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We are here, they are there: between peace and exclusion in Israel/Palestine

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The purpose of this work is to offer a critique of partition, not on the basis of its impact on the relations between the sides to the dispute, but on its implications for majority-minority relations inside the (non-homogeneous) state. Using the Israeli-Palestinian example, the paper argues that the dynamics of partition idealize the notion of a homogeneous nation-state and, consequently, marginalize minorities and accentuate internal political divisions. Specifically, Israeli policymakers' 'demographic trade-off' between territorial compromise and a 'Jewish state' underscores some of the recent national tensions within Israel over the citizenship status of the minority Palestinians.

Keywords: partition; demography; exclusion; Palestinian citizens; Israel

Introduction

Israeli policymakers in past years have advocated peace as a 'demographic trade-off' in which territorial compromise would not only end the occupation but also guarantee the status of a Jewish state. This 'demography engineering' (McGarry 1998) intends to redraw borders in order to ensure a Jewish majority within Israel so it will be able to maintain its Jewish identity and resolve the so-called 'Palestinian problem' by creating a separate entity. The use of this trade-off in Israeli political discourse, however, has negative implications for the status of Palestinian citizens. The declared goal, securing the Jewish character of the state, threatens to maintain their marginal position and undermines the potential for constructive dialogue between Jewish and Palestinian citizens over the future of the state.

The purpose of this work is not to argue for or against a two-state solution that partition would supposedly create but to point to an important void, the continued existence of minority citizens, at times further marginalized by the process. Advocates of partition in Israel highlighted the trade-off between land and the character of Israel as a Jewish state, purposefully or inadvertently failing to address the individual and collective concerns of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Rather, the use of the slogan 'we are here, they are there' to describe the goal of the peace process indicated that the Jewish majority has no intention to negotiate the status of the Palestinian minority.

The conflict, therefore, in the Israeli-Palestinian case is not just about territory but also about the state, its symbols and the place of the national minority within it.

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The existence of national minorities is a common phenomenon that does not necessarily entail territorial separation or an enduring conflict. Nationalist claims, as Keating demonstrates, are made in relation 'to a particular state form and balance of political and social forces and face a particular array of opportunities and barriers in each case.' Therefore, nationalist claims can be, and have been, negotiated, managed and compromised (2001, p. 23). In Israel, as will be argued below, partition and its demographic logic have so far prevented a constructive engagement with national minority claims. The grim realities of 'internal' tensions were revealed in October 2000 when demonstrations by Palestinian citizens escalated and resulted in 13 people killed by police fire. An official inquiry committee concluded that the events were the result of 'deep seated factors that created an explosive situation in the Israeli Arab population.'

In the first, theoretical, part of this work, I will provide a framework for understanding the relations between partitions and internal divisions and how partitions can foster a discourse and practices of homogeneity and exclusion. The second part of the work will describe the status of the Palestinian citizens in Israel and the potential influence of the peace process on their status. The third part will analyze the actual developments, the difficulties of the peace process, on the one hand, and the growing use of demographic arguments, on the other hand, which have erased most hopes. Specifically, I will outline three interrelated developments: a turning inward of Israeli Jewish society and a discourse of unity, the continued political marginalization of Palestinian citizens and the growing use of demographic arguments that underscore the latest partition efforts – the separation fence and the withdrawal from Gaza.

Partitions as solutions to ethnic conflicts

The idea of partition has recently attracted fresh attention as the inevitable (although not ideal) solution to protracted ethnic conflicts. Partition in the past was a tool of the empires to enable them to strengthen their hold over territories but, after the First World War it became a solution to ethnic conflicts. The idea of partition corresponded to the modern ideology of self-rule, namely, that nations are entitled to territorial sovereignty and as such, partition was a natural solution for territorial disputes. The devolution of authority to nations in the attempt to create homogeneous nation-states was supposed to replace the unstable multi-ethnic empires (Kumar 1997) or to enable Britain to 'divide and quit' from territories it could no longer rule. But, in most actual cases of partition, successor states were not ethnically 'pure,' often leaving minorities frustrated by boundaries they perceived as unjustly drawn. As a result, the act of partition was often the prelude either to new conflicts, as the examples of Northern Ireland, Pakistan/India and Israel/Palestine demonstrate, or to 'self-proclaimed pseudo-states' such as Taiwan or the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (Berg 2006).

The idea of partition regained popularity in the late 20th century as a solution for the growing number of violent intrastate civil conflicts. The partition of states engulfed in ethnic civil wars, even if accompanied by population transfers, was depicted as the lesser of two evils. Thus, for example, in the face of the atrocities of war in the former Yugoslavia, scholars of international relations recommended that American policymakers abandon the faith in multiethnic societies and adopt an agenda of partition (Mearshimer and Van-Evara 1995). Partition, in these accounts, is all but inevitable where ethnic communities cannot rely on a strong and impartial state to prevent civil strife. Solutions that include institution building and power sharing are doomed to failure because they do not resolve the security dilemma created by a mixed demography (Posen 1993, Kaufman 1998).

