930); Liebenstein (1936); Kolatt (1983:14); Shapira (1992:167–168); Sereni (1936:259–300). For a detailed treatment of internal Zionist consideration of pursuit of these objectives via attempts to organize the Arab masses as naïve, and as abandoned by the late 1930s, see Shapira (1977).

- q: I prefer the countryman to the townsman.
 w: So do I, and it is he who matters. He does matter. If it is made patent to him that what is going to happen will improve his lot, improve his life, and, in fact, increase his wellbeing, which is the very thing the townsmen want to prevent us from doing. Does it not strike you as curious that here people who claim to be patriots still go on squeezing the *fellah*, squeezing the last ounce of blood out of him, and when they use the term "not to be disturbed" they are frightened that the feudal system which exists in this country ... is being disturbed through the impact of modern civilization?

(Testimony offered to the Peel Commission on December 23, 1936 in Litvinoff 1984b:244)

More generally, Zionist leaders argued that Arab societies and outlooks would mature in response to Zionist-delivered processes of modernization, rendering them open to the benefits Zionism would provide. Peace would come when Arabs became what they really wanted to be – Westerners. The Jewish model of Western civilization thriving in the Middle East would be of crucial importance in this transformation. In the summary of its case before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, the Jewish Agency called for the disruption of the old Arab order of "squalor, disease, corruption, exploitation." Comparing Zionists to American colonists and British settlers in Australia and Canada, the Jewish Agency noted that history did not "invalidate their intrusion" which shattered "the old order and the existing way of life," but rather "applauds its results." The same would be true of Zionism's effect on the Arabs:

For Westernism is not the boggy which overshadows the Arab future with fear and terror: It is the theme, the purpose and the aspiration of modern Arab life; it is the social and cultural horizon of Arab thought. The Arabs are in potentiality and desire what the Jews are in fact – citizens of a civilization based upon European standards.

(The Jewish Agency for Palestine 1947a:357)

Regionalism and "Great Leader" Diplomacy

Zionist leaders occasionally acknowledged that peace with the Arabs of Palestine might be more difficult to achieve than peace with the Arab world as a whole. Although Zionism objected to the untoward "intervention" of the Arab kings in the 1930s in the affairs of Palestine,

for the most part, Zionist leaders characterized their erstwhile foe and eventual partner in peace as being the Arab states outside of Palestine or the Arab or Muslim peoples of the region in general. By defining the problem this way, symmetry could be established between independence and statehood for Jews in Palestine, and the enjoyment of those prerogatives of national life by Arabs in the Middle East as a whole.

Accordingly, most Zionists publicly denied the authenticity of distinctively Palestinian Arab national feeling.

There is no separate Palestinian Arab people with a definite Palestinian national consciousness. The Arab of Palestine considers himself either a member of a tribe, or a son of the Arab people of which only a small part lives in Palestine. It is no accident that the Arab national movement, insofar as it exists, is Pan-Arab.

(Greenberg 1936:253)¹²

Others, willing to acknowledge the national aspirations of Palestinian Arabs, still advocated focusing on the larger Arab national movement. "It is much simpler," wrote Eliezer Liebenstein, "for an Arab emancipation movement, which aims to build a great federated state, to come to an understanding with Zionism, than it is for a specific Palestinian-Arab movement." Only by including Palestine in a "Jewish-Arab federation" could the "difficult psychological problem" the Palestinian Arabs faced be solved, having to accept "an Arab minority position in Palestine which is the necessary outcome of a Jewish National Home" (Liebenstein 1936:227).¹³ Liebenstein went so far as to describe a "Jewish Palestine within a greater Arab federation [as] probably the final goal of any serious Zionist foreign policy" (ibid.:226).

Ben-Gurion put considerable effort in the mid-1930s into promoting this view. In a 1937 letter to the Mapai Central Committee, and in (entirely fruitless) discussions he held with some Arab notables during the period, he offered a long-term vision for regional federation that would finally ensure "no contradiction among [Jews and Arabs] in the future." After "a maximum of Jewish independence is established, an

¹² Greenberg was a prominent publicist, journalist, and Labor Zionist leader in New York. This article originally appeared in *The Jewish Frontier* in 1936. On Ben-Gurion's actual recognition of the Palestinian Arabs as an authentic political force see Ben-Gurion's 1936 explanation to his colleagues of why the Arabs in Palestine were ready to sacrifice and fight against Zionism, in Teveth (1985:165).

