Zionist Approaches to the Palestinian Question

Hamed Mousavi[1]

[1] Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Tehran, Iran

Correspondence: Hamed Mousavi, Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Tehran, Iran. E-mail: hamedmousavi@ut.ac.ir

Abstract

Liberal Zionists blame Israel's five decade long occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip primarily on Revisionist Zionist ideology and its manifestation in right wing parties such as the Likud. They also argue that the "Two State Solution", the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, will forever solve this issue. This paper on the other hand argues that while the Israeli left have divergent opinions from the revisionists on many issues, with regards to the "Palestinian question" and particularly on the prospects of allowing the formation of a Palestinian state, liberal Zionists have much closer views to the right wing than would most like to admit. To demonstrate this, the views of Theodore Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, David Ben-Gurion, the most important actor in the founding years of the state, as well as the approach of left wing Israeli political parties are examined. Finally, it is argued that none of the mainstream Zionist political movements will allow the creation of a Palestinian state even on a small part of Palestine.

Keywords: Zionism, Palestine, Israel, Liberal Zionism, Revisionist Zionism

1. Introduction

In *The Crisis of Zionism*, the highly acclaimed book by Peter Beinart, it is argued that Zionism is in deep crisis due to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The author argues that in line with the movement's original liberal foundations, the Jewish state must end its domination of Palestinian Arabs and allow them to establish a state based on 1967 borders. Beinart, in line with many liberal Zionists, blames Israel's five decade long occupation primarily on Revisionist Zionist ideology and its manifestation in right wing parties such as the Likud and leaders such as Benjamin Netanyahu. He also calls on Liberal Zionists both in Israel and the United States to become active in ending the occupation and alleviating the "crisis" that has plagued Zionism and thus solving the "Palestinian Question." Such a view is shared among a majority of liberal Zionists who argue that the "Two State Solution", the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, will forever solve the above crisis if allowed by revisionist parties such as Likud.

By the 'Palestinian Question' we mean the central challenge of the Zionist movement since the end of the 19th century regarding what to do with the native Palestinian population living in Palestine. This issue has been something that has plagued Zionism until today. This is why it is important to analyze the different approaches to this challenge. Contrary to Beinart's argument, the thesis of this paper is that while revisionist Zionist ideology and its manifestation in right wing political parties and politicians like Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon have important differences with the founders of Zionist ideology and the Israeli state, however on the issue of Palestinian Arabs and particularly on the prospects of allowing the formation a Palestinian state, liberal Zionists had much closer views to the right wing, particularly in the first four decades of the life of the new state, than liberal Zionists admit. To demonstrate this, the views of Theodore Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, David Ben-Gurion, the most important actor in the founding years of the state, as well as the approach of left wing Israeli political parties will be examined. Finally the essay will conclude with an analysis of the implications of this more critical view of history.

2. Herzl and the Palestinian Arabs

An important source of inspiration for liberal Zionists comes from Theodore Herzl, the father of modern political Zionism. The Jewish leader who lived from 1860 to 1904, studied law at the University of Vienna and devoted himself to literature and journalism in Europe. Herzl was heavily influenced by European enlightenment and liberal values. Even in his later years when he became bitter and cynical with regards to the possibilities of Jewish

emancipation in Europe, he still kept his Western liberal ideals. In *Der Judenstaat* he advocates a state for the Jews that is "modern", "tolerant", "neutral" in world affairs and more importantly where Jews are "free men" on their own soil and everyone is treated equally before the law. Herzl also envisioned the new state as completely secular, where freedom of religion and language was ensured (Herzl 1896). Even though Herzl didn't make a single mention of Arab Palestinians in *Der Judenstaat* however in his final years of life he published a novella called *Altneuland* (old- new land), which envisioned a state where Arabs and Jews had equal rights and both groups enjoyed the opportunities of the land. In an often-quoted passage, a Christian nobleman who is surprised that the Arabs do not "look upon these Jews as intruders," a Muslim resident of the future Jewish state explains:

