Part Three

Mapping Palestine

Chapter 8
The Elusive Middle Ground

To both Arabs and Jews Partition offers a prospect—and we see no such prospect in any other policy—of obtaining the inestimable boon of peace.
—from the Peel Commission findings (1937)

Reflecting upon his lifelong preoccupation with the Israeli-Arab issue, the late professor Yehoshafat Harkabi sagely noted that Palestine is "many shades of gray."[1] Not, however, when it comes to staking out land rights.

There is simply no new ground to uncover. Neither creative frameworks as yet unthought of nor unclaimed territorial expanses. If Palestinians are prepared to hold out for the entire West Bank, so, too, Israeli territorial zealots. Each side therefore retains a maximalist's final status vision and accompanying atlas of what Israel/Filastin by right should look like. In Arab and Israeli leaseholds there are no shadings—and no gray areas; only black and white.

Which ought to caution that the closer the negotiations get to the finish line the more they will make the excruciating post–Yom Kippur War shuttle diplomacy that yielded Sinai I and II on the Egyptian front and the separation-of-forces agreement on the Golan Heights seem like child's play. Israelis and Palestinians will be measuring negotiating success or bargaining failure by the number of dunams and hectares gained or lost. Rest assured that before any peace pact is initialed the war of percentages comes down to miles and kilometers. Still more likely: inches and centimeters.

Reinventing Palestine

Given Arab and Jewish antipodal maps of Palestine to be, it is precisely a gray area of territorial partition that will have to be created.

We all appreciate that Palestine fulfills multiple roles. Consecrated *holy ground* and *battleground*, it represents as well the *common ground*

for those millions of Israeli Jewish, Israeli Arab, and Palestinian Arab residents determined to live there. But that can only mean living together. Political separatism perhaps, although not complete physical separation.

Which poses the interesting question: Can historic, geographic, demographic "Palestine" now be asked to serve, in addition, as a *middle ground*? By which I mean the site for two distinctive homelands. Two homelands with overlapping national constituencies, a united Jerusalem, interdependent economic infrastructures, and a single transportation grid. Two political entities sharing security while residing in the closest proximity and in a state of peace.

I would answer yes. In fact, to my mind the makings for cohabitation and for an Arab-Israeli Palestinian middle ground already exist. Even without addressing it in quite such explicit terms, by their words no less than by their deeds the leaders of both communities are presently engaged in repartitioning the contested land and in redrawing boundaries.

How so? In the first instance, because of the series of phased interim agreements achieved since Oslo.[2] Starting with the symbolic transfer of power in Gaza City and Jericho from Israeli to Palestinian hands, followed by the 1995 Oslo 2 division of the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C, the process of adjusting territorial expectations and demands is already well underway. As of January 1998, and even before any of the pledged three additional pullbacks, the Palestinians exercised autonomy over a full 27 percent of the entire West Bank.

To any but the most naive it ought to be patently obvious that so-called redeployments by Israel are tantamount to permanent withdrawal of its civil and military presence. One must safely assume that in all such instances control, once yielded to the Palestinian National Authority, will not revert to Israeli hands in any future negotiation, but is irretrievable. West Bank cities and rural areas evacuated by Israel after 1993 are thus destined to remain within the redrawn bounds of Palestinian self-rule. And it would be political chicanery to claim otherwise.

In the second instance, de facto repartition proceeds apace through the frenzied efforts of Israelis and Palestinians alike at unilaterally "creating facts on the ground." To wit: home improvements, housing and road construction, and neighborhood expansion in east Jerusalem (both publicized and by stealth) as well as throughout the West Bank. And in the third instance, by open speculation over possible "border arrangements" well in advance, and in preparing to bargain over precise terms for the projected

Palestinian "entity," its powers, jurisdiction, semisovereignty (or full sovereignty), and geographic location. Purely from Israel's standpoint, the very act of drawing alternative map designs in effect largely predetermines the extent of its pending withdrawals and the amount of territory slated for transfer to the Palestinians in the future.

Thus, I am arguing that through their formulations and actions Israelis and Palestinians in truth are already prejudicing the outcome of the permanent status talks long before they have begun. In short, the final offensive in the monumental ground war for Palestine is well underway, and in earnest.

Although uncharted as yet, the map coordinates do seem fairly clear. The dividing lines are going to be drawn latitudinally at a point between wish lists and real choices; longitudinally, somewhere between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, or, with expanded horizons, possibly extending further eastward in accommodating the largest single Palestinian "diaspora" in Jordan. In redividing Palestine on the ground even prior to the 1999 political deadline these two copartitionists are in fact already engaged in redefining and reinventing "Palestine."

Agreeing to restrict themselves to "Palestine west of the Jordan" is in itself a major delineation. Parenthetically, this wording is almost subconsciously a kind of oblique admission that in their heart of hearts and deeper recesses of mind each side ideologically still retains the East Bank and trans-Jordan in their imagined "Palestine"—that there is also a Palestine *east* of the Jordan! Still, to all political intents Palestine to be is already circumscribed, long before its permanent frontiers have been demarcated.

Inching Toward a Partitionist Peace

So where are the two territorial claimants at?

From a comparative standpoint it is far easier to substantiate the template shift on the Israeli side. When a Beginist disciple like Likud Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu yields control over Hebron, conceding that the integrity of the Land of Israel is no longer the supreme value in Likud ideology, and then lends his name to an "Allon plus" formulation—and in prenegotiation, no less—it is fair to say that Israelis are now at the far more advanced stage of arguing over alternative plans of partition. The Palestinian mainstream, by contrast, is still resisting partition—as territorial compromise at the preliminary level of principle.

In Arab world politics direct references to the "P" word by name and to the need for partition are extremely rare. In its orthodoxy Palestinian rhetoric continues to invoke the imperative for Israel to uproot all of its settlements, as well as insisting upon Israel's "total" withdrawal from the West Bank.[3] Both themes certainly seem to contradict the essence and spirit of territorial compromise as give and take. Similarly, Palestinian discourse among politicians and intellectuals is spiced with repeated references to "freedom of the homeland" and "liberation of Palestine," leaving to one's imagination (and to Israeli insecurities) precisely what is meant by "Palestine" and exactly what the dimensions of that "homeland" might be.

Still, the realities on the ground are making themselves felt, and political realism is building up within the two respective camps. Unless I am far off the mark, this down-to-earth pragmatism, especially if encouraged and allowed to continue, has got to lead to a readjustment in outlook about what—and how much—is politically obtainable by each side through territorial compromise. The problem, however, is that these undercurrents run deep, ferment slowly, can be deflected and just as easily disavowed, lack official confirmation, and, besides, as just shown, may run parallel among Israelis and Palestinians but not necessarily with the same forcefulness in sweeping aside fortified ideological positions.

There are, in essence, two alternative models for territorially compromising western Palestine: "hard" versus "soft" partition. Fortress partition, aiming at autarkic and impermeable entities, juxtaposed with partition plus. Although each yields a different map and Israeli-Palestinian relationship, both rest on the same initial theoretical premise: share the land by dividing it. But the former stresses maximum disengagement and posits two hermetically sealed, self-contained units, whereas the latter emphasizes the porous nature of the division, making for—in the jargon of sociology and strategic studies—two "penetrated" societies and "permeable" geopolitical entities.