Conversely, it was argued, partition would create stable entities, homogeneous and legitimate, that would replace the multi-national states that were prey to civil war.

Partitions have been criticized on moral grounds, but their utility for conflict resolution is also questionable. Partitions tend to be zero-sum in nature, rather than transformative and, consequently, despite an illusion of finality, they are often a temporary solution that fails to engage the deep roots of the conflict. Thus, if the boundaries after partition remain disputed, the partition involves the uprooting of populations with material and emotional damage, inequality remains high and is attributed to past injustices or past grievances that have not been addressed, and the partition is likely to contain the seeds of a renewed conflict. These doubts are supported by a recent study that finds that partitions do not help prevent the recurrence of ethnic wars (Sambanis 2000).

A disputed territory, according to the logic of partition, is replaced by a rational division that creates homogeneous communities. But, this logic not only encounters the difficulties of non-divisible entities (holy sites for example) and of disputed boundaries but also of internal ethno-national divisions unresolved by partition. Even when partitions are the desire of both sides to the conflict, they are unlikely to create homogeneous entities and resolve all issues at stake, especially the symbolic and the indivisible. The continued existence of minorities within states, on the one hand, and the strengthened majority nationalism (in the case of Israel discussed below, also arising from the feeling that partition in itself is a sacrifice of the majority) might strengthen tensions between the majority and minorities. Thus, the expectations of national homogeneity might disappoint the majority, alienate the minority and challenge basic institutions such as citizenship when demands for equality and recognition are contested.

Citizenship, heterogeneity and ethnic conflict

The saliency of conflicts within states has led to a scholarly focus on ethnic identities and to the conclusion that ethnic nationalism or politicized ethnicity is a major ideological legitimator and deligitimator of states, regimes, and governments (Rothschild 1981). The focus on the characteristics, attitudes, and behavior of individuals and groups in the study of ethnic politics often misses the crucial elements of the 'playing field' that institutional theory stresses (Thalen and Steinmo 1992). An institutional framework that takes into account the structures of the state's and civic society's institutions and their role in cementing, creating, or attenuating cultural or identity politics can help us understand the development of ethnic politics (Crawford 1998). Citizenship, an important institution, often delineates a hierarchy between and within social groups in the state. Consequently, it, on the one hand, structures the opportunities afforded by the state to different people, included, excluded, and marginalized by the definition of citizenship, and, on the other hand, it impacts ethnic identity and its political mobilization (Rothschild 1981, p. 2, Brass 1985).

The legitimacy of the state, when dominated by one nation, depends on its ability to manage differences and contain their politicization. This management is often based on a 'hierarchy' of divisions and a compatible strategy of exclusion/inclusion based on different measures of assimilation, co-option, oppression or indifference. As such, divisions can be played-off against each other, assimilating one group by demarcation of another. The wider political manifestations are 'multiple traditions' of citizenship within a single polity that entails a series of inclusions/exclusions and, thereby, social stratification (Shafir and Peled 2002, p. 7). Some selective inclusions can be achieved as the state develops new practices of inclusion and co-opts groups previously left out. But, these exclusions can be re-invoked when the state is challenged by internal conflicts or external

pressures and chooses to forge cohesion via the exclusion of some group not central to that particular conflict (Marx 2002).

National unity, when invoked by government or other actors, where nation and state boundaries do not overlap, may mediate some divisions while exacerbating others. The process of partition in Israel discussed below provides an example of how the resolution of an external conflict is underscored by the mobilization of national unity and demographic arguments with adverse effects for the national minority. Specifically, the presence of Israel in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza was presented by policymakers and supporters of peace as a 'demographic threat' to the 'Jewish State.' The logical conclusion they drew was that Israel must withdraw from the territories in order to secure a solid Jewish majority within the state's boundaries. While this strategy was at most partially effective vis-à-vis the Jewish majority, it alienated the Palestinian citizen minority who came to realize that the peace process holds limited promise for a constructive discussion of Israel's citizenship regime and the status of the Palestinian minority.