> *"Would you call a man a robber who takes nothing from you, but brings you something instead? The Jews have enriched us. Why should we be angry with them? They dwell among us like brothers. Why should we not love them?"* (Herzl, Altneuland 1902)

While Herzl's view of a Jewish liberal state can be used to legitimize the plight of Israeli-Arabs for equal opportunity and rights, however there is no way to use Herzl's writings and pronouncements to support a palestinian state. Even in the utopian novella, Herzl never talks about a Palestinian state, but rather equality and freedom for an Arab minority living under the rule of a Jewish majority. Moreover Herzl's "liberal" view of Arab-Israeli relations in the novella, many passages of which are mentioned by Beinart, only portrays a very partial view of Herzl's complicated stance on the issue. First of all Herzl had a strong distaste for the Easterner's way of life. In contemporary language, Herzl would be considered a staunch orientalist. In numerous occasions he voiced his distaste for the "backward" way of life of the easterner, to the point that he strongly denounced Jews who had failed to assimilate into Western society and modernization. In one writing for example he talks about "ghetto Jews" (offensively called *mauschel* or 'yid' in English): "The Jew is a human being like any other, no better and no worse...the Yid, on the other hand, is a hideous distortion of the human character, something unspeakably low and repulsive" (Bowman 2010, p7). Herzl was so convinced that the *mauschel* was not a real Jew that he even suggested, "at some dark moment in our history some inferior human material got into our unfortunate people and blended with it" (ibid). In fact Herzl's distaste for "backward" non-European people was so pervasive that one can find numerous racist statements such as the above.

This belief in the superiority of Western thought and enlightenment led Herzl to advocate for a Western state modeled after his beloved Vienna. The new Jews of this state were to be fashioned after enlightened Christian Europeans. If Herzl was unforgiving of unassimilated Jews, it is no wonder that the Arabs living in Palestine who had a religion, language, history and culture very different from that Europe were at best invisible to him. Even when he visited Palestine in 1898, he described its non-Jewish inhabitants as no more than a "mixed multitude," a heterogeneous assortment of different ethnic and racial types that obviously lacked any of the characteristics of a nation. In fact when the German Imperial Chancellor asked him about the current residents in Palestine, Herzl described them as "Arabs, Greeks, the whole mixed multitude of the Orient" (Herzl, The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl, Entry for October 9, 1898, published 1960) (Lockman 1996). As a result it should come as no surprise that regarding the Arabs of Palestine, Herzl made a diary entry on June 12, 1895 saying "We must expropriate gently the private property on the state assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our country. The property owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discretely and circumspectly. Let the owners of the immoveable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us things for more than they are worth. But we are not going to sell them anything back" (Herzl, The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl Entry for October 9, 1898, published 1960).

The above diary entry, points to an important difference between the Zionist leader's private and public sayings. While Herzl was highly optimistic and liberal in his public pronouncements and writings, privately he was much more realistic and attuned to the difficulties that the Zionist enterprise faced and had no qualms about illiberal actions such as denying the rights of the native Palestinians including their expulsion from their lands. Even from his public pronouncements one can observe his high regard for European modernism and his intolerance and bigotry to the East's supposed backwardness and traditionalism. After all in the *Der Judenstaat*, arguably the most important text of early Zionism, he hailed the future Jewish state as a "portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism" (Herzl, The Jewish State 1896).

While Herzl did not publicly advocate the forcible expulsion of the majority of the native population in Palestine, as some revisionist Zionist such as Joseph Nedava have argued, nevertheless there is strong evidence that Herzl largely ignored the native Arab population, and even at times where he did address them it was in a Eurocentric and patronizing manner. Moreover he was well aware that in order for the Zionist project to succeed the native population had to be expelled as indicated in his 1895 diary entry. His main concern was that this be done in a

"discrete and circumspect" manner, rather than the rights of the Palestinian Arabs, as liberal Zionists of today argue.