A clear-cut or hard partition is wholly inapplicable in the case of Palestine, no matter how many people might find it desirable. The previous chapters have meant to illustrate what others have observed mostly in passing. That "economic interdependence, geographic imperatives and demographic intersections rule out hermetic separation."[4] There are simply too many points of Arab-Jewish contact. No surgical partition or ink-line borders, however impressive on paper, are going to even begin to come close to undoing the thick ties that entangle. The ties that bind Arab and Jew to the land, and to each other.[5]

Given the combination of limited choices and constraints on the ground, these two peoples and two ethnic communities are destined to be deeply implicated in each other's daily life . . . and to be mutually dependent one upon the other for their well-being and security. As a matter of fact, I am not at all sure anyone knows what "viable statehood" means in the context of Israel/Palestine west of the Jordan River other than in terms of partition plus: two formal states compelled by their situation of proximity and intimacy into a correspondingly close working relationship.

Strategies for "going it alone," whether Palestinian or Israeli, make absolutely no sense. So, too, encouraging Israelis and Palestinians to "live side by side" when this is taken to mean two self-contained ethnic communities and ecosystems. Cutting a deal may be the problem solver's concern; whereas for those people actually residing on the land their first need is to know how livable the paper settlement is going to be for them. Which leaves soft, or what I prefer to label qualified, partition the only realistic alternative.

Wishful thinking and nationalist sentiments aside, any final partitionist peace plan can only mean a two-tiered territorial redivision. Two separate political units perhaps, but each with a residual "presence" inside the other's domain. Realistically, who can picture an Israel without its Arab neighborhoods, sectors, or "triangles"? Or a Palestine ethnically cleansed of Jewish resident settlers rather than clustered, and encloistered, in enclaves of their own?

Already now this reciprocal "presence" finds tangible expression in Arab-Jewish mixed cities, substantial ethnic minorities and enclaves, Jewish settlements and Israeli military outposts, noncontiguity and a joint economic infrastructure. This kaleidoscopic landscape, in turn, argues for—indeed, cries out for—reciprocal transit rights and other satisfactory transborder arrangements that distinguish soft from hard partition.

So much for qualified partition as the preferred general framework. The broad outlines seem fairly clear, even compelling. Yet Israeli as well as Palestinian conceptualizers have already put us on notice: wherever else he may lurk, the devil is also in the qualifiers.

Both sides—even the most liberal and forthcoming among them—give only qualified, grudging consent to separation and partition. Again, it merits repeating that the sine qua non for any territorial repartition must be a mutual willingness to *part* at least to some extent with maximum territorial claims. Each leader needs to prepare his people for the likelihood they are not going to get 100 percent of the West Bank. For the moment, however, the two claimants widely, even vastly, differ not only over the

meaning, the style, and the manner of separation but also the territorial price to be extracted in order to achieve degrees of separation.

Of Inches, Kilometers, and Percentages

Consequently, in bringing the discussion entirely down to earth, what remains is to look at the major partitionist schemes currently "in play." The following section is less concerned with the exact border delineation than with *degrees* of territorial compromise.

Just contemplating the index of claims and counterclaims previously registered or currently on file is disquieting in itself. But in sifting through the profusion of territorial formulations our search is restricted to only the more recent map formulations. And which, second, fall somewhere between the official PLO-Hamas stand of "each and every grain of sacred Arab soil" and the equally uncompromising maximalist Israeli position represented by followers of the late Meir Kahana committed to *af sha'al*, to "not even one clod or lump" of covenanted land becoming forfeit. In a word, we are solely concerned with those solutions truly representing the compromise principle, as opposed, for instance, to "land for peace" or equivalent all-or-nothing prescriptions. Put differently, were Israel forced to yield the West Bank in its entirety, then 1999 could very well result in repartition . . . although not necessarily territorial compromise.

This aside, even comparatively liberal models for dividing and sharing the land have an overall distressing effect of their own, especially when taken together. For they sensitize us to the distinct possibility there may be less room in the end for peaceful territorial adjustment than one may usually be led to believe, or certainly might wish for in the upcoming negotiations. Constantly worth bearing in mind: Israelis and Palestinians represent two worthy protagonists who do not yield ground willingly; who do not give an inch; whose negotiating motto is "Look before you creep!"

Additional insights into the percentages game are provided by a loose map formulation offered up by *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist Thomas Friedman, himself a close student of the peace process. Writing in 1997, Friedman volunteered that at best the Palestinians could expect to secure somewhere between 65 and 85 percent of the West Bank, while Prime Minister Netanyahu was well advised to prepare his constituency for a settlement leaving Israel with 15 to 35 percent.[6]

For one thing, no authoritative Palestinian spokesman has publicly expressed even the slightest readiness to settle for less than 100 percent.

Absent this, and there is no room for a territorial compromise—and without compromising on territory, no compromise peace. For another thing, on the land issue everyone agrees there is a significant, possibly even critical 20 percent difference between 15–35 percent and 65–85.

Plans of Partition

The latter point is confirmed by any of some six or seven recent territorial formulations—all Israeli. Arranged from the most expansive to the most restrictive:

- *70:30*. In February 1997 a map of interests commissioned by the religious settler movement *Amana* outlined the possibility of parting with 30 percent of Judea and Samaria, but which would still leave 70 percent in Israel's possession.[7]
- In July 1997 Minister for Infrastructure Ariel Sharon addressed the Knesset on Israel's minimum lines for a final status pact. He insisted Israel would demand two security zones: a twenty-five-kilometer-wide strip west of the Jordan River and a strip some 10–15 kilometers wide running east of the 1967 "green line." Although he refrained from using numerical land percentages, Sharon's formulation left no doubt it incorporated extensive annexation. Also, he made a point of insisting these two zones were the "absolute minimum necessary."[8]
- *60:40*. On May 29, 1997, *Ha'aretz* headlined a meeting of the "inner security cabinet" at which Prime Minister Netanyahu enunciated a number of principles for any final settlement aimed at disabusing the Palestinians of any maximalist territorial claims.[9] Foremost among these guidelines: no redivision of "greater Jerusalem," Israel's retention of the Jordan Valley and wide security zones in the Judean desert, "broad and unrestricted access" to the Jordan Valley, contiguity between the larger settlement clusters and the more isolated settlements. Other stipulations: a buffer between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, at places "hundreds of meters wide," closing off the Palestinian entity from all sides, giving Israel the final say over virtually everyone and everything entering or leaving it. Last, enabling Jewish population growth in those areas left under Israel's control but without necessarily formally annexing them, thereby suspending determination of their final status to future generations.[10]

Although no official partition map accompanied Netanyahu's Cabinet presentation, the implications for mapmaking were reconstructed by re-