¹³ Liebenstein, later Livneh, was a founder of the Kibbutz HaMeuchad movement. This article originally appeared in German in 1933. Liebenstein, né Livni, was the father of Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

independent Jewish state will come into being within an Arab federation. As long as states exist, this is the solution that will satisfy all our desires and all of theirs." Federation, he argued, was "the last stop and the goal in our relations with ourselves and with the Arabs. We should keep the goal in sight and strive continually to solve the problem in a way that moves toward this goal" (Gorni 2006:92–93). Notably, Ben-Gurion's plan did not entail concessions to Palestinian nationalism or limitations on Zionist political goals; on the contrary, it suggested that the creation of a Jewish demographic preponderance and a strong Jewish state by way of iron wall tactics were *preconditions* for ultimate Arab–Jewish cooperation (Ben-Gurion 1973).

Weizmann's version of this general approach featured unremitting emphasis on the 1919 "Treaty of Friendship" he had signed with the Emir Feisal, of Arabia – the Hashemite prince and leader of the Arab Revolt. At almost every opportunity, Weizmann cited this episode as proof of Zionism's capacity to reach reasonable accords with the most influential of Arab leaders.¹⁴ During and after World War II, Weizmann sought to repeat his performance, not with Feisal, who had died as King of Iraq in 1933, but with Ibn Saud, the Arabian chieftain who had, with British help, liquidated the position of the Hashemite dynasty in Arabia.

In 1941, Weizmann raised a proposal he said was transmitted to him during a 10-hour meeting he had had with "the great Arabic scholar" St. John Philby, the British agent closest to Ibn Saud (from a meeting in New York, May 25, 1941, in Litvinoff 1984b:429). Weizmann publicly characterized Arabia under Saudi rule as the only "constructive" expression of Arab nationalism (Weizmann 1942:334). In meetings with American diplomats, Weizmann cited Churchill to give credibility to his plan, identifying the then British prime minister as having been the original source of the idea of making Ibn Saud "boss of Arabia" if he could provide Arab agreement to Jewish Palestine (in a report to the Zionist Political Committee, New York, January 28, 1943, in Litvinoff 1984b:506).¹⁵

¹⁴ See, for example, Chaim Weizmann's 1942 *Foreign Affairs* article in which passages from the "Treaty" were quoted at length to document Feisal's "full consent" and as evidence that Arab opposition to Zionism "will prove transitory" (Weizmann 1942:335). For similar invocations of the Weizmann-Feisal agreement see addresses by Abba Hillel Silver (1947/1947) and Moshe Shertok (1947/1947) before the United Nations on May 8 and May 12, 1947, respectively.

¹⁵ Shertok is noted as having rejected the idea of negotiations with Ibn Saud as a matter of practical policy, though not as a public relations position (Litvinoff 1984b:508).

In correspondence with the American Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, Weizmann compared Ibn Saud to Feisal.

We have from the beginning striven to reach an amicable understanding with our Arab neighbors, and it is my hope that Ibn Saud, like Emir Feisal, with whom we found ourselves in complete accord, might understand our aspirations and the benefits of a Jewish Palestine, not only to our people, but to millions of Arabs in the neighboring countries.

(Weizmann 1942:3)¹⁶

In December 1943, Weizmann presented his plan's "main outline," to wit: "The Arabs should relinquish Palestine west of the Jordan to the Jews if, at that price, complete independence is secured to them in all other Arab lands in Asia. Mr. Philby envisaged considerable transfers of Arab population, and a compensation of L20,000,000 was to be paid to Ibn Sa'ud" (Litvinoff 1984a:108). Weizmann promised that "Jewry, however impoverished, will be able to meet the financial burden . . . but the political part of the programme could only be implemented by Great Britain and the United States" (ibid.:108–109). Weizmann often also alluded to the eventual role that an independent Jewish Palestine could play as an equal partner in a great Arab federation of Middle Eastern independent states. If the Arabs of Palestine would not acquiesce in Jewish rule of the country, he held out the prospect of Zionist assistance for those Palestinian Arabs who wished to live in an independent Arab country to leave Palestine, with their property, and enjoy a new life elsewhere in the Arab world.