As such Herzl's modern European outlook for the Jewish state guided the Jewish Yishuv to "modernize" the Sephardic Jews arriving in Palestine by abolishing their pre-modern 'Jewishness' and creating a 'new' Jew, to the point that non-Ashkenazi Jews were even encouraged to change their former names. This Eurocentrism was also central to the exclusion of Palestinian Arabs from this new society. Thus early after the second Aliyah, David Ben-Gurion advocated the policy of 'Hebrew labor' (*Avodah ivrit*) which demanded the exclusion of Arab labor from Jewish lands (Bowman 2010).

3. David Ben-Gurion: Israel's 'Founding Father'

Unlike Herzl who had the option of being optimistic and utopian, the Yishuv and its leaders had to be pragmatic and practical. This pragmatism is displayed in the leadership of David Ben-Gurion who served as the chairman of the executive committee of the Jewish Agency from 1935 to 1948 and as the country's first prime minister from 1948 to 1954 and again from 1955 to 1963. He was also instrumental in the development of the Mapai, Ahdut HaAvoda and Rafi parties, which later merged in 1968 creating the influential Labor party. As a result the role of Ben-Gurion in shaping the policies of the Yishuv and the early years of the Israeli state cannot be overemphasized. This is why Shimon Peres refers to him as "our Washington, and our Jefferson" (Peres 2011).

Ben-Gurion's first priority during his tenure was the strengthening of the Israeli military and to use it to increase Israel's security. His approach towards the Arabs that had fled their homes in 1948 and the country's Arab neighbors was unflinchingly hawkish, the result of which culminated in the 1956 Suez War. In fact as Avi Shlaim points out, had it not been for Moshe Sharett, who acted as the country's foreign minister and briefly as its prime minister in 1954, Ben-Gurion would have steered the country to an even more aggressive militaristic policy. For example during the six months that Ben-Gurion served as Defense Minister in the Sharett government, he proposed to capture the Gaza Strip and repudiate the Armistice Agreement with Egypt, both of which were rejected by the "Sharettist." Nevertheless in the majority of the disagreements between the two men it was Ben-Gurion who had his way (Shlaim 1983).

As mentioned earlier Ben-Gurion's attitude towards the threat he perceived from the Palestinians and neighboring countries was uncompromising. One example of this was the IDF attack on the West Bank village of Qibya. On October 12, 1954 a Jewish women and her two children were killed by a grenade attack in the village of Yehud. The Israeli government concluded that the perpetrators were Palestinian militants who had come from the West Bank. The Jordanians, which at the time controlled the West Bank, in turn strongly denied the claim and promised a full investigation. On October 14 unit 101 of the IDF led by an ambitious major named Ariel Sharon (who in his later years would become Israel's prime minister) attacked the village of Qibya in Jordan. On Sharon's orders 45 village houses were blown up and 69 civilians, two thirds of them women and children, were killed. The event led to widespread condemnation by the international community and a Security Council resolution denouncing Israel's action. Even dovish Israeli politicians strongly criticized the move. For example Abba Eban, the Israeli ambassador to the UN, wrote to Sharett, "Sending regular armed forces across an international border, without the intention of triggering a full-scale war, is a step that distinguishes Israel from all other countries. No other state acts in this way. It was this, rather than the heavy casualties, that shocked the world" (Shlaim, The Iron Wall 2000, p92). Sharon on the other hand was happy with the operation, he boosted that the operation had improved the morale of the IDF and that Ben-Gurion had personally congratulated him on the operation and had said to him "It doesn't make any real difference...what will be said about Kibbiya around the world. The important thing is how it will be looked at here in this region. This is going to give us the possibility of living here" (Sharon 1989, p90) (Shlaim, The Iron Wall 2000, p92).

