

GLOBAL CONDITIONS AND GLOBAL CONSTRAINTS:

The International Paternity of the Palestinian Nation

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¹ This paper has been prepared for the panel *The Forms and Mechanisms of Relations on a Global Scale (II)* at the 2001 Hong Kong Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA). It builds on a previous working-paper for the European University Institute in Florence (Jung 2000) and is part of a larger project of the author on the future of Middle Eastern Security. I am grateful to Carlsberg Foundation, which supports this project with a travel grant enabling me to discuss matters of Middle Eastern security in that region. Moreover, I thank Catherine Schwerin for her valuable comments.

I. Introduction: Middle Eastern Irrationality?

In a recent article, Michael Mandelbaum depicted Middle Eastern states as the most combative members of the international community. He painted the picture of a region in which “traditional motives for war – gold and God – are still alive” (Mandelbaum 1999). In line with this rather stereotypical perspective, the Middle East is often viewed as a zone of conflict, in which competition for scarce resources (“gold”) inevitably leads to violent encounters between actors that are guided by irrational ideas (“God”). The long and bloody history of the Palestine conflict has contributed a lot to corroborating this image of a region in which violence seems to be endemic. In terminating the so-called Middle East Peace Process, the current “*Al-Aqsa Intifada*” marks another violent step in this conflict that has frequently escalated to warlike proportions in the form of popular unrest, communal riots, anti-colonial insurgencies, guerilla and terror attacks, as well as civil and inter-state wars. Yet behind these waves of violence and counter-violence, we can easily discern patterns of a kind of nationalist conflict with which European history is far more familiar than the stereotype of Middle Eastern irrationality admits.² Despite the academic obsession with proclaiming the “end of territoriality” and the “decline of the nation-state”, the Palestine conflict represents a painful but vivid remnant of those national conflicts that politically characterized the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe.³

In spite of the proclaimed doomsday of territoriality, the current *Al-Aqsa Intifada* essentially revolves around the final territorial consolidation of the Palestinian question, and with its territorial focus, this new round of warfare between Israel and the Palestinians points to the core of their century-old conflict: the asymmetric power struggle between two nations that claim the same territory. Given this territorial core of the conflict, the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel seems to be an inevitable precondition for

² Another stereotype is to associate the character of these wars with a specific “Arab inclination toward terrorism and guerilla warfare” (Schiff and Rothstein 1972: 32). Yet guerilla warfare is rather the result of asymmetric power structures and the lack of acknowledged political legitimacy on the side of the guerillas.

³ Concerning these discussions about the future of the nation-state, see Badie (1995), Brock and Albert (1995), Neyer (1995), Rosecrance (1996), Ruggie (1993), Strange (1996), Zürn (1992).

peace.⁴ The immanent relationship between land and people, which makes a major motive in the writings of the famous Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani, has molded Palestinian nationalism and the national political identity of a people held together by shared experiences of flight, uprooting, expulsion, dispersal and occupation. After decades of marginalization and statelessness, anything short of the foundation of their own nation-state would be unacceptable for the Palestinians.⁵ This was evident in the words of Mahmoud Darwish when he addressed the Arab world on the occasion of the 53rd anniversary of the foundation of the Israeli state. Against the backdrop of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, Darwish said:

“For the Palestinians the meaning of this war consists in their being subjected to continual uprooting, in their transformation into refugees on their own land and beyond it, in the attempt, following the occupation of their land and history, to banish their existence, to turn their existence from an unequivocal entity in space and time to redundant shadows exiled from space and time.”⁶

From the Palestinian perspective, the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* has turned into a Palestinian war for independence. In the nationalist reading of Mahmoud Darwish, the current armed conflict between Israel and the Palestinians expresses the emanation of the national will of the Palestinian people to transform their unbroken national identity into the political reality of an independent Palestinian state. In line with the central claims of nineteenth and early twentieth century European nationalists, Palestinian leaders demand the final convergence of state, nation and society (cf. Hobsbawm 1983b: 265). Not surprisingly, they also present the Palestinian nation as an unchangeable entity in time and space that is related to a particular territory. Yet academic reasoning deconstructs this nationalist rhetoric of a given transcendent and points at the historicity of both

⁴ A different opinion is advocated by Marshall, who suggests a solution to the conflict by means of an secular democratic state comprising both communities (Marshall 1995: 20).