During Zionism's early period in Palestine, there were some among the settlers who fashioned themselves as Hebrews returning to the East to find long-lost relatives among the Arabs as fellow Semites. Although one version of this idea was that Arabs in Palestine would have a "national home" within the national home of the Jews, another was that the two peoples would, through cultural adaptation and intermarriage, become one nation. Versions of Canaanism took this idea to its logical extreme, but despite the deep intellectual and cultural impact of the Canaanite impulse among important circles of Jews, this approach never produced a serious political movement capable of challenging more conventional Zionist attitudes.¹⁷ However, a faded version of this notion did appear in

¹⁶ The attractiveness of this idea can be appreciated by reading the hagiographical treatment Ibn Saud was being given by some influential Americans (see especially Carmichael 1942).

¹⁷ In one remarkable version of this idea, Edya Horon and Yonatan Ratosh advanced the image of a region-wide Hebrew power, led by the *Yishuv* but based on a reconstitution of

Weizmann's presentations. The Jews and Arabs, he often said, would make peace because, after all, they were relatives. Though quarrels within families could be most bitter, common bonds of kin and culture that had produced peace between the peoples in the past would do so in the future. Before the Peel Commission, Weizmann "confessed" that he had "not given up hope" that "the old tradition of cooperation between Jews and Arabs . . . might still prevail" (testimony to the Peel Commission on November 25, 1936, in Litvinoff 1984b.:121). He concluded his next day's testimony, *in camera*, by again expressing his hopefulness, based in part on the fact that "we are somewhat related, Jews and Arabs, and I know the quarrels of relatives are always the bitterest, but still we do cooperate" (testimony to the Peel Commission on November 26, 1939, in *ibid.*:147).

Legacies of Dissimulation: Understanding the Hollowness of Israeli Peace Policies and the Origins of the Military Government

Of all the theories of peace advanced by Zionist representatives, only two play a role in contemporary discourse. First, many Israeli leaders, especially on the right, still invoke the iron wall argument, though almost always as a rationale for toughness rather than as a vehicle for persuading Arabs that eventually successful negotiations will be possible. This "abandonment" of the intellectual core of Jabotinsky's theory is immensely significant (Lustick 2008). Virtually unique among all mainstream Zionist leaders, Jabotinsky's larger argument contained at least an implicit justification for eventual Jewish concessions. Once Arabs were prepared to accept Jewish independence in Palestine, he wrote, negotiations would lead to "mutual assurances" including limits that Zionism would place upon itself. It is noteworthy that in none of the other lines of argument analyzed in this paper did Zionist leaders identify Jewish concessions as an important element in the eventual attainment of peace. Second, during the Oslo years, Shimon Peres (1995), at least, was fond of fostering the idea of a "New Middle East" based on regional prosperity rooted in economic cooperation. The effort gained little traction even during the height of the Oslo peace process, and has disappeared *entirely* since its demise,

the ancient Semitic/Hebrew people described as dominating the "Land of Ever" between the Nile and the Euphrates (Ohana 2012:84-90).

at least in its liberal form. In recent years, Benjamin Netanyahu has voiced support for an illiberal concept of "economic peace" premised on the Palestinians' suspension of their political struggle in exchange for a modicum of neoliberal economic prosperity. Unsurprisingly, this plan has failed to attract significant interest among the Palestinians or the international community. None of the other theories have the slightest resonance within the mainstream, or even the significant margins, of Israeli political society.

Accordingly Israeli leaders hoping to bolster their arguments about how peace can and should be achieved find thin gruel in pre-state Zionist expositions on the topic. The implications of this absence for the ability of Israel to pursue peace in the twenty-first century while remaining Zionist are the subject of a larger work. Here, we ask a simpler question: what accounts for why so many of the public Zionist arguments reviewed in this chapter sound so ludicrous as forecasts of the factors crucial to peace-making?