Ben-Gurion also believed that time was on the side of Israel and as such there was no rush to seek peace. In a 1949 interview with the New York Herald Tribune for example, he stated "I am prepared to get up in the middle of the night in order to sign a peace agreement, but I am not in a hurry and I can wait ten years. We are under no pressure whatsoever" (Shlaim, The Iron Wall 2000, p52). Above all, Ben-Gurion believed that it was through power that Israel could succeed and this is why the hawkish former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon repeatedly called him his "teacher." This is why Aluf Benn, the editor-in-chief of the Haaretz Newspaper, stated in 2003, "Sharon feels more comfortable with Ben-Gurion than he does with Ze'ev Jabotinsky and other right-wing Zionist icons" (Benn 2003).

Ben-Gurion's iron fist policy was also a driving factor in sidelining doves such as Sharett and the rise of security hawks such as Golda Meir, the "Iron Lady" of Israeli politics, and Moshe Dayan, who personally oversaw the takeover of East Jerusalem in 1967. All these politicians were opposed to returning the West Bank and Gaza strip

to Jordan and Egypt, let alone allowing a Palestinian state to form (Shlaim, The Iron Wall 2000). Ben-Gurion's security first policy also resulted in his decision to impose very harsh martial laws on the Arab citizens of Israel, which lasted for nearly twenty years.

4. The 1967 War

The 1967 War is an important turning point in Israeli history. The lightning victory of Israel over its Arab rivals in the course of only six days highly boosted the moral of the Jewish state and was instrumental in shaping its "special" relationship with the United States, which during the same time period was struggling with its own war effort in Vietnam. This is why in American circles it was half-jokingly said that they should send Moshe Dayan to Vietnam to show how to do the job right (Chomsky 1999). Aside from the rise in Israeli power resulting from the war, the Jewish state was also now in control of the Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. With the control of this new territory, Israel was now also responsible for the wellbeing of its inhabitants, an issue that according to Beinart was the seed of what was to become the "crisis" of Zionism.

Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin, who served as the chief of staff in the IDF during the war, were the primary managers of the war effort, both of whom later became senior members of the Labor party. Even if one agrees with some historical accounts which argue that the decision to invade the West Bank and Gaza Strip was not taken in a deliberate, preplanned and systemic manner, however it is difficult to ignore the fact that only a week after the war, the Israeli government decided to formally annex East Jerusalem. In fact Avi Shlaim, an Oxford historian, uses documents from the archives of the Labor party to show that after the war the policy of the Eshkol government was to make the Jordan River the border of Israel and give the Palestinians a "semi-autonomous" status. It is important to note that there was a minority of politicians, notably Abba Eban, who argued for the return of the West Bank to Jordan, however more influential members such as Eshkol himself as well as Rabin believed that the river Jordan was the best line of defense (Shlaim, The Iron Wall 2000, p256).

The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip was the beginning of what was to become the settlement problem and as Beinart explains, a major barrier on the way to peace. What Beinart does not point out however is that the first wave of settlement building was undertaken by Labor governments from 1968 to 1977, and not by revisionist or religious Zionists. These constructions were carried out in a systemic manner in the most strategic areas of the West Bank such as the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem corridor (Bard 2012). Even though the pace of settlement construction increased during the Likud government of Menachim Begin in 1977, however all three Labor governments of Eshkol, Meir and Rabin who preceded him increased the number of settlements. As graph 1 shows, it is difficult to distinguish between Labor and Likud governments on the issue of settlement construction. Aside from the second Rabin government of 1992-1995 when the Oslo peace process was underway, there is no significant drop in new settlement construction. However what is even more interesting is that new settlement construction was larger during the government of Shimon Peres from 84 to 86 than the hawkish government of Yitzhak Shamir.
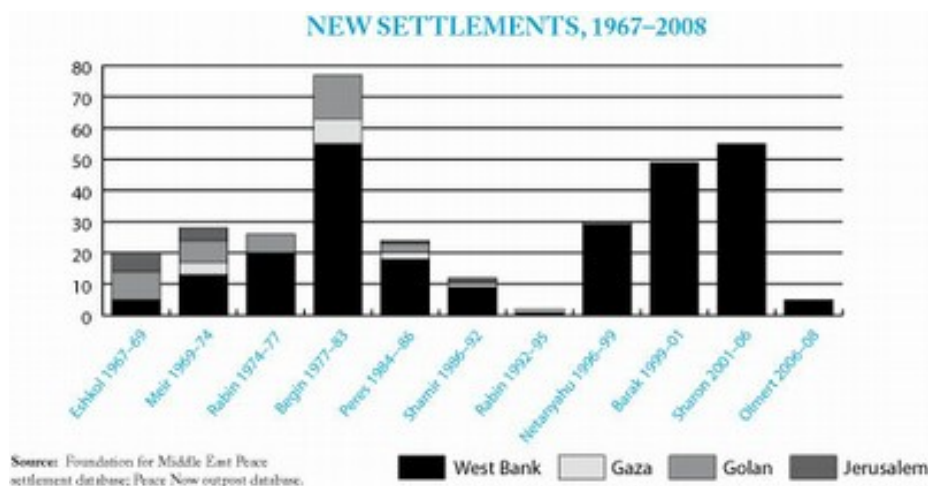