⁵ For recent inquiries about the conditions of peaceful conflict resolution, see Inbar and Sandler (1997), Khouri (1998), Lalor (1999), Perthes (1999). The Oslo process is described in Makovsky (1996), Maoz (1995), and Savir (1998).

⁶ *Not to begin at the end*, Mahmoud Darwish, *Al-Ahram Weekly On-line*, 10-16 May 2001.

processes, state formation and nation building.⁷ To be sure, the constructed nature of nations does not mean that they are not real. When this article poses the question of how the Palestinian nation has been shaped by global and regional developments, it does not intend to question the reality or legitimacy of nationalist sentiments amongst the Palestinians. On the contrary, in arguing against the prejudice of Middle Eastern irrationality, this article supports Palestinian demands for the international recognition of their right of self-determination alongside the Israeli state. It argues that precisely this demand is an expression of the hitherto denied international patrimony of the Palestinian nation. What does this international patrimony look like?

From an historical perspective, the formation of the Palestinian nation has been inextricably bound together with two other processes. In the first place, the political history of Palestine with its national and territorial aspects has been shaped to a large extent by the emergence of the international system as a “society of states”. Particularly with regard to the still state-centered character of the international order, the foundation of a Palestinian nation-state seems to be a late but necessary adaptation to the rules of the international game. Secondly, the Palestine conflict has been an integral part of regional nation building, conditioning both the development of regional inter-state relations and the evolution of actors and ideologies in Arab politics (cf. Sela 1998). In this regional dimension, the Palestinian-Israeli relationship will maintain its crucial role as a “continuous theme in Arab politics” (Kazziha 1990: 300), and without a sovereign Palestinian state, the Middle Eastern state system cannot be considered consolidated. In the light of the above-mentioned historical processes, the assumed irrationality of Middle Eastern politics is inseparably knitted into the logic of international politics, and the Palestinian nation has been shaped as one part of this complex interplay among international and regional forces.

In order to analyze the international patrimony of the Palestinian nation, first a general theoretical framework concerning the linkage between nation building state formation and violent conflicts will be presented. These theoretical assumptions rest on some considerations of IR theory and of historical sociology, thus combining external and internal aspects of state building processes.

⁷ Two comprehensive accounts of the history of Palestinian nation building are given in the books by Khalidi (1997) and Kimmerling and Migdal (1993).

The third section then examines the evolution of the Palestine conflict and its territorial political coordinates against the background of historical changes in the international system. It further presents four analytical dimensions of the conflict that help us to better understand how local, regional and global aspects of the conflict are interrelated. The fourth section examines ideological and institutional aspects of Palestinian nationalism through the lenses of global conditions and global constraints. Thereby, the social dynamics of Israeli-Palestinian relations are also taken into account.

II. Nation Building, State Formation and War

II.1 The Nation-State in IR Theory and Political Sociology

In his analogy of “war making and state making as organized crime” Charles Tilly struck the heart of the relation between state formation and war in concluding that wars make states and states make war (Tilly 1985). Although based on the European history of state formation (cf. Tilly 1975 and 1990), Tilly’s conclusion seems to be equally suitable regarding the violent nature of state-building processes in the Third World. There, more than 196 wars since 1945 have accompanied the processes of decolonization and state formation, processes which turned out to be particularly belligerent in the Middle East, in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in South and South-East Asia (Jung and Schlichte 1999: 38). In this regard, the Third World has seemingly repeated the violent irrationality of European state formation. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the various paths which Third-World countries have taken toward modern statehood differ substantially from the European experience. For a better understanding of contemporary state-building processes, however, the latter does not exclude the applicability of some general theoretical aspects that are derived from European history.

This applies in particular to the role of nationalist movements in forming the contemporary political landscape of a global society of states. Nationalism has been one of the most successful export products of European political history. From its inception during the nineteenth century, the idea of the identity of nation and state, i.e. that political legitimacy must be based on the will of the nation (Schieder 1991: 17-18), has spread over the entire globe.