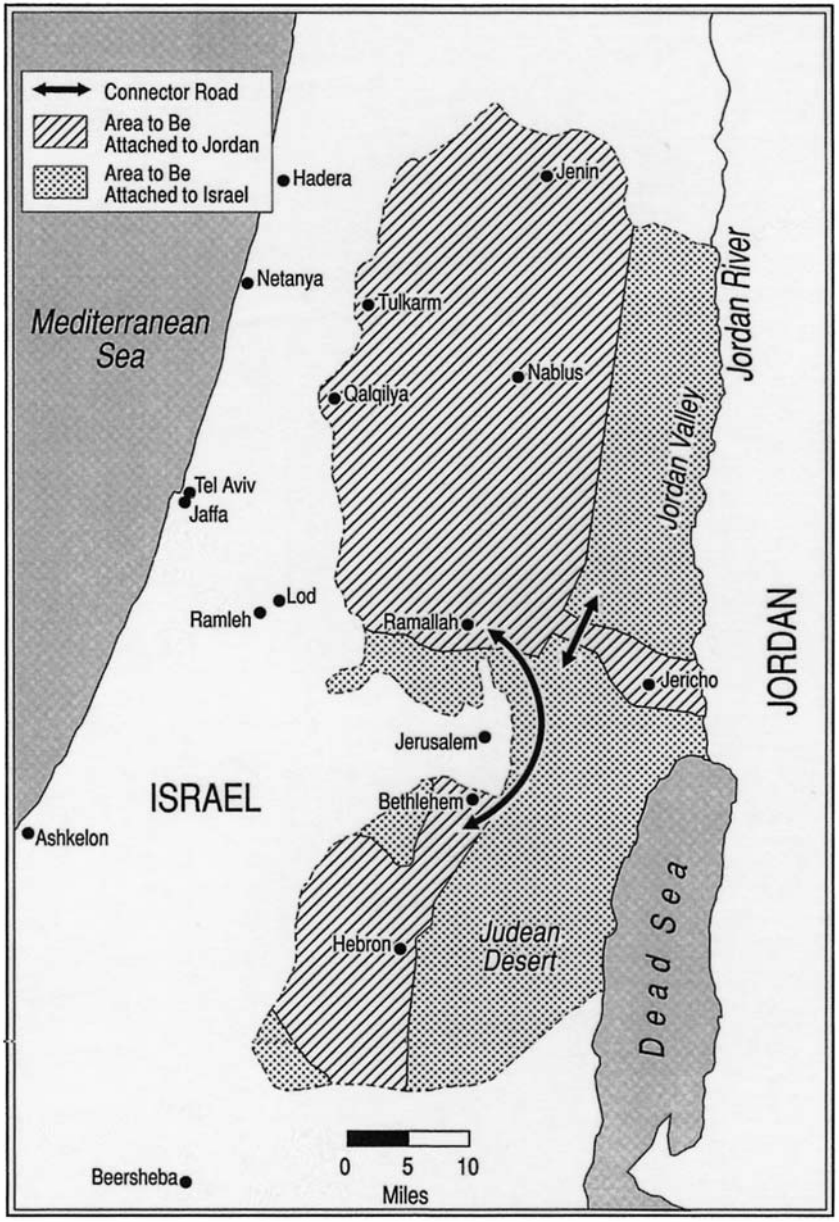
porter Ze'ev Schiff, who estimated the prospective Palestinian entity at most might receive 40 percent of the West Bank. Interestingly, while Netanyahu referred to his plan as "Allon plus," under the original 1968 Allon plan Israel asked to retain "only" about one-third of the contested land. Netanyahu's updated version, however, differed markedly, reflecting three decades of settlement policy as well as the fact that any territory now ceded by Israel would go to Arafat and the Palestinians rather than reverting to the more trustworthy Jordanians. Netanyahu clearly signaled his intention to retain 50 percent and more of the West Bank.

The *New York Times*'s Thomas Friedman, rushing to judgment, dismissed the Netanyahu proposals as "just a bunch of lines."[11] Closer to the mark, veteran politico-military analyst Ze'ev Schiff emphasized the deeper ideological adjustment hinted at in the prime minister's principles. As Schiff wrote, "the map has within it a further notification by the political Right of its readiness to divide the land of Israel between us and the Palestinians, slice by slice."[12]

I would add, in the same vein, that Netanyahu perhaps cleverly sought to deflect party and coalition critics at home by drawing attention away from what Israel was prepared to concede and underlining instead prospective gains; in particular, security depth, Jerusalem, the settlements. Quite likely, he was also signaling that his government differed from its Labor precursors and the Oslo enthusiasts who inadvertently may have encouraged the Palestinians to expect Israel's eventual collapse on the territorial front. Under Likud rule there would be no land-for-peace swap; only a territorial compromise. And, moreover, one falling far short of Palestinian demands by safeguarding Israeli claims—in Netanyahu's version—to at least half if not more of the West Bank.

- *52:48*. Preparing for the contingency of a negotiated partition, the IDF general staff was widely reported in Israel as having drafted its own "map of interests" at the beginning of 1997, which was then shown by the prime minister to President Clinton at a White House meeting on February 13.[13] It is reasonable to assume that the military establishment's detailed and authoritative blueprint also served as the basis for Netanyahu's own subsequent personal formulation, Allon plus.

Underscoring national security concerns rather than ideological or political ones, the IDF plan advocates, for example, directly incorporating large swatches of land along the Jordan River into Israel's defense perimeter as well as a number of electrical, water, and traffic "lifelines." If accurate, these reported territorial stipulations mean that Israel's security



16. The Original Allon Plan

elite is on record as advocating retention of as much as 52 percent of the West Bank by the Jewish state.

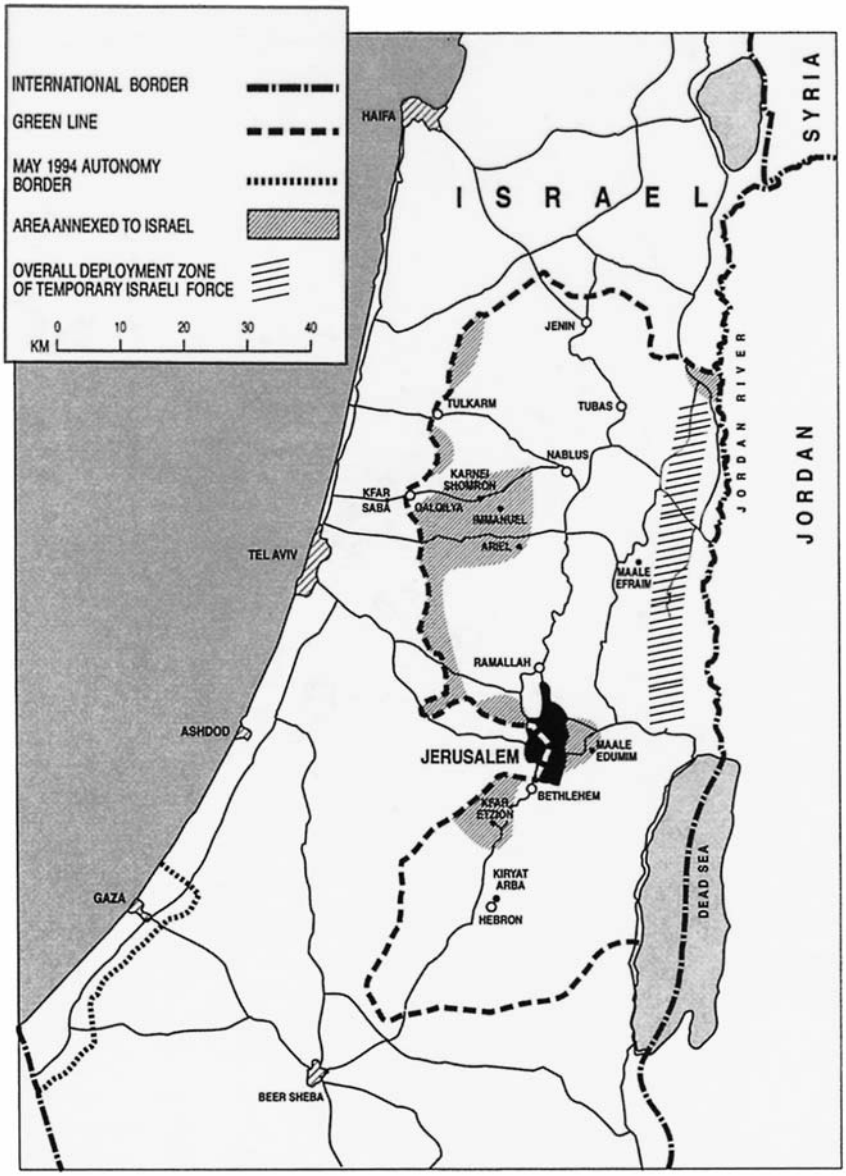
- *18.2: 81.8*. Yet another serious nonpolitical map exercise, but significantly below the previous "50 percent-and-more" plans, was published at approximately the same time. This one, by Professors Elisha Efrat and Yossi Katz, was chiefly concerned with the final dispensation of land then within Israeli-governed Area C. Controlling for population distribution and concentration as their independent variable, in contrast to the IDF's focus upon security assets, Efrat and Katz feel Israel would be within its rights in claiming 23.4 percent of Area C—equivalent to 18.2 percent of the West Bank.