Figure 1. New Settlements Constructed by Administration, 1967-2008

Source: Foundation for Middle East Peace (FMEP), Settlement Database.

Also graph 2 shown below, which was compiled by the Peace Now movement, shows that in more recent times settlement construction significantly accelerated under the Labor government of Ehud Barak from 1999 to 2001.
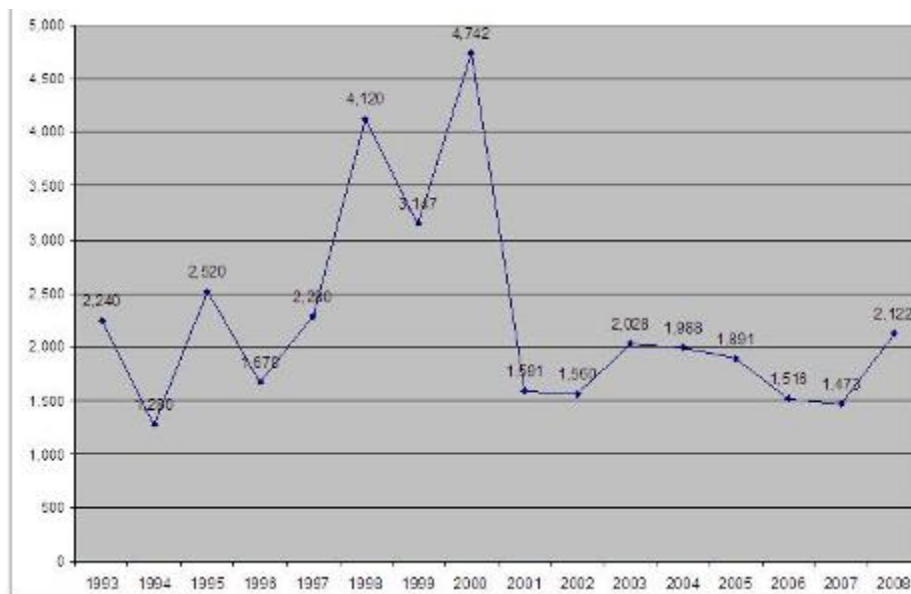
Figure 2. Number of Housing Starts in the Settlements (not including East Jerusalem)

Source: Ofran, Hagit and Noa Galili. Peace Now, West Bank Settlements--Facts and Figures, June 2009.

The discussion above reveals another important point. Right wing parties such as the Likud and its predecessor the Herut, were not able to win a plurality of Knesset seats and form a government up until the 1977 elections. The 1977 elections were called a 'Mahapakh' (upheaval or revolution) because it was the first time in the country's history where a party other than Alignment/Mapai was able to form a government. Therefore it can be concluded that right wing groups only had a marginal influence in the decisions of successive Israeli governments from 1948 to 1977. Thus they cannot be blamed for Israeli policy towards Palestinians during this period. This more accurate reading of history is beneficial in understanding the approach of the two camps to the Palestinian problem in contemporary times, which is the topic of the next section.