Nationalism as the ideology to bring about this political identity “feeds on cultural differences”, turning them “into a principle of political loyalty and social identity”. In this way, nationalist programs pick up localized, life-transmitted folk cultures and transform them into a standardized, education-transmitted culture (Gellner 1995: 2-3). Thus, nation building is both the construction of homogenous cultural entities, and the politicization of these entities elevating the national political duty to an obligation that “overrides all other public obligations” (Hobsbawm 1990: 9).

From a functionalist perspective, this cultural coding through nationalist constructions and “invented traditions” basically serves three purposes. In the first place, it establishes a symbolic representation of social cohesion and membership of a particular community. Second, it legitimizes the political institutions and authority structures of modern states. Finally, nationalist coding is instrumental in changing the social fabric of individuals via institutions of socialization. These spread and inculcate beliefs, value systems and conventions of behavior (Hobsbawm 1983a: 9). In transforming folk to national cultures, the invention of national print-languages was “of central ideological and political importance” (Anderson 1983: 67). In processes of state formation, the formalization, scriptualization and centralization of knowledge are conditions for the establishment and monopolization of an abstract knowledge to administer and therefore to rule. “Surveillance as the mobilizing of administrative power – through storage and control of information –“ rests on the standardization, formalization and implementation of a written language by the state (Giddens 1985: 181). It is therefore no coincidence that the scientific development of comparative language studies went parallel to the formation of European nation-states (Anderson 1983: 70).

Summing up this brief theoretical view of nationalism, the crucial point concerning the construction of nations lies in the congruence of the political and cultural unit. From this perspective, nationalism cannot “become political”, as John Hall put it (cf. Hall 1995: 23), but nationalism always represents an intrinsically political phenomenon. The specific core of nationalist ideologies is their general political character and their relatedness to the formation of modern states. Concerning the historical differences between the particular characters of nationalist ideologies, Schieder discerned three phases in European nation-state formation. The first is characterized

by the revolutionary transformation of absolutist states, as in the French, Scandinavian or English examples. In this phase, the nation emerges as a product of revolutionary emancipation that builds on already existing state structures, forming a political nation that is not so much based on patterns of a national culture as on the revolutionary transformation of a polity. In the second phase, national movements work on the unification of politically separate parts of a nation. It is not the emancipative transformation of an existing state, but the national creation of a new state. While this second phase is represented in German and Italian unification, the third phase is related to the formation of East European states. There, national consciousness developed explicitly in movements against existing states. These suppressed the free unfolding of the nation, and it is the secessionist struggle against these states that molded Eastern European nationalism (Schieder 1991: 68-71).

Clearly, theorizing about nationalism and nation building revolves around the social institution of the modern state. Therefore, we first have to give a brief definition of our conceptual understanding of the state. There are basically two perspectives from which this definition can be made: from an external or from an internal point of view. Externally, the state can be defined as the principal actor and the core institution of the international system. From this IR-theory perspective, states are autonomous entities, which pursue interests such as security, economic gain or ideological goals on rational cost/benefit calculations (Gilpin 1981: 11-13). Together they form an international system in which political authority rests on autonomy and territories within which “domestic political authorities are the only arbiters of legitimate behavior” (Krasner 1995: 119). This is illustrated in the framework of the so-called Westphalian model of the international system, states are rational actors “striving to maximize their utility in the face of constraints that emanate from an anarchic although interdependent international environment” (Krasner 1995: 122). According to the distribution of power among these states, the international system has historically formed three types of international relations: imperial/hegemonic, bipolar, or balance of power systems (Gilpin 1981: 29). War is then the result of the rationally calculated action of a state or a group of states that expects benefits from taking action toward systemic change.

While classical IR theory defines the state as a unitary actor pursuing its interests among other states, sociological theory tends

to conceptualize the state from within as a particular political and social order. According to Max Weber, the modern state is a political community “that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Weber 1991: 78). Political power is based on legal authority with a formal order subject to change by legislation (Weber 1968a: 56). In spite of the fact that both theoretical approaches share key elements in defining a state, such as the monopoly of physical force and territoriality, processes of state formation are looked upon in different ways. Whereas IR theory is interested in state formation from an external, international system perspective, political sociology concentrates on the unit level and therefore on internal mechanisms behind the monopolization of legitimate violence by the state as a political-territorial association (cf. Weber 1968b: 904-5).