That the 18.2–81.8 formula might enable Israel to incorporate 105,000 Jewish residents (87 percent of the settlers) inside eighty-nine Jewish settlements (73 percent of the settlements on the West Bank) explains both the logic and the appeal behind their argument. For under its provisions less than 10 percent of the Jewish settlers would be left outside the boundaries of sovereign Israel, whereas over 80 percent of the West Bank would become a sovereign Palestine. One catch, however: once water control and access roads are factored in, then the two social scientists advise Israel might legitimately insist on annexing another 10 percent of C, for a total of 22 percent of the entire West Bank.[14]

Several territorial compromise formulas put forward by the Israeli peace movement go even further in reflecting an earnest of intent to trade the maximum amount of land compatible with Israel's bare-boned security needs in return for an accommodation with Palestinian nationalism. Precisely owing to their liberal, dovish political orientation, these plans, located at the other end of the spectrum from most territorially demanding to most concessionary, are perhaps singularly instructive on the looming politics of partition.

- *11:89*. One of the earliest, most carefully considered and widely discussed plans to emerge in the immediate post-Oslo period is the 1994 Alpher blueprint.[15] Part of a larger study on future settlement and border prospects, Alpher's Plan B—"Moderate Territorial Compromise"—would have Israeli negotiators restrict territorial desiderata to "around 11 percent of all the territories"—covering Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.

Of particular interest is the rationale offered by the plan's author. Alpher justifies even these 11 percent on the following grounds: (1) UN Resolution 242 does allow, after all, for border modifications, and also



17. The Alpher "Minimalist" Plan for Territorial Compromise

mandates Israel's right to secure boundaries; (2) there is a strong case for Israel's right to continue to exploit traditional water resources; (3) the "demographic balance" is in Israel's definite favor in western Samaria, along the Jerusalem corridor, and around Jerusalem; (4) all the annexed

lands would be directly contiguous with the green line; (5) mass removal of the settlers would be a political and domestic impossibility for any Israeli government; whereas (6) the number of Palestinian Arabs included in the annexation would be minimal, "several tens of thousands" at most.

Further supporting arguments: (7) Israel "will almost certainly be holding most of the bargaining cards in the final status talks"; (8) Israel therefore will be positioned to offer sweeteners, like meeting the Palestinian requirement for "an extraterritorial land corridor connecting the Gaza Strip to Judea"; (9) also, the offer of compensation to the Palestinians "in the form of desert territory, or part of the Triangle or Wadi Ara or land adjacent to the Gaza Strip" as "a politically important face-saving device that would balance more expansive Palestinian territorial concessions in the West Bank—precisely because it involves land from pre-1948 Palestine." Tenth, and last, "a large majority of Israelis would likely support such a negotiated agreement."

Without getting into a discussion over each point, the Alpher concept of partition is noteworthy on three counts. First, security becomes the sole criterion for territorial claims; second, the modest land figure his Plan B poses is deceptively small; third, even this Israeli minimalism and self-restraint do not correspond to the maximum Palestinian leaders are prepared to concede.

Regarding the first, Alpher writes (p. 40) that under his plan Israel would ensure a number of advantages. Among them, most notably: enhanced defensive capabilities toward the east, both in the Jordan Valley and in western Samaria, enhancement of the defenses of Jerusalem and easier access to the city, sufficient control over the Yarkon-Taninim Aquifer, Israel's primary water resource in the territories. So, too, inclusion within Israeli sovereign borders of some 70 percent of the settlers, thereby reducing significantly the threat to domestic political stability during the transition and reducing the economic burden of evacuation.

Second, but related, is the 11 percent land figure, which is modest for one reason, centering on the status of the Jordan Valley. The discrepancy between the Sharon, Netanyahu, and IDF territorial schemes, for example, and Alpher's is that all the former insist on making the Jordan security salient a direct part of Israel. Alpher's provision is more subtle. It would annex Ma'aleh Adumim, having it serve as "the deployment zone for a rapid intervention force designated to assist in closing the Jordan River crossings and defending the Jordan River security border" in an emergency; with a second rapid intervention force deployed south of Bet She'an in a second but tiny annexed area. In addition, an Israeli military

force—"mobile and/or fixed in nature"—would be deployed in the Jordan Valley and on the eastern slopes of the ridge, "on Palestinian territory" under a Jordan Valley arrangement to remain in effect for a minimum of fifteen years. This is so much as confirmed by a map sketch of Plan B accompanying the discussion that shows a wide band running south from Bet She'an to Ma'ale Adumim captioned "Overall Deployment Zone of Temporary Israeli Force." The overall effect is to make any outright annexation by Israel seemingly constricted to the eastern side of the green line. In other words, Alpher is only able to pare territorial demands down to a minimal 11 percent by not claiming direct sovereignty over the Jordan River security perimeter while still retaining effective control for a defined but nevertheless extended period of at least fifteen years.

There is a third and final observation that needs to be made here about the Alpher plan and, by extension, any other minimalist position. Simply stated, it is that even the most modest and concessionary Israeli proposals for a territorial settlement short of "land for peace," hovering between 8 and 11 to 13 percent, do not enjoy resonance in Palestinian circles. As Alpher himself cautiously notes (p. 41): "No doubt this plan also poses serious drawbacks. First and foremost, there is no guarantee that, even after long and arduous negotiations, the Palestinians would accept it."

In a nice turn of phrase, Heller at one point speaks of "the reality of restricted choice" in Palestine peacemaking. By their current and divergent stances on territorial compromise the two respective Israeli and Palestinian sides offer an interesting but also potentially deadly study in contrasts. The Israelis, as demonstrated above, through their range of formulations, plans, and land maps; the Palestinians, by their conformity, and the very absence of partition-based formulations, plans, and land maps other than the return of all occupied Arab territory.

Israeli Pluralism

To students of Israeli domestic affairs political diversity and pluralism are the spice of life and a double-edged sword: a credit to functioning democracy, but an obstacle to the kind of strong national consensus needed for affirmative public policy making. And especially on the cardinal issue of a Middle East peace settlement meant to provide both honor and security.

Precisely for this reason commentators paid due notice at the start of 1997 to the signing of the National Agreement Regarding the Negotiations on the Permanent Settlement with the Palestinians. Dated January 22, 1997, and spearheaded by two leading Labor and Likud members of

Knesset, the aforementioned Dr. Yossi Beilin and Michael Eitan, this initiative aimed at averting a bitter controversy at home and within the Jewish nation about (a) the legitimacy and (b) the price of giving up parts of the homeland. While, in addition, forging a bipartisan strategy on the "path of historic compromise" with Palestinian nationalism in preparation for the scheduled permanent status negotiations.