5. Liberal Zionist vs. Revisionist Zionist Approaches

This essay has so far showed that Beinart misreads or simply ignores a large part of Zionist and Israeli history which display how liberal Zionist leaders and parties were just as, if not more, complicit in creating the "crisis" of Zionism. The question now becomes whether liberal Zionism and its manifestation in left wing Israeli parties are any different than right wing groups, which are based on either revisionist or religious Zionism, on the Palestinian question? So far we have argued that in all practicality the approach of the two groups on this issue was not all that different prior to 1948 as well as in the first four decades after the creation of the Jewish state. Nevertheless it must be readily admitted that the viewpoints of the two groups started to sharply diverge with the start of the 'Peace Process' in the early nineties. Yitzhak Rabin made a sharp turn in the Israeli approach to the Palestinian question when he formally recognized the PLO in 1993 and led the Oslo peace process, a new approach that ultimately led to his tragic assassination in 1995.

Rabin wasn't alone in this new turn either, he was supported by the vast majority of the Labor party as well as the Israeli public (Shlaim, The Iron Wall 2000). On the other hand it is no secret that the right wing governments of Shamir and Netanyahu, which were also formally involved in peace negotiations, did everything in their power to derail it from arriving at any meaningful conclusion. Their approach to the peace process is well documented by scholars such as Shlaim, and Aruri, and is outside the scope of this short essay. Suffice to say that Shamir, in an interview with Ma'ariv newspaper right before leaving office in 1992, when asked about the peace process, explained, "What is this talk about 'political settlements'? I would have carried on autonomy talks for ten years and meanwhile we would have reached half a million people in Judea and Samaria" (Shlaim, The Iron Wall 2000, p500). It is interesting to note that he doesn't even talk about stonewalling a Palestinian state, but rather about stonewalling "autonomy talks."

What needs to be analyzed is why did the position of left wing Israeli politicians like Rabin and Peres change on

the Palestinian question? As pointed earlier Rabin himself led the IDF in the 1967 war and advocated for Israel to keep the West Bank afterwards. Neither was his approach to the first Palestinian Intifada of 1987, during which he served as the defense minister, anything but dovish. After all he advocated for the use of "force, might and beatings" to quash the Palestinian revolt (The New York Times July 12, 1990), during which the protestors unlike the second Intifada were not armed. In fact as a result of his approach, Rabin came to be known as the "bone breaker" internationally (Shlaim, The Iron Wall 2000, p453) (Shipler 1988). Neither does Peres, who is considered as one of the "fathers" of Israel's military nuclear program (Cohen 1999), have a history of leniency towards Palestinian Arabs prior to the Oslo negotiations.

One conclusion from this more critical look at Israeli history can be that the main reason Labor leaders started any real negotiations on a future Palestinian state was due to the fact that in the early 90s the power of the US and Israel had risen, while the PLO had become very weak. As a result the time was rip to a solution that would be in Israel's favor. There is important evidence in support of this argument. The position of the PLO in the aftermath of the Gulf War and the demise of the Soviet Union was very weakened. Not only had the PLO lost the Soviet Union as one of its main allies, but it had also lost most of the support it enjoyed from the Arab world due to Arafat's support for Saddam Hussein during the first Persian Gulf War. President George Bush correctly stated after the war that the PLO had "backed the wrong horse" (Aruri 2003). Moreover the PLO, now based in Tunisia, had virtually no control of the Palestinian Intifada, resulting in the rise of Palestinian competitors such as Hamas. Therefore the PLO was losing much of its political and economic strength.