The Palestinian citizens of Israel

The Jewish–Arab divide is considered the deepest schism in Israeli society. Arab citizens are a non-dominant, non-assimilating, working class minority and are considered by the Jewish majority as dissident and enemy-affiliated (Smootha 1992, p. 218). For their part, Palestinian citizens, in a recent document, described Israel as an 'ethnocratic state' that denies full citizenship to the minority. Since *el-nakba* (literally: tragedy, the term used by Palestinians for the war of 1948), Palestinian Arabs have suffered from 'extreme structural discrimination policies, national oppression, military rule that lasted until 1966, land confiscation policy, unequal budget allocation, rights discrimination, and threats of transfer' (Future Vision 2006). The demands for equality and representation, or individual and group rights, challenge some of the basic foundations of the state and encounter widespread resistance from the majority, who are committed to the idea of a Jewish state.

The definition of Israel as a 'Jewish State,' on the one hand, and its conflict with native Palestinians and the wider Arab world, on the other hand, have significant ramifications for the status of Palestinian Arabs within Israel. The Jewish character of the state, almost a consensus among the Jewish majority, implies that Palestinian Arabs are citizens of a state whose symbols reflect the Jewish majority's culture and are exclusive in nature. Beyond the symbolic issues, the preference of Jews over non-Jews is anchored in laws that deal with immigration, use of state land and semi-governmental institutions, as well as in Israel's basic laws that anchor the Jewish character of the state (Rouhana 1998). The exclusion of Arabs is justified by an ethno-republican discourse of citizenship (Peled 1992) in which Jewish ethnicity is mandatory to be part of the community and contributions to the common good determines one's status in that community. Arab citizens are exempt from military service, considered the most significant contribution to the common good, and, therefore, cannot count as 'good citizens.' Given that many social rights in Israel are tied to the performance of military service, the lower status of Arabs is excused by their non-contribution.

The exemption of Palestinian Arabs from military service is the outcome of the wider conflict and the state's perception of the Palestinian Arabs as a 'fifth column.' From the end of the war in 1948 until 1966, in spite of their formal citizenship, Palestinian Arabs were placed under military rule that limited their movement. The gradual relaxation of Israeli policies towards Arab citizens has not diminished the social gaps between them and the Jewish majority, nor has it eased their economic, social and political marginalization

(Lustik 1985, Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1993, Gavison and Abu-Ria 1999). Specifically, Arab citizens suffer from higher rates of poverty, low quality of public services and are underrepresented in the public sector.

The politicization of Palestinian citizens was translated into various struggles designed to achieve individual equality and/or struggles for collective recognition. While individual equality according to some analysts (for example, Smooha 1992) can be achieved within the Jewish definition of the state, collective claims of recognition (described as 'Palestinization') challenge the foundations of the state. The demands, however, seem to interact as the failure to achieve individual equality could be a contributor to the consolidation of a Palestinian identity and collective claims, especially among the younger generation. The solidarity of Palestinian citizens with the Palestinians in the occupied territories was almost always expressed within the confines of the law. The former have consistently advocated a solution of 'two states' in which they remain citizens of Israel but demanded widespread reforms, namely, the annulment of its Jewish character that would allow them to integrate or provide them with some form of cultural autonomy (Ghanem 2000).

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the one hand, influenced the largely negative and suspicious attitudes of Jewish Israelis towards Palestinian citizens and, on the other hand, presented a dilemma for Palestinian citizens, who were torn between their interests as a minority within a Jewish state seeking integration and their commitment to their brethren's plight. Integration, in other words, is held back not only by the Jewish majority's exclusion but also by the Palestinian minority's difficulty integrating into a state that holds Palestinians in the occupied territories under military rule. Accordingly, peace between Israel and the Palestinians, it was believed, could relieve Israel's security problem and, consequently, provide greater acceptance for Arab integration. In addition, it could also solve the Arab citizens' moral dilemma. Indeed, research findings in the mid-1990's, when the peace process was in gear and Rabin's government made important overtures to the Arab population, especially in budget allocations designed to narrow inequalities, revealed 'growing integration into Israeli society and politics on the one hand, and a growing distance from Palestinian identity and politics on the other' (Smooha 1998).

But, as will be elaborated upon below, the hopes that peace would change the relation between the minority and the majority were short-lived. First, the difficulties and eventual collapse of the peace process re-created the security dilemma and possibly worsened it, as terrorism invaded the heart of Israel. Second, the forceful action and reaction of the Israeli military in the territories re-posed Arab identity dilemmas. Third, the gradual shift towards partition with the discourse of demography, internal Jewish unity and a strong commitment to a Jewish state precluded any serious discussion on the status of the Palestinian citizens. And, fourth, the deep internal (Jewish) divisions exposed in the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin led to various reconciliation measures that highlighted the common Jewish identity and further alienated the Palestinian citizens. Thus, with the collapse of the peace process and the eruption of violence, Jewish society has turned 'inward,' the divide has deepened and the status of Arab citizens has not improved.