The fundamental explanation for the striking disconnect between pre-state theories of peace and post-state realities is that whenever pre-state Zionist leaders thought seriously about how to solve this problem, they failed. Without abandoning the core principles of unlimited Jewish immigration (usually admitted to publicly) and eventual Jewish statehood (only latterly admitted to publicly by non-Revisionists), no top-rank Zionist spokesman could think of why the Arabs would find it a compelling interest to accept Jewish independence in Palestine as right, proper, and welcome. Not having anything to say that they actually believed, but having to respond positively to questions about whether and how the Arabs could ever live in peace with Zionism, they dissimulated. The arguments publicly offered were strictly a function of calculations about how to find favor in the eyes of particular audiences, regardless of how far-fetched or sophistic they might be. As Elyakim Rubinstein (1983) has pointed out, the very absence of a solution freed them to say about the future whatever seemed beneficial at the time:

Since the Zionists did not envision what the future Palestine would look like . . . they felt no contradiction between what they said and what they did. The strategy of promoting the national home was in many ways vague . . . [b]ut tactics were clear.

(Rubinstein 1983:43)

The disingenuousness of Zionist leaders is extremely well documented. Teveth (1985:viii) summarized Ben-Gurion's attitude toward public

truthfulness on the Arab question as follows: "Ben-Gurion was a political man and was quite capable of pragmatic insincerity. To bring the maximum number of Jews to Palestine's shores, he was prepared to 'sup with the devil,' so he hardly would have shunned a tactic of dissimulation for moral reasons."¹⁸

Occasionally, the "inconsistencies" between public and private declarations were breathtaking. In his address to the Peel Commission, Ben-Gurion insisted that Zionism never had and did not want a "state" in Palestine. He emphasized that the Basel program had used the term *Heimstätte*, the closest English term to which was "home," and, he added, it said "in Palestine," not "Palestine as a National Home." In any case, even if a state were on offer, Ben-Gurion denied to the commissioners that he desired that outcome. He offered three reasons why Zionists did not [*sic*] want to make Palestine a Jewish state:

1. Since there were Arabs in Palestine, a Jewish State would entail "domination by the Jewish majority of the minority, but that is not our aim. It was not our aim at that time and it is not our aim now . . ."
2. A state would mean complete independence, while a Jewish National Home, once "fully established," "should be a member of a greater unit, that is the British Commonwealth of Nations."
3. A state would put Jews in control of Muslim and Christian Holy Places. "We are unwilling," said Ben-Gurion, "and it is not in our interest that we should be made responsible for them." (For the relevant portions of Ben-Gurion's testimony, see Esco Foundation 1947:801-802.)

Perhaps the most amusing episode in this regard was a *lapsus linguae* that occurred during one of Chaim Weizmann's lengthy appearances before the Peel Commission. On December 26, 1936, Weizmann was expatiating on the complex arrangements he endorsed for parity in Palestine between the Jewish and Arab communities. Swearing his fealty

¹⁸ Zaki Shalom (2002:38) characterizes Ben-Gurion's real attitude toward the possibility of peace with the Arabs as follows: "Warfare *per se*, and especially against the State of Israel, according to Ben-Gurion, originated in an atavistic drive that boiled like lava in the Arabs' blood, and could not be overcome even if they themselves wished it." On Ben-Gurion's double discourse, see especially Heller (1988). For Sharett's explicit acknowledgement in 1931, see Cohen (2008:27). For a sympathetic examination of the rationale for and patterns in Zionism's double discourse on the Arab question, see Goldstein (1980: 15-29). On the general issue, see also Morris (2001:49) and Shapira (1977). Regarding Ben-Gurion's unapologetic acknowledgement of his use of what he knew to be a false *effendi* argument in the 1920s for avoiding negotiations, see Teveth (1985:170).

to the concept, he declared that the Jewish National Home "even if (Jews) were a majority would not become a Jewish National State" (Litvinoff 1984b:212). Asked if even a great majority of Jews would transform it into such a state, Weizmann insisted, still, it would be a "National Home," but not a Jewish State. When asked why he would refuse a state with even a tiny Arab minority, he used the refrain that such a state "would mean the Jews dominating the Arabs" (*ibid.*:213). Asked to think far into the future, Weizmann denied he or any Zionist leaders aspired to statehood: "For practical purposes, I cannot see a Jewish State in Palestine and it is not the intention, at any rate of those who are at present guiding the destinies of the Zionist movement, either overtly or covertly to create such a state" (*ibid.*:213). Weizmann then suggested the idea of two separate legislative bodies in Palestine, one Arab and one Jewish.