The Beilin-Eitan charter seemingly heralded agreement on three crucial principles: creation of a Palestinian entity, Israel's existential right to assured security through eliminating the risk of attack, no uprooting of Jewish settlements in the "Western Land of Israel." The joint document went on to underscore other preconditions. No return to the 1967 borders. The right of most West Bank settlers to live under Israeli government and protection, with those outside the areas annexed by Israel maintaining close ties with the state "as individuals and as a community." The Jordan Valley to be treated as a special security zone, with Israeli armed forces deployed along the Jordan River security border. And, as a corollary—territorial continuity as well as "free and safe passage" between the settlements, the military outposts, and the State of Israel to be enforced under full Israeli sovereignty.

Bottom line, however: from a later perspective the Beilin-Eitan initiative appears more like a nonstarter than a genuine common front, let alone a consensual or authoritative bargaining position. Despite last-minute efforts at papering over serious differences by wrapping them in ambiguity, thereby preserving the outer semblance of a historic Labor-Likud national pact, the 1997 charter failed at the time to sweep public opinion. Indeed, it was largely and rather quickly forgotten.

Nonetheless, for some people Beilin-Eitan and the Netanyahu guidelines enunciated shortly thereafter suggest the makings of a national consensus and coalescence around one working map as of 1998. For example, the *New Republic* editorialized: "In recent years, both Labor and the Likud have seen the West Bank as the cartographic equivalent of Swiss cheese. Labor viewed it as Palestinian cheese with Jewish holes. The Likud saw it as Israeli cheese with Palestinian holes," whereas with the Beilin-Eitan agreement "there is now a confluence of Israeli perspectives on the emerging map."[16]

Which, to my mind, entirely misses the key point. Any such confluence is deceptive. True, for most Israelis, including many of the more practical leaders of the settler movement save the extremists, it is patently clear that there will be a definitive repartitioning of Judea and Samaria, the Palestinians concurring. Yet the differences among Israelis and in their

mental maps of what this redivision should or will look like are still far too wide to be able to speak of a consensus on territorial partition other than over principle itself.

Suffice to note that the disparity is large, ranging from Sharon's 64 percent and the IDF-Netanyahu figure of more than 50–60 percent of the West Bank to the Beilin-Yossi Sarid-Alpher-Heller minimalist bare-bones claim to 8–13 percent.

If anything, extensive map exercises conducted by the Netanyahu government in late December 1997/early January 1998, and intended to put a ceiling on territorial concessions, pointed to a hardening of Israel's territorial bargaining position for the duration of the interim stage and into the final status round. If true, and if adhered to in the face of Palestinian, Arab, American, and European pressure, the implication for repartitioning meant a further tilt to the right in Israel's official stance and claims to larger segments of the West Bank. Besides signaling a less rather than more concessionary posture vis-á-vis the Palestinians, the reports emerging from these Cabinet and inner security cabinet sessions held in the interval between the prime minister's meetings with Secretary Albright and President Clinton further sharpened the disparity between Israeli territorial maximalists, centrists, and minimalists.

Once again, in a replay of the previous summer 1997 round, Minister Sharon's formulations emphasized broader national interests—aside from the settlements factor and military bases—like ecology, water resources, Jerusalem's periphery, historical sites, major roads, and territorial continuity. Whereas Minister Mordechai's offered a leaner conception of security interests translating into 52 percent of the land, but without taking into account areas of dense Jewish settlement. However, given the defense minister's own conviction that the critical mass of Jewish settlements ultimately deserve to be incorporated into Israel, one could deduce that when the two men's alternative versions of Israel's "interest zones" were superimposed on each other the basic discrepancy would almost entirely fade away. Instead of a fundamental gap, on the contrary, adding up the numbers indicated the emergence of a working consensus: Sharon's retention of 64 percent of the West Bank, contrasted with Mordechai's 63 percent.[17] Nevertheless, Israeli society as a whole will enter the decisive territorial talks divided over the precise meaning of territorial compromise instead of fused around one single map.

Even so, it remains to be noted that no credible leader, party, or peace movement in Israel interprets "land for peace" in other than partitionist and compromise terms. Certainly not in the accepted Palestinian and Arab

sense of an even exchange; a straight trade predicated upon Israel's wholesale dismantling of the settlements, total withdrawal from all the territories, and full redeployment westward, ending in a redivided Jerusalem and reactivated 1949–1967 armistice lines.

In one very specific sense the exact lines and percentages bandied about in the onrushing stream of projected maps are less important than the larger two trends they point to.

In the first instance, territorial concessions earlier pronounced totally acceptable by authoritative policy makers in Jerusalem have become the accepted base point in more recent bargaining. Thus, heated objections in 1997 to any double-digit second redeployment above 9 percent of the West Bank were set aside by mid-1998. The argument by then among Israeli political and military elites had shifted to fallback positions. Whether or not to resist a 12 or a 13 percent withdrawal. And whether 3 percent of this total, earmarked for a special nature reserve, should qualify as Area B (the Palestinian demand) or Area C (Israel's offer), best designated Area C (reduced IDF security control), or, still better, subsumed under a new category of land labeled Area D.[18] By the second half of 1998, what Israelis referred to as "10 + 3" had become the operative offer in continuing efforts at meeting standards for a second deployment.

Again, it is not that such nuances are not insignificant. Each percentage point, after all, represents substantial chunks of coveted acreage. It is just that the distinctions between categories of land and percentages of land are overshadowed by the sense of a seductive or wearing down process at work. Over time Israel's territorial position has moved gradually, perhaps even substantially (in relation to earlier formulations of *af sha'al*, of not yielding an inch. On November 18, 1998, Israel's parliament endorsed the Wye River agreement which, when implemented, would see Palestinian control rise from 27 percent to 42 percent of the West Bank. The Knesset vote was 75 in favor, 19 against, and 9 abstentions.

Yet the process led the Netanyahu government, pushing and shoving—and Israel—that much closer to some as yet indeterminate West Bank middle ground. And certainly a far distance removed from former relatively moderate delusions about the Jordan River, for example, serving as Israel's ultimate political as well as security border. Only that the concessions are never quite sufficient.

A companion trend is of equal importance for the definitive partition map. If fully implemented as a preliminary to the permanent status stage, second and third redeployments position the Palestinians, for their part, to approach the bargaining table with as much as 40 percent or more of

their territorial claims already "in hand," meaning under their administration and authority. And further reinforced by Israel's acquiescence to a form of linkage whereby land yielded in the interim phase is nonrefundable upon entering into the final phase.

But this, of course, leaves the remaining contested 50 to 60 percent.

Which suggests that Israelis and Palestinians are still going to have to make further fundamental territorial readjustments in the near future if a land split is to have any prospect of working. For the simple reason that, as the literature on conflict resolution teaches, accommodation is really a three-way street. In essence, each of the sides first needs to disabuse itself and its followers of at least some of their notions of peace—the rewards to be gained as well as the price to be paid. This, before they can then turn to each other at the bargaining table with more flexible proposals . . . and maps.