The promise of peace

The Oslo Agreement between Israel and the PLO, signed in 1993, presented a framework for a peace process based on mutual recognition, co-existence, mutual dignity and security. The core proposal revolved around a partition that would supposedly answer Israel's desire to maintain its Jewish status, as well as the Palestinian demand for independence. Three significant obstacles, however, challenged the possibility of partition. First, since the

1970s, Israel had been building a system of settlements across the West Bank and Gaza, so by 1993 over 100,000 Israelis were living on the land of the supposedly would-be Palestinian state. Second, Palestinians who fled or were deported from Israel in the 1948 war were demanding, for themselves and their progeny, 'the right of return' to their original homes from the refugee camps and other places of habitation. And, third, both sides lay uncompromising national and religious claims to the city of Jerusalem.

Partition was to be achieved gradually, through a series of interim agreements involving Israeli withdrawal and established cooperation. The difficult issues mentioned above, which could not be resolved at this stage, were deferred to a later stage, in the hope that the trust and cooperation built up in the interim agreements would facilitate their resolution. The difficulties of the peace process, the rising toll of violence and the growing schisms within Israel that culminated in the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin resulted in two conclusions among the Israeli-Jewish public. The first, which gradually developed in subsequent years, was that Israel must separate itself from the Palestinians with or without an agreement. The second was that Jewish Israelis must put their differences aside and make peace among themselves before making peace with the Palestinians. Essentially, both conclusions were about drawing boundaries and making peace from within, based on a national unity. Both strategies, however, have also had important implications for the status of the Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The inward turn of Israeli society

The hopes placed on the peace process for the status of Palestinian citizens and Jewish-Arab relations were overly optimistic not only because of the instability of the process but also because of its structure. For the majority of Jewish Israelis, the peace process with the Palestinians was intended to end the occupation and the conflict that, since the intifada of 1987, had become a burden for Israel. The slogan 'we are here and they are there,' used by the left to convey the need for peace, is indicative of the significance of a Jewish state for the entire spectrum of the Jewish population in Israel and of the purpose of peace for securing the future of a Jewish state. It is not accidental, therefore, that the relations between the Jewish majority and the Palestinian minority in Israel were not mentioned in the agreement and were hardly discussed, as the peace process within Israel was framed as a solution to a 'demographic problem' that would re-affirm the Jewish state.

The Jewish public in Israel, however, was deeply divided in the 1990's over the Palestinian question and the future of the occupied territories. The highly charged debate over the Oslo agreements in Israel included acts of civil disobedience and political violence. The assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by a right-wing religious fanatic exposed the depth of the political division in Israel. Jewish unity, therefore, was far from a reality and was to become a political project in itself, a pre-condition for the peace process. The initial reaction to the assassination of Rabin was widespread resentment against the extreme right and the rise of support for the Labor party. This support, however, was short-lived, as after another cycle of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in 1996 the left-right divide regained its significance and the Labor party was defeated in the elections by the anti-Oslo Likud. Many in the pro-peace camp came to the conclusion that resolving the internal, Jewish division was either more important than peace with the Palestinians, or a pre-condition to peace. Rabin's assassination triggered reconciliation initiatives and the formation of civil society institutions, often funded or supervised by the state, promoting encounters between religious and secular, and right and left. This can be described as a centripetal-centrifugal process where, on the one hand, common security and identity

concerns underscored the initiatives to foster dialogue and understanding across Jewish divides but, on the other hand, with little if any concern for Jewish–Arab relations.

The rifts between right and left, secular and religious were to be ameliorated by a common denominator all sides found easier to agree upon – Jewish identity. A 1999 study (Levy *et al.* 2002) found that Jews in Israel wanted the state to have a Jewish character, even though they could not agree on what that term meant, but revealed ‘worrisome findings’ on the deterioration of relations between different groups in Jewish–Israeli society.

The feeling of internal Israeli unity and that of general Jewish unity has eroded. In addition, a gradual decrease in Jewish identity among the non-religious (especially Ashkenazim and the educated) is evident and a general confusion regarding the meaning of the concept ‘Jewish’ and the definition of the character and contents of the Jewish state. But, in spite of the above, there is no doubt that adherence to a personal Jewish identity and the quest for the crystallization of a common Jewish identity characterize the great majority of Jews in Israel. (Levy *et al.* 2002)