Q. That is your conception?

A. It is not a Jewish State but it is the next best.

Q. You would rather have the Jewish State?

A. No, nor do I suggest you would like to trip me up on a question.

(*ibid.*:215)

Zionist leaders were fully conscious of how important the Arab question was in the court of international public opinion. Their main problem was that they had no solution to the problem, or at least no solution whose articulation could possibly help their cause by being acknowledged. A great deal of evidence exists that during the 1930s and 1940s, key activists within the movement were advocating and planning the mass "transfer" of Arabs (see, for example, Ari Shavit's treatment of Shmarya Guttman; Shavit 2013a). As Yitzhak Rabin and others have testified, Ben-Gurion was personally responsible for the expulsion of tens of thousands of Arabs from Lydda and Ramleh – a decision that may reasonably be traced to his stunned and utterly enthusiastic reaction, 10 years earlier, to the Peel Commission's recommendation and thus legitimation of the idea that in the context of partition of the country, mass deportation of Arabs from the territory of the Jewish state could and would be effected.¹⁹ As reflected in debates within the Zionist Executive, the Mapai Party, and the World Zionist Congress in 1937 over the Peel

¹⁹ See Ari Shavit's (2013b:99-134) analysis of the systematic preparation that went into the expulsions that occurred during the 1948 war; as well as Avi Yiftach (2000:128-143). (Hebrew).

Commission's partition proposal, it is clear that what mainly attracted support for the proposal within the Zionist movement was its recommendation in favor of the massive expulsion or "transfer" of Arabs from within the projected Jewish state to the projected Arab state, to Transjordan, or beyond. For many, this had long been a privately cherished dream, but one deemed impracticable.²⁰ By including it as a formal recommendation, Ben-Gurion believed the British had shown it to be a possibility to be systematically pursued.²¹

The result of having no real theory of peace, and nothing to say that it believed would be publicly acceptable about what to do if peace were not possible, was a litany of insincere arguments, tactically framed and adapted to the particular prejudices and concerns of questioners. As a "public affairs strategy," these arguments contributed to protecting Zionism from threats to its ambitions arising from worries of unending war. But the legacy of this practice was to enshrine propaganda over realistic assessments in Israel's relations with Arabs, thereby depriving contemporary leaders of the Jewish state of authentically Zionist rationales for peace policies based on truth and concessions to the real needs of Arabs and Palestinians.²² Systematic dissimulation also

²⁰ On the systematic deletion of discussions of and speeches supporting transfer of the Arabs of Palestine from the record of the 1937 Zionist Congress, and regarding this practice as applied to discussions of the Arab question at previous Congresses, see Morris (1994); see also Cohen (2008); Goldstein (1980); Heller (1988); Shalom (2002).

²¹ Standard Zionist accounts of the movement's response to the Peel Commission play down or ignore the excitement of Zionist leaders generated by its "exchange of population" recommendation. But for vivid details of the reaction of mainstream Zionist leaders such as Ben-Gurion, Sharett, Locker, Zisling, Weizmann, Katznelson, and Myerson, to the possible practicability of transfer, and regarding development of plans for its implementation, see Nur Masalha (1992:49–92) and Katz (1998:85–109). For evidence that while considering the Peel proposal top Zionist leaders also came to appreciate the importance, from the point of view of avoiding onerous international legal obligations toward minorities, to greatly reduce the size of the Arab population remaining within the Jewish State on-the-way, see Feinberg (1938/1962).

²² In the decades after the 1967 war, a theory developed in Zionist circles that peace could come once the Arab nation as a whole were offered a relationship to Palestine consistent with the minimum requirements of the Palestinian and/or Arab national movements. Before 1948, however, Zionist leaders seldom, if ever, discussed partition as a solution *because* the Palestinian Arab state would eventually satisfy Arab requirements; only that, under certain circumstances, it *might* satisfy *Jewish* requirements. Although the question leads beyond the parameters of this chapter, it would be useful to study the extent to which post-1967 endorsements of partition by mainstream Zionist groups and leaders included division of the territory in ways calculated to satisfy Palestinian or general Arab political requirements (as opposed to following only criteria relating to what the Jewish-Zionist community could be induced to accept).

contributed strongly to Arab disbelief in Israel's sincere commitment to peace. The pretense of Zionist theories of peace when in fact there were none also helps answer the more specific question posed at the outset of this chapter: how to explain the yawning gap between what was said publicly and officially prior to 1948 about how Arabs in the Jewish state would be treated, and the reality of rule of the Arab minority by the military government.