Palestinian Conformity

Commenting upon the flurry of maps circulating in Israel at the beginning of 1998, a report for the Foundation for Middle East Peace contributes, in my view, several perspectives helpful in grasping deeper processes at work behind the headlines. Geoffrey Aronson, a consistent critic of Israeli policy in the occupied territories and author of the report, describes what I identify as three different factors affecting coming peace prospects, both for the good and the bad.

In the first instance, after five years the Oslo process had indeed deteriorated from a bilateral negotiation between Israelis and Palestinians to largely "an Israeli internal debate," as Aronson puts it, about how much territory, authority, and sovereignty to offer the Palestinians. In the second instance, the report points, correctly, to the transformation then taking place in Binyamin Netanyahu's own ruling party, the Likud. "Its leaders as well as rank and file," the author of the report writes, "are in the process of accommodating themselves to the fact that the 'integrity' of the whole `Land of Israel under Jewish sovereignty' and even the retention of all Jewish settlements under full Israeli sovereignty" are, in Aronson's words, "unsustainable political goals."[19]

In the third instance, the 1998 report concludes, "none of these maps meet even the minimum expectations of the Palestinian leadership, not to mention the even more expansive expectations of much of the Palestinian public." Which alerts us to a serious problem, less of communication than of asymmetries, once we compare the *respective* positions.

Crossing the political divide, the Arab state of mind toward political and territorial partition remains significantly different from the current Israeli state of mind. So much so that Israeli and Palestinian perceptions of territorial compromise offer a striking study in contrasts, a study that highlights nonuniformity and fractiousness on one side with something approaching numbing conformity on the other.

Had the permanent status round of talks begun in 1997, as scheduled, they would have found Israelis seriously divided over partitioning Palestine . . . the Palestinians seriously united against dividing Palestine.

Down to the very present Israelis suffer, if you will, from *split* visions. There are dreams and there is reality. You may covet peace and security, but which comes first? National interest maps somehow confusingly counter nonidentical security interest maps. In order to honor a commitment to relinquish 13 percent of the West Bank, which do you sacrifice: settlements around Mount Hebron and the West Bank highlands? Or parts of the eastern corridor in the barren unpopulated Judean Desert and the Jordan Rift Valley that would block the Palestinians from creating a large and powerful continuous land mass, in effect uniting the two banks of the Jordan River?[20] Which of the two options better serves Israeli interests?

The national debate continues. But there is at least a genuine debate. Also, larger trends and time charts show public opinion increasingly resigned to the partition construct, whether for its wisdom, its fairness, or its inevitability.

This contrasts with a *shared* vision among West Bank Arabs. To the extent an outside observer (and an Israeli one at that!) can gauge, Palestinians give the impression of still being at the preliminary, ideological level, and therefore still remain solidly opposed to the idea of redividing and sharing parts of the West Bank.

Palestinian resistance to partition is deeply ingrained—"the negation of their elemental birthright to the territorial integrity of their ancestral homeland."[21] So, too, are objections to territorial concessions to Israel in return for statehood and as the price for peace visceral and reflexive. But a political calculation as well. So much so that there has yet to be an official unambiguous confirmation that Palestinian Arab nationalism is in fact prepared to accept either a politically constrained state or a territorially constricted one in anything less than the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip, including eastern Jerusalem.

Similarly unclear is the degree of Palestinian willingness to grant even "insubstantial" territorial concessions. Israelis may have many complaints against Yasir Arafat, but definitely not duplicity on the subject of land

claims. Ambiguity, for him, stops at the land's edge. He has never kept his territorial imperatives hidden, but has stated them, time and again, in clear categorical terms. As, for example, on the eve of his visit to Washington in January 1998, when he said, "We have only one map, and that is the map of the independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, based on UN Resolution 242. This is the only map that will become reality."[22]

Which leaves moot the all-important question. If forced to weigh between the two components—land and powers—are Arafat and other PLO leaders prepared to compromise? To consent to a state circumscribed in size (anywhere from 10 to 30 percent) in order to achieve unconstrained statehood and full sovereignty within 70 to 90 percent of western *Filastin*?

In the absence of official Palestinian documentation or clear supportive material one way or the other, these critical issues that so vitally affect partition's prospects remain speculative. We would only comment that much of the secondary sources, such as public statements, West Bank opinion surveys, and journal pieces by Arab scholars, sound a cautionary if not pessimistic note.

There is a demonstrable reluctance to inscribe one's signature to the partitionist formula. Quite the opposite. This audible silence is broken by vehement as well as categorical objection—and from both sides of the Palestinian political spectrum.

Secularists vociferously express their opposition to the principle of partition and to its concomitant "two states for two people." As a counter, they have revived old themes from the seventies, calling for the establishment of "a single secular and democratic state on the entire area of Palestine" or its more sanitized version, "one state for two people." The wording may differ from one spokesman to another, although the sentiment and feeling are the same.

For instance, Nabil Sha'th, one of the chief negotiators on the Palestinian side is quoted as declaring, "We want an independent Palestinian state on all the land occupied in 1967."[23] Asked his opinion, Mahmoud Darwish, a celebrated Palestinian poet and former member of the PLO Executive, candidly volunteered, "If you're asking me for the record, I have to tell you that partitioning the country is still possible. If you're asking me off the record—I have to tell you that at this point, it's no longer possible."[24]

In a two-part collection of post-Oslo papers by Palestinian experts, sponsored by the Washington-based Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine in August 1996 and tellingly entitled *Beyond Rhetoric: Perspectives*

on a Negotiated Settlement in Palestine, not one of the contributors used, endorsed, or even bothered to argue its demerits. In contrast, one of the most explicit explanations to be found for antipartitionism from a Palestinian and an Arab perspective is offered by the Israeli Arab Palestinian nationalist, Member of Knesset Azmi Bishara. In fact, he goes out of his way to make Israelis understand that "when a Palestinian agrees to the '67 borders, he is making a big concession, since it is clear to him that he has rights to everything, that everything belongs to him. Nevertheless, for the sake of compromise, he is willing to accept the borders of June 4, 1967."[25] This obviously merited elaboration, and so Bishara continues: "The '67 borders constitute the outer limits of the compromise the Palestinian people is willing to make with Israel. Therefore, any attempt to retain parts of the Palestinian homeland—in its current definition, for the historic Palestinian homeland is much larger—under Israeli rule will mean a continuation of the conflict." Ominously, he cautioned, "Even if someone can be found to sign his name to this sort of concession, the conflict will continue. No Palestinian government that would agree to such a [West Bank] concession would survive as a legitimate governing authority."

No less dismissive of partition in any shape or form is the Islamic religious right. Released from Israeli prison in October 1997, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, head of the Islamic Hamas movement often critical of Arafat and his peace policy, assured, "We want this land, we want to remove the occupier from the land."[26] He continued, "We have different views on how to liberate our land, but this is the only difference between us. We are brothers, in one trench, against one enemy." With his political influence mounting in the territories, Sheikh Yassin subsequently used his triumphal four-month tour of Arab capitals to vow continued holy struggle against Israeli occupation. "The first quarter of the next century," he pledged, "will witness the elimination of the Zionist entity and the establishment of the Palestinian state over the whole of Palestine."[27]

This type of public discourse, with its central theme of liberating all the land confiscated by Israel in the past, understandably colors West Bank opinion. That it has raised exaggerated expectations can be seen in Palestinian survey samplings, such as the one conducted by the Jerusalem Institute for Communication directed by Ghassan al-Katib in late 1996.[28] Among its principal findings:

- On the question "Would you agree to Jewish settlers living under Palestinian sovereignty?," 70 percent were unwilling to abide by this form of Arab-Jewish coexistence.