During the same period the US was in a very powerful position in the world stage particularly in the Middle East. The time was set for Washington to move in and use the window of opportunity to establish a favorable settlement before the strategic balance in the Middle East might change. According to Shlaim, Rabin believed that the PLO was "on the ropes" and was therefore highly likely to drop some of its main principles and demands (Shlaim, The Iron Wall 2000, p515). From the Israeli perspective the ordeal had the potential to be a political, economic and public image success. The peace process allowed Israel to sign a peace deal with Jordan, with which Israel shares a long border. Also the negotiations ended the Palestinian Intifada, which Israel had been unable to quash for nearly six years even though it had used a variety of methods. In the economic realm, by 1995 Israel had a GDP growth rate of 7.1% (one of the highest among Western economies at the time). The GDP per capita of Israel reached sixteen thousand dollars per year, almost the same as Great Britain. Since 1990 the economy had grown by 40% while export had grown by a whopping 54% (Aruri 2003, p104). In Western media typical headlines after the signing of the Oslo Accord were: "Israel agrees to quit West Bank", "Israel Ends Jews Biblical Claim on the West Bank," "Rabin's historic trade with Arabs," "A historic compromise" and the "Israelis find a painful peace" (Chomsky 1999, p915).

Thus it can be argued with quite strong evidence that the change in the behavior of the Israeli left was based on a cost/benefit analysis. This analysis resulted in the belief that the time for a peaceful settlement with the Palestinians had come. Labor leaders based their approach to the Palestinian question on a realist cost/benefit analysis, similar to the foreign policy decision-making process of many secular Western countries. This very approach to the issue is where they differ from the political right. In this regard there was no 'change' as such in the fundamental viewpoints of left-wing Israeli leaders such as Rabin and Peres, rather the circumstances had changed resulting in a new cost/benefit calculation. It is important now to go back to this essay's earlier argument that claimed that during the first four decades of the Jewish state's life the approach of Liberal Zionists to Palestinian Arabs was not practically different from the revisionists. Although this is an accurate statement, however it is important to differentiate between the logics and motives behind the two groups even during that period. This underlying difference, which had been masked by the converging position of the two camps before the 90s, became very apparent with the start of the peace process.

In order to understand the logic behind the tough measures adopted towards the Arabs in the early years of the state, we must look at the viewpoints of the hawkish elements of the left who usually led the day when it came to decisions regarding the Palestinians. When Moshe Dayan's practice of "retaliatory strikes" for infiltrations of the borders by Arab militants came under heavy criticism inside Israel, he responded by writing:

> *"The only method that proved effective, not justified or moral but effective, when Arabs plant mines on our side [in retaliation]. If we try to search for the [particular] Arab [who planted mines], it has not value. But if we harass the nearby village . . . then the population there comes out against the [infiltrators] . . . . . .the method of collective punishment so far has proved effective."* (Morris 2001, p275-276)

The above quote points to an important difference between the position of hawkish left wing politicians such as

Ben-Gurion, Dayan, Rabin and Golda Meir and revisionist Zionists, right wing religious activists and the settler movement, whom Beinart blames for the occupation. The former adopted tough policies regarding Palestinian Arabs not because of the higher morality of Jews, messianic goals or even the Jewish people's historic ties to the land, but rather because they believed that such policies were needed to ensure Israel's "security." This is why Dayan explains that the policy of retaliatory strikes were "not justified or moral, but effective." Even Beinart himself, after explaining that Jabotinsky and his followers believed that the Palestinians would only abandon their nationalist dreams after they had been crushed militarily and psychologically, admits that "Labor Zionists used force ruthlessly as well, but they were more troubled by it" (Beinart 2012, p104). What he does not explain is that the reason the liberal Zionists were "troubled" by the measures they adopted, was because they saw them as tragic but nevertheless as necessary. On the other hand the political right rarely had any qualms about even the most barbaric measures against the Palestinians.