A relatively small proportion of pre-state Zionist public discussion on peace pertained to the specific question of Jewish-Arab relations within the future Jewish state. The topic was addressed, directly or indirectly, in four ways. One was use of the term "neighbors" to blur the question of whether the speaker was referring to relations between Jewish and Arab inhabitants within Palestine/the Land of Israel, or to relations between Palestine, with its Jewish majority, and the other Arab states of the region. Thus David Ben-Gurion's book on the subject – the only book ever published by a top echelon leader on the Arab question – was titled (in Hebrew, it was not published in Arabic) *We and Our Neighbors* (1931). This trope was useful as a way to refer to Arabs in a positive way without recognizing the collective political personality of Palestinian Arabs. If "neighbors" were heard as referring to Arab states or Arabs living outside of Palestine, then promises of neighborly relations did not imply anything at all about a relationship with the Arabs of Palestine as a political community. On the other hand, if "neighbors" were heard as referring to Arabs living in Palestine, then it could be used as a formula for portraying non-Jews living in the midst of a Jewish state, with individual and civil rights (as imagined in the Balfour Declaration) but, again, with no commitment to political rights or a recognized collective personality (see especially Shapira 1992).

Another argument was to emphasize how much the Arab minority in the Jewish state would benefit economically from their integration into the prosperous and advanced Jewish economy. This was the argument made to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) by Zalman Shazar, a future President of Israel:

As far as the Arabs of Palestine are concerned, they will obtain even greater advantages from this Jewish immigration than they did from that of the past. A considerable increase in Jewish immigration means a strengthening of that force which is most vitally interested in doing away with the differences between the standards of living to be found in Palestine. It means raising the lower standard of living to the level of the higher. As long as Jewish workers are a minority, they naturally have to

protect themselves against the majority who accept lower working conditions. Once this situation changes, the efforts to bring about an equalization of the standard of living at the higher level will be much more likely to succeed. Mutual understanding will bear fruits in every aspect of life. Jews and Arabs will meet as equals; and as equals mutually concerned in working to raise the standard of living, they will find a common ground.

(Testimony of Zalman Shazar [Rubashov], representing the Histadrut in UNSCOP 1947)

The most common formulation used by Zionist representatives in the 1920s and 1930s to refer to majority-minority relations was "non-domination." When explaining how Zionist insistence on a Jewish majority in Palestine could be squared with claims that transforming Palestine in this way would not entail unbearable demands on the local Arab population, they offered a kind of mantra: "non-domination of the Jews over the Arabs and non-domination of the Arabs over the Jews" (Ben-Gurion to MAPAI party council, March 22, 1934, in Hattis 1970:98; see also Goldstein 1980:21). Instructively, this formulation was used during the decades in which Jews were a substantial, but still definite, minority in Palestine. In this context, speaking of the non-domination of a minority by a majority only in *principle* applied to Jewish treatment of an Arab minority. Practically speaking, in the first two decades of the mandate, it meant securing treatment of Jews as a community with equal rights in Palestine, even though it was only a minority, by promising to accord that status to Arabs if and when a Jewish majority emerged. It was also a convenient way to reject British proposals for a democratically elected legislative council (which would have featured a clear Arab majority) in favor of focusing on sharing equally in the governance of the colony. More broadly, "non-domination" could be used to support relatively vague proposals for "parity," "federalism," or "cantons" – arrangements that would establish equality in the status of Jews and Arabs in the country, regardless of the size of the two communities.²³ Instructively, the formulation was largely abandoned in the 1940s as the demand for a Jewish majority in a Jewish state in all or part of Palestine became the virtually universal demand of Zionist leaders.