- When asked, "As part of a final settlement, would you support Israel annexing settlement blocs with a Jewish majority in return for Israel ceding territories elsewhere?, 84.1 percent of those polled answered in the negative.
- Moreover, a full 70 percent of those canvassed demanded the right of Palestinian return, including to pre-1948 cities and towns like Haifa, Ramle, Lod, and Jaffa.[29] Two years later the head of the Center for Palestine Research and Studies at an-Najah University in Nablus found 52 percent of the Palestinians backing a sovereign but demilitarized state in 95 percent of the West Bank and all of Gaza. Support fell to only 16 percent were the projected state to comprise a smaller area.[30]

Allowance, in fairness, ought to be made for the possibility that denial of partition's relevance, suitability, or legitimacy is intended either for foreign or for domestic consumption. All or nothing is a perfectly understandable opening gambit in most bargaining situations. Such an uncompromising initial posture signals steadfastness. It may actually result in gaining all, when an adversary negotiating from weakness is compelled to make unilateral concessions. At worse, starting demands for 100 percent can always be traded off and trimmed and, even then, are likely to produce 50 percent compromises.

More than that. Further allowance is made, in trying to fathom the depths of Palestinian opposition, for two additional arguments serving as disincentives. Palestinians see themselves historically as having relinquished their rights to 77 percent of their homeland because of events in 1921, 1947, 1948, and 1949, and 1967 for the 23 percent of the West Bank and Gaza. To now suggest further cuts from this whittled-down image of the "homeland" is not only painful but politically difficult. Related to this is an argument Israel will have to address seriously and carefully in submitting its peace map and conception of the territorial partition construct. I am referring to the profound problem of territorial integrity and contiguity. So profound that it receives separate discussion and analysis in the following chapter. As previewed by the tough bargaining throughout 1997–1998 on second and third redeployments, each hypothetical bite into this 23 percent West Bank–Gaza figure exacerbates the issue of direct road links between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Just as each further dissection raises further doubts about making any Palestinian state a politically and economically viable going concern.

Similarly, the internal political calculus: that in the prevailing Palestinian political climate those who might find their way to partition, whether because of prudence or by a tortuous process of elimination, may

find it impolitic however to espouse such an unpopular, defeatist viewpoint. Nevertheless, we ought to be mindful of one or two of the risks inherent in such a calculation. For instance, as documented by the PLO's history and Arafat's own political career, verbal professions of liberating all of Palestine, or merely all of the West Bank, when stated so often for the public record and so forcefully, make it excruciatingly difficult to back down. Not impossible, but certainly politically risky. Especially, moreover, when all-or-nothing political rhetoric has won over large numbers of Palestinian true believers indoctrinated with a belief in ultimate victory. And when Islamic fundamentalist critics of Arafat's prepermanent status policies, led by respected religious figures like the above-mentioned Hamas leader, Sheikh Yassin, offer incalcitrants bitterly opposed to any concessions toward Israel a viable political alternative.

Even allowing for both exogenous and internal, endogenous arguments, studied silence, ambiguity, or outright denial of territorial compromise's validity all ultimately serve the same purpose.[31] Thus, what nonetheless emerges is a general sense that the Palestinian populace at large regards a Palestinian state in the 1967 lines, including east Jerusalem, as their minimum demand. And they are as yet unprepared to settle for anything less; certainly not substantially less. Which, if true, only confirms yet again how extremely difficult it is in conflict resolution, as in politics generally, to alter core attitudes and long-standing ingrained policies.

Nor will the task of moderate Palestinian leaders inclined to greater pragmatism be made any easier in reshaping opinion and reforming a winning peace coalition because the depth of the entrenched antipartition position. Beginning in 1937 and consistently thereafter, whenever offered the choice of peaceful territorial partition—as they themselves would be the first to admit—Palestinians and Arabs clung to the ideology of all or nothing. As one Palestinian author summarizes the traditional position: "Opposition to any partition of Palestine—which boils down to the rejection of a Jewish state in Palestine or any part of it—had long been the clear and steady objective of the Palestinian struggle."[32]

Breaking with the past is hard enough. I would only add that in this very specific sense the 1977–1979 Sadat-Begin peace negotiations provide an unhelpful precedent. Having set the highest standard for land concessions by Israel on the Sinai front, the territorial settlement with Egypt makes it difficult in the extreme for any other Arab interlocutor—whether King Hussein, Yasir Arafat, or a Syrian leader—subsequently to settle for less than all or nothing. Which is, of course, inimical to the spirit of peacemaking through territorial compromise.

No less dysfunctional are the extremely negative connotation and images the very notion of partition raises in Arab consciousness. To Palestinians *taqsim* implies stifling ghettoes, archipelagoes, enclaves, patchwork areas, a rump state. Rami Khouri, the internationally circulated Jordanian columnist for the *Jordan Times*, warns, for example, that the most the Palestinians can probably expect to hope for in a settlement with Israel are "semitic Soweto enclaves"; he conjures up an even more bleak picture of "POW camps," "nature reserves," "refugee camps," "garbage dumps of history," "levantine ethnic zoos."[33]

If this is how territorial compromise is depicted, small wonder that no authoritative Palestinian voice—political or intellectual—has been raised on behalf of partition. Especially when political calculations of wider Arab world and pan-Islamic support for the Palestinians' just cause and maximalist position, possibly joined by a sympathetic United States and the European community members, serve to reinforce reflexive ingrained contempt for partition in any form other than total and complete Israeli withdrawal.

Indeed, Palestinian academics for the most part reinforce this almost monolithic negativism instead of preparing the way for greater political realism. In a dialectic unique to the Palestinian discourse, even people who present themselves as moderates in putting forth such enlightened ideas as Arab-Jewish binationalism or creation of a single unified democratic state in Palestine end up in reality as critics of Arafat's leadership and of the two-state formula, with its implicit acceptance of partition. Consider the positions staked out by Professors Khalil Shikaki and Ahmed Khalidi.

Offering reflections on a durable settlement, Shikaki, a respected social scientist, defines "the realization of Palestinian independence within clearly defined and sovereign territorial boundaries" to be "the most vital Palestinian goal." But he then immediately qualifies this by insisting both that any Jewish settlements "compromise the future development of the Palestinian state" and that "the boundaries of the state should not be any less than those of 1967. Therefore, a return to the 1967 borders is the cornerstone of any agreement."[34] For his part, Ahmed Khalidi, editor of the leading Palestinian publication, the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, volunteers his personal blueprint founded on a "sovereign, uncontested, independent state" enjoying both territorial integrity and contiguity ("there can be no civilian pockets under Israeli rule on Palestinian land").[35] One of his main points is that "any further dissection of Palestinian territory would make it politically impossible to maintain a state"—a condition,

once again, all but foreclosing any land deal whatsoever. Still, Khalidi would have the "future shape" of his Palestinian state—and by implication that of the Jewish state as well as specific lines of demarcation between the two—left to the bargaining sessions. He himself demurs, ending, "This is not a full blueprint for Palestine. The hard details must be left to the negotiators."

Like most interpreters of the Palestinian strategy, nowhere in Khalidi's discourse do we find explicit use of, let alone support for, either "partition" or "territorial compromise." In truth, peace formulations by Palestinians, be it on the West Bank or abroad, are really a competition for who can pen or verbalize the most enlightened presentation, hinting at moderation and compromise but without uttering the formula of territorial partition. And without being seen as seeming to conspire—least of all with the Israelis—to dismember an idealized patrimony. Palestinians would say you do not easily or readily compromise with usurpers.