Parallel to the monopolization of the legitimate use of physical force, the modern state has acquired the monopoly on taxation and established a political order that rests on legal authority. In Weber’s terms, “legal [rational] authority is resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands” (Weber 1968a: 215). Unlike traditional rule, which is based on personal authority and the obedience to age-old rules, legal systems of domination rest on an impersonal purpose and the obedience to abstract norms. Accordingly, state formation means both the expropriation of all autonomous actors who formerly controlled the means of physical force by the state and the transformation from traditional political orders to legal rule, i.e. from the personal authority of rulers to legal political authority based on formal regulations.

In the European example, the establishment of legal authority can be observed in a process of four waves of “juridification”. Firstly, the Absolutist State signified the formation of the state monopolies of taxation and physical force which, secondly, became legally anchored in political institutions and civil law in the constitutional monarchies. The emergence of the democratic constitutional state marked the third wave, in which bourgeois revolutions brought about the nationalization of the two state monopolies, thus breaking absolutist power. Finally, the formation of the welfare state tamed the autonomous dynamics that spring from the accumulative logic of the economic system and its generalized medium, money. It was not before the very end of this process lasting many centuries that

representational forms of government, democratic procedures, and formal norms had been firmly established (Habermas 1986: 356ff). Yet, Norbert Elias reminds us that these processes of internal pacification and the establishment of democratic rule were not at all peaceful developments. He traced the origin of the state monopoly of physical force back to its opposite, the unrestricted and violent elimination contest in which any individual or small group struggles against many others for sources not yet monopolized (Elias 1994: 351).

Putting IR and sociological perspectives together, state formation is a contradictory process in which the state appears as a cause for both war and peace. The internal pacification of social conflicts and the evolution of a “society of states” that is built on Westphalian principles such as territorial integrity, political sovereignty and non-interference were interrelated, while violent processes contributed to the emergence of distinct realms of state and civil society (cf. Krause 1996: 326). Based on the civil claims of protection (security) and the state’s need for extraction (taxation), European state formation has taken a contradictory trajectory. This contradiction is manifested in the “central paradox ... that the pursuit of war and military capacity, after having created national states as a sort of by-product, led to a civilianization of government and domestic politics” (Tilly 1990: 206). Regardless of the particular ways in which the bargain between war-makers and state-makers brought the “civilized” standards of international law and democratic rule about, these standards are the normative constraints under which current processes of state formation take place. Concerning the Palestine conflict, we can therefore follow Tilly who concluded: “Israel’s territorial wars with its neighbors would have surprised no European of the eighteenth century, but in the period since 1945, they have become anomalies” (Tilly 1990: 181).

II.2 Conditions and Constraints of State Formation in the Middle East

Not only Israel’s territorial ambitions have been constrained, but also – and even more severely – those of other state-makers in the Middle East. Referring to Middle Eastern state formation, Ian Lustick (1995) explained “the absence of Middle Eastern great powers” with the normative and power-related constraints that were imposed on

regional state formation by an existing international order. Under the impact of international norms and great-power policies, Middle Eastern state-makers were not able to fight those large-scale state-building wars as their European predecessors did. Being from its inception dominated by the larger unit of the Western state system, the Middle Eastern system was not allowed to operate by the same rules (Lustick 1995: 655-63). In this way, the concepts of “free competition” or “anarchy”, i.e. the absence of any super-ordinate authority, are only of a limited explicative value in understanding the evolution and shape of the Middle Eastern state system. In pursuing their interests, the political entrepreneurs of the Middle East have had to conform their actions to the already existing norms and power relations of a hegemonic international system.