The conclusions of the research are manifested in the concerns and program of Tzav Pius, a private initiative of reconciliation, dialogue, and unity. The logo of Tzav Pius imitates an army logo and its name rhymes with the Hebrew term for a conscription order, thus making ‘a symbolic and emotional connection between a call for arms, national duty, unity and state and between forgiveness, reconciliation, and agreement’ (Yanay and Lifschitz-Oron 2003). Its activities include encounters between religious and secular Jews in various settings where the sides come to know each other or engage in joint studies of Jewish texts. Tzav Pius also works in religious and secular schools (both systems are under state control) to promote understanding and break down stereotypes. In its brochures, beneath the army-like logo, appears the statement ‘We have no other country’ and below, ‘Let’s solve it together.’ Participants in meetings organized by Tzav Pius expressed anxiety over what they perceived as a breakdown of Jewish society and searched for a common ground against extremism using unifying concepts such as ‘Jewish roots,’ ‘Jewish heritage,’ common experiences such as army service and a common past, especially the Holocaust experience (Yanay and Lifschitz-Oron 2003). Arabs, therefore, are not simply absent from the programs and discussions of Tzav Pius, but are external to its *raison d’être*. Indeed, it is their very absence that enables reconciliation and their presence that supposedly prevents it. This democratic anomaly was revealed again in another initiative of reconciliation known as the ‘Kinneret Declaration.’

The declaration signed in October 2001 by 56 Israelis – secular, traditional, religious, left, and right – received much attention and replicated the exclusion strategy described above. It was wider in scope and a more ambitious project, attempting to rewrite Israel’s declaration of independence into a covenant between these groups:

In establishing the State of Israel, the founders of the state performed an extraordinary historic deed. This deed has not ended; it is at its height. The return to Zion and the effort to found a Jewish-democratic sovereign entity in the land of Israel face great challenges in the 21st century. We, who have joined together in this agreement, see ourselves as responsible for carrying on this deed. We see the State of Israel as our shared home. In accepting this agreement upon ourselves, we pledge to undertake all that can and must be done to guarantee the existence, strength, and moral character of this home.

The declaration was an initiative supported by the Rabin Center, dedicated to the memory of Rabin, and by the Avichai Foundation (also a sponsor of Tzav Pius) who formed the ‘Forum for National Responsibility.’ This forum, an initiative of Israel Harel, a former chair of the Settlers Council (representing the Jewish settlers of the West Bank and Gaza), was intended to be a political body independent of political parties and without

active politicians. The participants described themselves as united in a feeling that something must be done. ‘A historical window of opportunity,’ ‘the shock of the intifada,’ ‘the minute when something must be done,’ ‘because we are one people’ and ‘because it is a critical component of national security,’ were among the explanations for their willingness to commit to this project. (Levi-Barzilai 2002). Indeed, participants in the initiative described the urgency and crisis that required (Jewish) society close its ranks and pull together:

From day to day the feeling of crumbling apart is getting stronger, the result of several factors: a dramatic increase in socio-economic gaps; a political system based on sectoral interests and the ignoring of the common interest; a multicultural ideology that respects every sector but ignores the necessity to maintain a common cultural identity. When adding all of this to the daily threat to personal security, it is easy to understand the feeling of collision. (Sheleg 2002).

The declaration affirmed Israel’s commitment to its democratic as well as its Jewish character but Arab citizens, a large minority of 20%, were not represented but were to be addressed at a ‘later stage.’ Yael Tamir, one of the founders of Peace Now, a former minister in Barak’s government and a philosopher renowned for her work on liberal nationalism (and since 2006 the Minister of Education) explained that the absence of Arabs was necessary:

I understood that if we begin with Jews and Arabs, the break up – not between us and the Arabs, but between me and the right wing people, among us – would come quickly. We agreed that right after the Kinneret Declaration we would turn to a dialogue with the Arabs. (Levi-Barzilai 2002).

The declaration, however, left limited room for an open dialogue with the Arab population. It opens with the statement that Israel is the national home of the Jewish people and declares that it is a democratic state, without acknowledging any democratic deficits in regard to its non-Jewish citizens. The two civic initiatives are indicative of the inward turn of Jewish–Israeli society and its desire for secure boundaries and homogeneity. This desire underscored, on the one hand, the support for the fence separating Israel from the (non-citizen) Palestinians and ensuring a demographic majority that would protect the Jewish state and, on the other hand, the popular demand for a (Jewish) national unity government.

National unity and political exclusion

The Palestinian minority, despite having the right to vote and run for office, has been consistently marginalized in Israeli politics. Arab politicians who joined Zionist parties usually played minor roles within the parties and were not appointed to ministerial positions. Arab independent parties, on the other hand, were automatically relegated to the opposition and considered illegitimate for being part of the coalition. This marginality changed briefly during the peace process but returned after it collapsed. Rabin’s government (1992–1995) was an important exception when Arab parties were not officially part of the coalition but supported it from the outside. The willingness of the government to rely on the support of the Arab parties and its attempt to make peace with the Palestinians offered some hope for the future of the Arab citizens. These hopes, as described above, were cut short by two interrelated developments. First, the assassination of Rabin underscored the inward turn of Israeli Jewish society, which sought reconciliation and unity and, intentionally or not, excluded Arab citizens. Second, and more important, the debate over the peace process was gradually framed as an ‘internal’ Jewish debate regarding the (Jewish) common good, namely the future borders of the state. The right wing’s argument that a Jewish majority was necessary for territorial compromise

was eventually accepted by the center-left so that a Jewish (right-left) coalition was preferred and Arab parties returned to exclusion.