Once the future of Palestine began to be described more vividly as a Jewish state (or "commonwealth") that would include an Arab

²³ "Non-domination" as a principle could even be considered fully consistent with the elimination of an Arab minority via "transfer." If only a negligible Arab population remained within the Jewish state, there would be, in fact, neither Arab domination of Jews nor Jewish domination of Arabs.

minority, another theory of how and why amity would reign between Jews and Arabs in that state took center stage. Instead of emphasizing the symmetry of the commitments to non-domination that it would be appropriate for each community to make, or the long history of Jewish suffering as a minority that would forever preclude Jews from actually discriminating against others, Zionist spokesmen increasingly based their forecast of internal harmony and justice toward the Arab minority on Jewish political prudence. In a memorandum submitted to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, the Jewish Agency argued that:

any Arab minority in a Jewish State would still be an integral part of a race exercising unchallenged predominance throughout the entire Middle East. They would be surrounded on all sides by kinsmen enjoying the full panoply of sovereign independence. Thus their minority position would be formal rather than virtual. It would be impossible for any Jewish authority established in Palestine, interested in maintaining close relations with its neighbours, to show neglect or lack of consideration for the rights of Palestinian Arabs.

(The Jewish Agency for Palestine 1947a:349)

In his personal statement before the Committee, Weizmann described the Arabs as having a "perfect guarantee; whatever Palestine may be, it will only be an island in an Arab sea . . . the mere weight of their existence in organized States would prevent any Jew from doing them injustice even if he wanted to . . ." (The Jewish Agency for Palestine 1947a:24). Ben-Gurion made the same argument. When asked about whether Arabs in a Jewish majority state would be oppressed, he asked the Committee members to "suppose Jews to be the worst people in the world." Still, he said,

[w]hen things in Palestine change, the Arabs would be a minority and we would become the majority, but the Arabs . . . would have nothing to fear, because here they are surrounded by Arab countries that are independent . . . Imagine that in the neighborhood of Poland there were a big State like Russia, with 189 million Jews, then the Jewish minority in Poland would not be persecuted; they would be perhaps in a privileged position. I am sure the Arabs will be in such a privileged position here.

(ibid.:78)²⁴

These pre-state theories of majority-minority relations were no less tactical in their design and presentation than were the larger theories

²⁴ Israel's first foreign minister-to-be, Moshe (Shertok) Sharett made the identical argument in his United Nations speech on May 12, 1947 (Shertok 1947).

purporting to explain how deep-seated Arab opposition would eventually be replaced by peaceful acceptance of the fruits of the Zionist project in Palestine. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the reality of Jewish-Arab relations in the new state was exactly the opposite of the claims advanced by these theories. Without any serious thinking about how to integrate Arabs within a Jewish majority state, the provisional government and its successors faced the minority that did exist with no plans for the actual status and role of Arabs in the Jewish state. The result was the crystallization of policies that were justified, if not designed, in response to the Arab world's hostility to the Jewish state, and which reflected the real imperatives of the "Zionist revolution" to wield power on behalf of the interests of Jews, and, essentially, only of Jews. They were decidedly *not* produced by desires to reassure the Arab world that Arab citizens in Israel were being well treated. These policies were implemented by a rigorous regime of military rule that dominated what remained of the Arab population in territory ruled by Israel, enabling the state to expropriate most Arab-owned land, severely limit its access to investment capital and employment opportunity, and eliminate virtually all opportunities to use citizenship as a vehicle for gaining political influence.

Resistance in Zionist circles to imagining a future Jewish state that included a non-Jewish minority was long-standing. In 1919, the King-Crane Commission reported that in conversations with Zionist representatives, it "came out repeatedly . . . that the Zionists looked forward to a practically complete dispossession of the present non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine, by various forms of purchase" (see "The Recommendations of the King-Crane Commission" 1967 quoted in Khalidi 1987). The Israeli Foreign Ministry's 1950 declaration, cited earlier, to the effect that following the 1948 war Israel had no minority problem, indexed both how powerful was the inclination for "wish" to become "fact" and how irrelevant were Zionist theories advanced prior to 1948 about the factors that would ensure peace between Arabs and the independent state of the Jews, whether inside or outside of Palestine. Six-and-a-half decades later, Israeli Jews still contend with problems of majority-minority relations inside the country and an existential struggle with Palestinians and Arabs outside it. To end both dimensions of this conflict, concessions toward arrangements perceived as sufficiently just by Palestinians to be sustainable will be required. A key question for further research is the extent to which the absence of pre-state theories made it difficult,

if not impossible, for Israeli politicians to promote such concessions as consistent with the pre-state Zionist doctrines, tropes, symbols, and heroes that still dominate Israeli political life. To the extent this was the case it represents a deep failure of Zionist ideology, not as an imperative to action for desperate Jews, but as a useful guide for understanding the world in which they live.

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