Analyzing the historical background of the Ottoman Empire’s decline, Carl Brown (1984) derived characteristic patterns in the close interaction between the emerging Middle Eastern and the international system of states. This organizing and explanatory device he called the “Eastern Question System”. According to Brown, the intense interrelationships between the unequal power systems led to a center-periphery struggle in which domestic and international politics became thoroughly blended and confused (Brown 1984: 72). On the one hand, the Middle East provided European powers a convenient arena in which to fight out their rivalries with little risk, while on the other hand, regional and local forces were able to instrumentalize great-power politics to their own ends. This entire confusion of international, regional and local levels is then expressed in the systemic characteristic that no outside state has been able to dominate and organize the Middle East, just as no state from within has been able to do so (Brown 1984: 270-74). With regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, this systemic characteristic is reflected in the fact that all Arab-Israeli confrontations have been stopped by international diplomatic intervention, yet so far outside intervention has not been able to bring about real peace (Brown 1984: 241).

One aspect of the Eastern Question System is that it shaped to a large extent the existing territorial political landscape of the Middle East. The boundaries of Middle Eastern states reflect compromises of both the interests of international great powers and the assertions of regional actors. More closely linked to the internal dimensions of state formation is another crucial difference between the Middle

Eastern and the European examples. The competitive nature of European state formation resulted in a concept of security that was predominantly externally oriented. This stress on external security permitted a strong identification of state security with the security of its citizens and thus a high legitimacy of state rule (Krause 1996: 320). The overlapping notion of security together with the bargaining processes between military men and entrepreneurs resulted in the subsequent subordination of the military to the civilian state elite (Krause 1996: 325), and it contributed heavily to the convergence of nation, state and society. The two steps of juridification that lead from absolutism to constitutionally based democracy reflect the historical development of this specific civil-military relationship. The authoritarian nature of Middle Eastern politics has its origin not least in the fact that as political and economic rent-seekers, Middle Eastern regimes have been able to extract their material needs from international resources. Bargaining processes between the military and civil society comparable to the European experience and the convergence of state and society, thus, have been essentially hampered.

III. Territory and Armed Conflict: Palestine in the Context of International Developments

III.1 Emergence and Institutionalization of the Palestine Question

The origin of the Palestine conflict can be traced back to the late nineteenth century when the first Zionist settlements were established in the then Ottoman province of Beirut and the *Sanjak* (district) of Jerusalem (Sayigh 1997: 5). The complex interplay of historical processes in Europe and the Middle East provided the background for the genesis of the conflict. In combination with the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, the aggravation of the imperialist power struggle offered Zionist and Arab nationalist movements the opportunity to pursue their interests in alliance with one of the great powers. In applying the nationalist discourse of the time, non-state actors claimed their right to the establishment of their own states based on the principles of the Westphalian order. In this regard, the still virulent antisemitism in Europe was instrumental in the justification of Jewish nationalism. The title of Leo Pinsker's book "Auto-emancipation" (1882) became a keyword for the Zionist

movement. The Zionist ideology opposed the principle of emancipation through assimilation that had so far prevailed among Europe's Jewry. On the occasion of the first Zionist World Congress (1897), Theodor Herzl brought this critique against the liberal societies of Western Europe to the programmatic conclusion that the national liberation of the Jews could only be accomplished by the establishment of a Jewish nation-state (Schölch 1981: 39-40).

The chance to transform their national aspirations into action came for both Zionists and Arab nationalists with the breakdown of the international balance of power system in the First World War and the following political reorganization of the international system at Versailles: "Given the official commitment of the victorious powers to Wilsonian nationalism, it was natural that anyone claiming to speak in the name of some oppressed or unrecognized people – and they lobbied the supreme peacemakers in large numbers – should do so in terms of the national principle, and especially the right of self-determination" (Hobsbawm 1990: 136). It was in the language of the colonizers that the colonized now began to pursue their political emancipation. The territorial distribution of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire at San Remo (1920) resembled the power relations among the asymmetrical elements of the Eastern Question System.⁸ Dominated by the interests of the colonial powers Great Britain and France, the political aspirations of some less powerful regional actors are nevertheless clearly visible in the territorial delineation of the mandate territories. Particularly the division between the newly established territories of Palestine and Trans-Jordan was a clear expression of Britain's wartime commitments (cf. Gil-Har 2000). In this respect, the strategic interests of the British government rather than sympathy for the Zionist idea caused the inception of Palestine as a political entity in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (Vereté 1970: 64).