The difference between the motives of the two groups regarding Palestinian Arabs is important. For the ideological right the sacred land of Israel can never be relinquished to people who they believe do not belong there in the first place. As Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Cohen Kook puts it, "Zionism is a heavenly matter" and that "the state of Israel is a divine entity," and that settlement of the land by Jews was hastening the coming of the Messiah and as a result that the enemies of Israel were in fact the enemies of God, trying to impede the Lord's divine plans (Ravitzky 1996, p82-85). Secular rights on the other hand, whom Beinart attacks throughout his book, believe as Netanyahu has explained, that "Arabs know only force" (Beinart 2012, p111), with some like Ben-Zion, the father of the prime minister, even arguing for the relocating of Arabs of Palestine "to Arabia, Iraq, Syria-anywhere-as long as they will get out of the land of Israel" (p107). In fact Beinart is correct that these groups believe in the principle that no land, even if small, should be relinquished for a Palestinian state. Neither do these rightwing groups have any moral qualms about what needed to be done to attain their maximalist definitions of Zionism. Jabotinsky wrote in 1910, "The Bible says 'thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt," quickly adding that "Contemporary morality has no place for such childish humanism" (p101). The history of revisionist Zionism is in fact full of such viewpoints. A year after the Deir Yassin massacre of 1948 which killed over a hundred Arab civilians, most of them woman and children, Yaakov Meridor, a revisionist member of the Knesset said, "thanks to Deir Yassin we won the war." When a leftist member of the chamber rebuked by saying, "don't boast about Deir Yassin," another revisionist member of the Knesset replied, "there's nothing to be ashamed of." As Beinart explains, for the revisionists "not being ashamed was the whole point" (p105).

The security centered politicians of the Israeli left on the other hand can hypothetically allow Palestinian "autonomy" on a small part of the land of historic Palestine, as long as they do not perceive this to be a "security threat" to the Jewish State, and as noted earlier see this as beneficial to Israel's security and political needs as well as its economic and public relations interests. This is an important difference with the right wing camp and a major source of divergence between the two groups in the past two and half decades. Acknowledging this can strengthen the arguments of "pro-peace" writers like Beinart, and guide the actions of groups such as Peace Now, which promote a two-state solution to the conflict. While the political right is against a Palestinian state in principle, liberal politicians can potentially be allies as long they see such a solution as beneficial to Israel. Nevertheless history has shown that since security is their primary concern, therefor the bar for a favorable cost/benefit analysis is set high and that Israel's security needs must be met first before they can agree to any compromise on the Palestinian issue. The transition of Peres from a "hawk" to a "dove" serves as a perfect example. He himself explains that he only changed his position after Israel became capable of building nuclear weapons, adding, "because until Dimona, the Arabs were sure they could destroy us" (Peres 2012).

Moreover, history has shown that even the Israeli left has attempted to maximize Israel's benefits of a so called "Peace Process" while minimizing Palestinian gains. For example during the Oslo Peace Process Rabin leaned heavily toward the "autonomy option" rather than allowing the creation of a Palestinian state. The late Israeli leader repeatedly stressed such a position. Moreover neither the Oslo Declaration of Principles, nor the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II), both of which were signed on the Israeli side by Rabin, stipulated the creation of a Palestinian state, regardless of the understanding of the Palestinian side. In fact the lengthy Oslo II document does not refer to a "Palestinian state" even once, rather it sets forth the conditions for an "Interim Self-Government" run by an elected "Palestinian Council." In fact, according to the Oslo II agreement the West Bank would be divided into three zones: A, B and C: In area A comprising of around 3% of the West Bank the Palestinian Authority would be fully responsible for internal security, public order and civil affairs. In area B comprising of around 27% of the West Bank Israel would be in charge of "security" while the PA would be responsible for civil affairs. In the remaining 70%, designated as area C, Israel would enjoy

complete authority (security, public order and civil affairs), effectively handing over the majority of the West Bank to the Israelis (Aruri 2003, p99-100). Therefore it can be concluded that while the Israeli left have divergent opinions from the revisionists on many issues, with regards to the "Palestinian question" and particularly on the prospects of allowing the formation of a Palestinian state, liberal Zionists have much closer views to the right wing than scholars such as Beinart would like to admit.

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