Rabin's willingness to rely on non-Jewish votes was used by the right-wing opposition to de-legitimize the government and its decisions. In the elections of 1996, after Rabin's assassination, supporters of Netanyahu, the Likud's candidate, used a popular slogan 'Netanyahu is good for the Jews.' The message was clear, de-legitimizing reliance on Arab support of the Labor Party and the political participation of Arab parties. The power of this message became more evident some three years later when the Labor party under Ehud Barak returned to power in 1999. Barak, winning by a landslide, with the help of about 96% of the Arab vote (365,000 votes) declared his intention to form a broad coalition. The broad coalition envisioned, it was shortly revealed, was a Jewish coalition designed to grant widespread (Jewish) legitimacy for future negotiations. Consequently, the Arab parties were not invited to the coalition talks and were largely ignored throughout Barak's term. Their frustrations exploded a year later after the violent collapse of Camp David. A series of demonstrations that followed violent events in the West Bank and Gaza resulted in the death of 13 demonstrators, Arab citizens, killed by the Israeli police.

National unity governments in Israel are often the reaction to perceived political crises that justify 'breaking' the rule of coalitions that govern with a slim majority. The term itself connotes the inherent dilemma of Israeli politics, as nation and state do not conflate so, national unity means Jewish unity. Unity governments that included the Labor and Likud parties were formed in 1967, before the war, and in 1984, during an economic crisis. The collapse of the peace process, combined with a fear that the growing internal divisions were undermining Israel's security, made the conditions ripe in 2001 for a broader national unity government. After the failure of Camp David and Barak's declaration that there was 'no partner' with whom to negotiate, Israelis were generally skeptical about the possibility of peace with the Palestinians (Arian and Shamir 2002) so the major divisive issue was off the table. Then, the terrorist campaign of suicide bombers after Camp David gave prominence to security concerns that overrode all other issues. Finally, as was discussed above, the growing support for 'national unity' expressed the desire for the reconciliation of Israel's 'internal' divisions and for a concentration on deflecting the external threat.

During the last months of his government and after the breakdown of the peace process, Ehud Barak made some attempts to form a unity government in order to avoid elections that did not materialize. Ariel Sharon, the Likud candidate, who won the election by a landslide, followed his declared intentions during the election campaign and formed a unity government with the Labor party that lasted less than two years, but enjoyed widespread public support. After the breakdown of the government and another landslide victory, Sharon attempted again to form a unity government. In a survey conducted for Israeli Radio two weeks before the elections, 74% of the respondents expressed a desire to see a national unity government after the elections (<http://bet.iba.org.il/32448.htm>). In a speech, after formally being appointed by the president to form the government, Sharon explained that the government was facing economic and security challenges that called for unity and compromise:

We will have to make crucial decisions that will require widespread agreements across the nation. Nobody can stand aside. In order to face the challenges and realize our hopes we must walk together. Everybody who desires peace must join the government or bear responsibility for his refusal. He who says 'no' to unity betrays the wish of the Israeli public... No party should be disqualified. All Zionist parties will be invited to join the government. (*Maariv* 10 February 2003)

'National unity' was presented as the required response to external dangers and, accordingly, a 'responsible' act expected from political parties. Public figures and senior

businesspeople concerned with 'stability' appealed to the Labor party, which had declared in the election campaign that it would not join a national unity government (a declaration that according to some analysts had a negative impact on the campaign), to join the government. But, the differences between the parties prevented the formation of the national unity government. Despite public pressure and desires, a national unity government was not formed, as differences between parties could not be overcome. The pressures for national unity, however, had three significant implications. First, there was a demand for Jewish parties to 'act responsibly,' or, be punished at the ballot box – as the downfall of the Labor and the left-wing Meretz parties demonstrated. Second, all Jewish parties (including the extreme right-wing parties) were perceived as potential coalition members. And, third, Arab parties, by definition, were not part of a national unity government and, therefore, further marginalized. The implications of national unity governments for the political orientations of the Arab minority are yet to be studied.