Two aspects of the mandate period were particularly crucial for Middle Eastern state formation:

- 1) The ordering principle of territoriality was introduced and sanctified, creating among others an - in territorial terms - clearly demarcated political entity of Palestine under British mandate for the first time.

⁸ A historical account of the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire is given by Anderson (). Hurewitz's books (1956a and 1956b) contain the legal diplomatic documents of Middle Eastern state formation.

- 2) With regard to the internal aspects of state formation, modern administrative and military structures, which had first been introduced by the Ottoman reforms,⁹ were enhanced and monopolies of physical force more firmly established.

Although characterized by restricted sovereignty and deprived of political independence, the mandate period introduced the political matrix of the international order to the region, and, consequently, shaped both the territorial structure of the Middle Eastern state system and the coordinates of the Palestine conflict. The Zionist movement now had the opportunity to put its ideas into practice by increasingly colonizing the British mandate of Palestine and establishing a state-like institutional structure. Yet the mass immigration of European Jews to Palestine did not happen until the German Nazi regime began its policy of extermination against the Jews. From 1933 to 1935, for instance, approximately 135,000 Jews emigrated to Palestine (Flores 1981: 112), more than in the 15 years since the end of the First World War (Eisenstadt 1987: 434). Regarding inter-Arab politics, the 1930s were also the period in which the systemic structures of regional inter-state relations were implemented. Revolving around themes such as the “Arab Caliphate”, the Hashemite-Saudi Conflict, the Syrian Kingdom and the Palestine question, the characteristic patterns of unity and disunity among Arab states were institutionalized. In this struggle for regional hegemony amongst Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Transjordan, the political claims of Palestine’s Arab population and its resistance to Zionism became hostage to the subordinated interests of Arab rulers, whose preferences were to “prevent any single Arab country from attaining a foothold in Palestine” (Podeh 1998: 67).

Whereas the multi-polar structure of the international system facilitated the transformation of the former Ottoman territories into a Middle Eastern state system, it was within the coordinates of bipolarity that the consolidation of the regional state system took place. Beginning with President Truman’s prompt recognition of the Israeli state in May 1948, Cold War considerations and public perceptions of the East-West conflict determined US post-Second World War policy in Palestine (cf. Evensen 1992). In the region, however, the Palestine conflict was almost entirely articulated in

⁹ For a general description of the Ottoman military and administrative reforms in the nineteenth century (*Tanzimat*), see Lewis (1961) and Zürcher (1993).

pan-Arab terms, and the conflict became “a rallying point for internal solidarity in many Arab societies” (Kazziha 1990: 318). Generally speaking, four crucial developments can be observed in the Cold War period:

- 1) In the first place, a regional system of great power clientelism emerged in which Israel and the Arab states acted as political rent-seekers on the international level while pursuing relatively independent regional goals.
- 2) Within this clientelistic arrangement, regional and international confrontations became blurred, tying the Palestine conflict tightly together with the East-West conflict.
- 3) This identification of international with regional perspectives facilitated the extreme militarization of Middle Eastern states, whose regimes used the thus-acquired means of force to both stabilize their authoritarian rule and fight limited regional wars.¹⁰ The Palestine conflict in particular escalated into a series of inter-state wars, which further enhanced its interrelatedness with internal and external aspects of regional state formation.
- 4) It was, then, the poor military performance of Arab regimes in these wars against Israel that contributed decisively to the fourth development, the re-emergence of the Palestinians, during the Cold War period. Beginning with the humiliating Arab defeat in the “Six-Day War” (1967), the PLO increasingly had taken the initiative and developed into the organizational core of a specifically Palestinian national movement. The articulation of the Palestine conflict shifted from a pan-Arab to a Palestinian nationalist discourse, demanding the establishment of a Palestinian nation-state.¹¹

III.2 Four Analytical Dimensions of the Palestine Conflict

From the first Zionist settlements in the nineteenth century to the major military confrontation between the PLO and the Israeli army during the latter’s intervention in Lebanon (1982), the Palestine conflict has developed in complex interrelation with regional and

¹⁰ For the aspect of authoritarianism in the Middle East, see the Crystal’s book review (1994).