If this characterized state of mind is anywhere near true, it prompts underscoring how little frank discussion there is in Palestinian circles of the need—not to say the wisdom, justice, advisability, or merit—for a two-state solution. And of a West Bank territorial repartition as arguably the most effective instrument for realizing this.

It remains to be shown that the Palestinian national movement and its present leadership have fully come to appreciate and to critique their own history by applying the same tools of revisionist historiography as wielded, for instance, in the United States and in Israeli academic and leftist circles. Had the previous two generations accepted the partition plans of 1937 or 1947 they might long since have enjoyed the normalcy and the legitimacy that ordinarily come with independent statehood. Insistence upon possessing the entire space left them dispossessed, instead, and without any of Palestine. Or, as Shlomo Gazit phrases it in game theoretical language, "The Palestinian extreme zero-sum position left them with the zero."[36] Nor does it do much good for Israelis or even more distant outside observers to note this. It is for the Palestinians themselves to absorb perhaps the greatest lesson of their modern political history.

Which also leaves them still wrestling with what they alone have the right to define as their foremost political mission at the present moment. Resistance? Liberation? Or independence? By liberation, do they mean national liberation or liberating territories? Since it is obvious their goal is liberating both people and land, must it be all Palestinians and all lands regarded as Palestinian? What then of their Palestinian diaspora in Hashemite Jordan? Of a historic accommodation with a Jewish state res-

ident anywhere in former mandatory Palestine? And if independence is the primary goal, then independence over the entire "homeland"—or within it?

At this point I am going to sacrifice narrative continuity by inserting a personal note. In authoring this book, no part has caused me more self-introspection—to the point of daring to voice it here—than these two sections devoted to the comparative positions of Israelis and Palestinians on the idea of (a) compromising Palestine and (b) repartitioning the West Bank while keeping Jerusalem intact.

In contrasting Palestinian conformity with Israeli pluralism on these front-burner issues, I am fully aware of the more immediate implications. Describing the Palestinian stand as less accommodating, indeed *uncompromising*, on possible territorial reference points east of the green line, and compounding this by citing Israel's greater flexibility on a land split so long as it ends up with chunks of West Bank real estate, exposes me to three forms (if not more!) of academic and Middle East criticism. To wit: the author is obviously prejudiced, short on scholarship, and less than perceptive about Middle East and Arab-Israeli affairs. Anticipating such criticism, I wish to clarify my position, even in advance of the critics.

Regarding the bias and the scholarship, Israeli and Palestinian academics are no different. We are equally vulnerable, subject almost by definition to automatic attacks of partisanship and subjectivity. It boils down to wanting to put one's own country in a favorable light while casting aspersions on the side opposite as an unworthy, because unforthcoming, peace partner.

Yet, as readers of the preceding chapters have found, criticism has been leveled at Israeli leaders where warranted. I am opposed, however, to any settlement terms that might put the State of Israel under direct risk. Or that write off for all time and future generations the right of the Jewish people to believe in their inseparable bond to *Eretz Yisrael* (just as I don't believe the Palestinians can be asked to forfeit their possession claims). With the above proviso, so, too, do I support meeting to the greatest extent possible (a) legitimate and (b) reasonable Palestinian claims, primarily by facilitating political self-determination through the formula of grand historic "partition plus" compromise.

As for scholarship in research, there are standards for thoroughness and there is the law of probable inexhaustibility of materials. This is especially true in contemporary world and Mideast regional affairs. But, I have good reason to suspect, all the more apparent in studying adversarial re-

lationships that carry their own constraints against accessibility, candor, full disclosure, and the like. Nevertheless, in fairness to the Palestinian side, an honest effort has been made by a non-Palestinian to probe statements by notable or authoritative Palestinian spokesmen. Not exhaustively, and resting primarily on pronouncements translated from the Arabic or else delivered in English or Hebrew in the original. These official statements, interviews, journal articles, and official statements are as reliable as anything we have to work with, and certainly representative.

But aren't these materials being used selectively? Here, my answer is, Absolutely. I continue to sift through Arab sources precisely in the hope of discovering nuances that might support my central theses. To repeat the formula: there is no peace without compromise; no compromise without territorial compromise; and compromise, by definition, obligates give and take on the part of both direct parties. Given my concern with and interest in a final peaceful end to this many sided, life-consuming conflict through territorially and politically compromising Palestine, I have every possible incentive in playing up, not downplaying, a rising constituency of support for redividing western Palestine. In other words, evidence of significant movement away from an all-or-nothing position on the West Bank by *both* sides, if anything, best serves my purpose.

Which leaves the third matter about perceptions of Middle East and Arab-Israeli affairs. In scientific event analysis, human perceptions being what they are, and the Middle East being what it is—fluid, complex, and controversial—there is always going to be more than one interpretation of any given issue. As proof, I note here one reputable scholar's view of the respective Israeli and Palestinian positions that is diametrically opposed to mine. Claiming that an "apparent role reversal" has occurred, Columbia University's Naomi Rosenberg argues, "whereas in 1947, partition was accepted by Jews and rejected by Arabs" in 1997 "partition is accepted by Arafat and apparently rejected by Netanyahu."[37] I happen to think the role reversal is, indeed, more apparent than real. Nor am I quite sure of what Arafat's acceptance of partition is based upon, other than the ambiguous 1998 statements, or what he means by "partition" in terms other than full withdrawal by Israel back to the green line, including the Jerusalem sector. What is on the record, however, is Netanyahu's implementation of the 1997 Hebron agreement and consent to double-digit redeployment. Again, however, my argument is not either with or against Dr. Rosenberg so much as it is *for* honest differences of viewpoint and interpretation.

There is a world of difference between willful misrepresentation and misreading. I may be faulted for the latter, but I don't think my personal interpretation and analysis of the powerful ideological-theological checks and political balances *against* the trinity of Jewish nationalism, Zionist rights, and West Bank territorial compromise with Israel are either baseless or an inaccurate reading of the mainstream Palestinian stand.

For that matter, let me turn the tables around. Would-be critics are themselves hereby invited to share the nettle or burden of proof with me. Indeed, Arab and Palestinian colleagues can do peace a great service, reinforcing my case for West Bank compromise, by volunteering on-the-record statements of Palestinian endorsement for "territorial compromise." My gratitude is readily acknowledged in advance.

An "elusive middle ground" has been used here and as the title of this chapter in a figurative rather than literal sense. Theoretically, at least, the statesman's manual does leave room for precisely and evenhandedly "splitting the difference" in a classic fifty-fifty equation.[38] But where it seems to me the idea of a middle ground can be applied to greater practical effect is in two different political contexts. Bilaterally: to the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, where the parties until now have never managed to agree upon who should give up what. But also inner-directed: to Israelis and Palestinians respectively, where each collective is struggling separately and apart to reconcile what might have been and what ought to be, on the one hand, with, on the other hand, what is and what can still be.

This serves to reinforce a point made in the opening chapters of this book. One definite prerequisite for achieving ripeness is the presence, on both sides, of responsible pragmatic leadership. Nationalist leaders that Israeli historian Yosef Gorny labels "revolutionaries of the here and now"—possessors of a vision bounded by present-day reality—in contrast to dogmatists unfettered by such practical considerations.[39]

The elusive middle ground is where prudence and the politics of partition finally meet and converge.