Security and demography

The concept of a fence between Israel and the Palestinians was not new to the political discourse in Israel. Israeli liberals have often used demography and the threat of a bi-national state, or the need to preserve the Jewish State from a possible Arab majority, as the rationale to end the occupation. From the time of Oslo, especially when the process was undermined by violence, the fence was raised as a fallback position, a security measure Israel could or should use unilaterally, if the Palestinians failed to cooperate. The concept of the fence gained momentum when the peace process collapsed into violence, and local initiatives along the frontier created security barriers between Israel and the territories that have gradually made separation a local reality and a national possibility (Ben-Porat and Mizrahi 2005). Separation received the initial political momentum when the Labor party in the 1996 campaign, losing its support due to stepped-up terrorist attacks, adopted the slogan 'we are here, they are there, a fence in between.' This strategy emphasized the need to achieve security by ending the occupation, unilaterally (if necessary) drawing the future borders and securing a demographic Jewish majority. The fence strategy failed to win the election, but the idea was embedded in the political discourse and re-emerged four years later.

Ironically, it was the Likud government and Prime Minister Sharon who had previously opposed the fence that, six years later, made it into a reality. The new Likud government had to face the fact that despite the large number of members of terrorist organizations, including leaders, killed or captured by Israeli military initiatives, suicide bombings continued and worsened. Consequently, the concept of a fence gained momentum and public support that the government could no longer ignore. Surveys held in 2002 sent a clear message to the government, as they indicated that a majority of Israelis (83%) supported unilateral disengagement, even at the price of evacuating some of the settlements and believed that the fence could prevent or significantly reduce terrorism (Peace Index May 2002). The fence was not only a security measure but also a demographic measure advocated by Israeli doves to convince fellow (Jewish) Israelis. Uzi Dayan, a retired major general and the head of the 'Forum for National Responsibility,' a dovish movement that includes many former generals, described the fence as a security measure with long-term significance for the preservation of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, a measure against the 'demographic threat.'

A decisive Jewish majority must be preserved only through democratic and moral means, otherwise it will not be a Jewish state ... the state of Israel should decide on its borders in the

next few years, according to two considerations: security and demography: security, so that all the citizens of Israel live in safety, and demography, so that the nature of this state will continue to be Jewish and democratic. (Dayan 2002)

Partition, therefore, underscored the new consensus among Jewish Israelis and tied together issues of security and demography. The shift of the peace process away from the concept of cooperation, first, to partition and then to unilateral partition, had important implications not only for Israeli–Palestinian relations but also for the relations within Israel between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian citizens of Israel. The significance of the demographic discourse – ‘we are here, they are there’ – employed by both the right and the left was not simply a temporary exclusion of Palestinian citizens but rather a hierarchical move that placed the Jewish character of the state outside the debate and, consequently, the status of Palestinian citizens. This geographic or demographic discourse about setting boundaries, as the next section will demonstrate, was supplemented by a discourse about national (Jewish) unity.

National unity, the fence and the Gaza withdrawal

The withdrawal from Gaza in the summer of 2005 was a logical continuation of the fence strategy. The demographic concerns that underscored the campaign for the fence were raised again to justify a unilateral withdrawal from the densely populated Gaza Strip. Like the fence, this idea was also the result of the growing belief that ‘there is no partner’ on the other side and that, consequently, Israel should re-deploy its forces according to its own interests. Moreover, like the fence, this initiative was supported by many on the left, but also by the center and moderate right, who either believed that the price of holding on to Gaza was too high, or that the withdrawal in Gaza would allow Sharon to retain important parts of the West Bank. Overall, like the fence, the unilateral move focused on an Israeli interest/need and had little concern for Palestinian interests/needs.

The ‘we are here, they are there’ approach underscored the withdrawal from Gaza, as the supporters of the plan explained the threat to the Jewish majority if Israel retained control of the heavily populated Gaza Strip. The demographic rationale was supplemented by a security argument that the disengagement from Gaza and the removal of settlements would free large numbers of troops that could be deployed elsewhere. Thus, the disengagement plan was presented to the public not as a peace plan but as a unilateral move based on Israeli interests. The plan brought together a coalition between the Likud and the Labor parties, but moved the right-wing and religious parties to the opposition. While the polls indicated public support for the plan, the opposition of the settlers and especially of right-wing extremists brought back memories of the months prior to Rabin’s assassination. But, while settlers and their supporters actively opposed the police and army during the evacuation of settlements, violence was limited. The Israeli public that followed the media coverage of the withdrawal witnessed, on the one hand, settlers confronting soldiers and policemen with hard words but, on the other hand, embraces of brotherhood between the sides.