¹¹ For a detailed history of the PLO, see Rubin (1994) and Sayigh (1997).

international political structures. From an analytical point of view, this complex interrelation falls into four dimensions of conflict:

- 1) The *Israeli-Palestinian dimension*, which comprises the relation between the Israeli state and the Palestinians who live either in Israel itself, in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, or as refugees and expatriates outside Palestine. The Israeli-Palestinian dimension is of a territorial and political demographic nature. At the center of the territorial aspect stand Palestinian claims based on UN Assembly Resolution 194 of December 1948. They comprise the right to their homeland, the right of return for the exiled population, and the right of self-determination, i.e. to establish an independent Palestinian state. The demographic aspect is a result of the explicitly Jewish character of the Israeli state, which seems to be incompatible with the Palestinian right of return.
- 2) The *Israeli-Arab dimension* reflects the complicated relationship between Israel and the Arab states. In the first place, there are issues such as military security, border demarcation, water distribution, and territories under Israeli occupation that have shaped the relations between Israel and its direct neighbors, the so-called confrontation states: Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.¹² In the second place, there is the ideological aspect of the Israeli-Arab conflict dimension that rests on pan-Arab claims to the whole of Palestine. This ideological aspect affects the political legitimacy of all Arab regimes. The – albeit often rather rhetorical – support for the Palestinian case has therefore been an important variable for both the internal political stability of Arab states and the quest for leadership amongst them.
- 3) The *Jewish-Islamic dimension* of the conflict has an impact on the relationship between Israel and the Islamic world. From an Islamic point of view, the territory of the Israeli state is an integral part of the *dar al-Islam*, the lands belonging to the Islamic community. The very existence of a specifically Jewish state within the *dar al-Islam* poses a permanent challenge to the ideal of Islamic supremacy. Furthermore, ranking behind Mecca and Medina, Jerusalem represents the third most important place

¹² It is not possible to present here the complexities of water conflicts in the Middle East. For further reading, see Beshorner (1993), Kliot (1994), Lancaster (1999), Lowi (1993), Murakami (1995), Ohlson (1992), Rogers and Lydon (1994) Rouyer (1997), Trotter (2000).

among the holy cities of Islam. Thus the fact of “Jewish rule on Islamic territory” and the issue of Jerusalem make the Palestinian question also an Islamic one.¹³

- 4) The *colonial/Western dimension* of the conflict, which is a result of the historical trajectory that the formation of the Israeli state has taken. Given the involvement of the colonial powers in Middle Eastern state formation and Western assistance to the Zionist movement, it comes as no surprise that the Arab world perceives Israel as an “outpost and symbol of Western imperialism”, a perception that has been further strengthened by the almost unconditional support that the United States has granted to Israel since the 1960s. The historically constructed notion of Western conspiracy against the Arab world has been further enhanced by the high standards in the fields of technology, education and economy, which distinguish Israeli society decisively from its Arab neighbors.

In reality, however, these four dimensions of the Palestine conflict are almost inseparably knitted together. The analytical distinction presented here serves as a heuristic instrument in order to better understand the complex conflict structures and how they interrelate with the formation of Palestinian nationalism.

With regard to analytical purposes, it makes sense to further distinguish between conflicts of interest and conflicts of ideas. Whereas territorial and security issues of the Israeli-Palestinian and the Israeli-Arab dimensions, as well as matters concerning the repatriation and re-compensation of Palestinian refugees, are primarily conflicts of interests, which principally can be solved by negotiation, the conflicts of ideas that characterize the Israeli-Arab, Jewish-Islamic and colonial/Western dimensions are more difficult to overcome. As integral parts of the political worldview, the pan-Arab and Islamic claims to Palestine, as well as the conviction that Israel is an unacceptable relict of colonial domination, are not subject to negotiation. Although a fair solution to the above-mentioned conflicts of interests might have an impact on this worldview, a change in perception takes time. The ideational components of the Palestine

¹³ With the rise of religious movements on both sides, “the holiness of Jerusalem has acquired a new centrality” (Armstrong 2000: 6). Today, Jerusalem is an important symbol for the modern identity of both Israelis and Palestinians (Khalidi 1997: 18). Concerning the rising political importance of Jerusalem, see Dumper (1997).

conflict will therefore even survive the foundation of an independent Palestinian state.