The disengagement, backed by demographic and security arguments, was not only an internal Israeli affair that excluded the Palestinians but also largely an internal Jewish affair. The unilateral nature of the plan left limited room for cooperation with the Palestinians or for a renewal of substantive peace talks. Internally, the continuous use of demography, Jewish unity and the future of the Jewish state could hardly make this plan attractive to the Arab citizens of Israel. Arab parties, critical of the unilateral plan because of its unilateral nature, chose to abstain when the plan was brought to the parliament for

approval. Similarly, the fence was supported by 76% of Jewish Israelis but only 10% of Palestinian citizens (Smootha 2006).

State of the division

The turning inward of Israeli Jewish society was matched by the growing frustrations of the Palestinian minority and vice versa. Not only had the peace process had little if any positive influence, but since October 2000 the two sides had also seemed to be drifting farther apart. While Palestinian citizens have made some gains through the Supreme Court, which has handed down several decisions against discrimination, their overall marginality has not significantly changed. The violent events in October 2000 led many Jewish Israelis to avoid visiting Arab towns and villages either because of (unjustified) growing fear or in retaliation for the Palestinian actions. The fears are mutual: while Jews fear a Palestinian rebellion inside Israel, Palestinian citizens are concerned about their political status, the severe infringement of their citizens' rights and the violence inflicted on them by the state (Smootha 2006). Interestingly, the events are interpreted by Palestinian citizens as a result of their continued exclusion and discrimination but by Jews as 'national and religious-based opposition to the state of Israel' (Shifter-Sagiv and Shamir 2002).

The fears were translated again into demographic concerns and growing intolerance. A leading politician, Benjamin Netanyahu, stated in 2003, 'We have a demographic problem – but it is not focused on the Palestinian Arabs but rather on the Israeli Arabs . . . if they integrate well and reach 35-40%, the Jewish state will cease to exist and become a bi-national state.' A survey conducted after these words found that 71% of Jews agreed that Arabs constituted a demographic threat and 41% felt that Netanyahu's words were appropriate (Smootha 2006). Tolerance towards Palestinian citizens also eroded, as Jews surveyed expressed growing resistance to Palestinian citizen inclusion and growing support for security measures against them. A majority of Jews also opposed Palestinian citizens' participation in democratic decisions over the future borders of the state (Shifter-Sagiv and Shamir 2001).

According to Smootha (2006), the majority of Palestinian citizens accept the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish and democratic state but oppose Zionism, which they perceive as a form of discrimination and exclusion. The distinction between a Jewish state and a Zionist state is questionable and should therefore be translated into questions that pertain to individual equality and recognition of minority rights. The 'future vision' document, written by Palestinian scholars for the 'National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel' outlines a program based not only on individual rights but also on the recognition of the Palestinians as a national minority and wider institutional changes regarding the Jewish character of the state. A recent survey (Rekhes 2007) finds that a minority of Palestinians has read the document but a majority agrees with its ideas. In the Hebrew media, the document received widespread and mostly negative attention. The questions of equality, through individual or group rights, and of the future institutional arrangements of majority-minority relations, are yet to be seriously discussed.

Conclusion

The hopes that the Arab citizens held out for the peace process enhancing their status within Israel were short-lived. Not only has the collapse of the peace process brought back the old dilemmas of loyalties and suspicions but the dynamics of the process itself have led elsewhere. While in itself partition and a two-state solution could be an important beginning for positive internal change, three important, interrelated factors discussed

above have prevented these changes. First, the instability of the peace process has led to growing emphasis on Jewish unity and, consequently, the exclusion of the Palestinian minority. Second, more and more emphasis was placed on demographic arguments and measures that alienated the Palestinian minority from the peace process. And, consequently, third, the political and social marginalization of the Palestinian minority has not changed.

The majority of issues confronting Palestinian citizens and the Jewish majority will not be resolved by partition. The equality demands of Palestinian citizens stretch across the three components of the Marshallian paradigm: individual freedoms, participation and social equality (Turner 2001). The full inclusion of Palestinian citizens, therefore, would have to engage not only with individual freedoms and equalities and with economic deprivation but also with the collective status of the minority and the re-definition of citizenship. In 2007, three political documents, delineating the desired relationship between the state of Israel and Arab society were published (see Jamal, in this volume). The documents attempted to engage with the various aspects of the exclusion and inequality of Palestinian citizens. They have yet to receive a serious response or a counter-proposal. The focus on partition, as this paper argued, has narrowed the room for a citizenship debate. Rather, the goal of a Jewish state with secure boundaries and an assured demography became a consensus among major parts of Jewish Israelis, which means, intentionally or not, a continued marginalization of the Arab minority within Israel. At the current stage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, it is difficult to think of or hope for any solution but a partition. A successful partition, however, would have to, first, be based on mutual agreement, second, create space for cross border cooperation and, third, be a first step to an internal restructuring of majority-minority relations within Israel and of Israel's citizenship regime.

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