Given the violent history of the Palestine conflict, ideological aspects of the Palestine question are instrumental in securitizing other domestic and regional conflicts that occur in the ongoing process of regional state formation. Theoretically, securitization is an extreme version of politicization, and it presents an issue as an existential threat. To securitize an issue is a move to requiring emergency measures and the application of extraordinary means (Buzan et.al. 1998: 23-26). In this way, both Israel and the Arab states have highly securitized regional politics. In the Israeli case, regional conflicts and the country's own state of security have been viewed against the background of the Holocaust, making Israel into a "fortress state" and leading to two preventive wars (Suez War, 1956, and the Six Day War, 1967).¹⁴ Arab regimes have also used the ideological dimension of the Palestine conflict to justify the use of military force against both internal and external threats. Moreover, the ideological dimension of the Palestine conflict plays a major role in the strategies of Islamist movements in legitimizing the application of violent means in their political strife.¹⁵ In the run-up to the Second Gulf War (1991), this overlapping of interests and ideas in Middle Eastern conflicts was clearly visible.

III.3 The End of the Cold War and the Beginning of the Oslo Process

After Iraqi troops had occupied Kuwait in August 1990, Iraq's President Saddam Husain linked the question of an Iraqi withdrawal with the solution of the Palestine conflict. While the West heavily rejected this package deal, it was almost enthusiastically received among the population of Arab states. Pursuing his own power interests, Saddam Husain used the Palestine conflict as the classical rallying point for inter-Arab solidarity. He combined the four dimensions of the conflict with his own interests and was thus able to stir a major legitimacy crisis for many Arab regimes who supported international demands for an unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Although Saddam Husain's attempt to draw the entire region into a disastrous war eventually failed, the

¹⁴ An overview of the development of Israeli security perceptions is given in the article by Schiff (1999).

¹⁵ For an analysis of the Egyptian example, see Endres and Jung (1998).

Palestine conflict was again on the international agenda. The structural context for the explanation of both the Second Gulf War and the subsequently initiated Middle East peace process are to be found in the decisive changes in the international system which occurred with the end of the Cold War.

With the demise of the Soviet Union, the post-1945 clientelistic arrangement between the bipolar international and the regional state systems broke down. The end of the East-West conflict deprived the regional states of a major source of military and economic means. The peace process was therefore not so much a result of major structural changes in the Palestine conflict itself, but the outcome of a process of adjustment to the new international conditions by the regional players (cf. Beck 1997b). In this way, the shift from the bipolar international system to US hegemony was reflected in the mere fact “that each party’s decision to participate in the negotiations emerged largely from its calculations about its relationship to the United States” (Kelman 1992: 20).¹⁶ The West in general and the United States in particular were now the only sources of economic rents left. Accordingly, joining the peace process was the appropriate move to guarantee the continuous influx of politically motivated economic resources. A brief glance at the Israeli and Palestinian examples will show how this shift to a new version of the Eastern Question System functioned.

Considering the Israeli position in the early 1990s, a statement of the former US ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Robert Neumann, is telling: “The collapse of the Soviet Union has substantially diminished Israel’s possible role as a strategic asset. To be sure, other conflicts in the Middle East loom, but, as the Gulf War of 1991 demonstrated, in such conflagrations Israel is a potential hindrance rather than an asset” (1992: 49). The political and economic dependency of the Israeli state on US support, exceeding an annual amount of three billion US dollars (Paulsen 1999: 11), left then Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir no other choice than to sit down at the US-sponsored negotiation table. Shamir’s strategy to delay any agreements as long as possible, while creating a *fait accompli* in expanding Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, was partly countered by US pressure. The coupling of a ten billion US

¹⁶ Concerning the crucial role of the United States even before the demise of the Soviet Union, see the article by Telhami (1999), who describes the Camp David Process as an Israeli-Egyptian competition for alliance with the United States.

dollar loan-guarantee for the integration of Russian Jewish migrants with the settlement policy of the Israeli government stressed the determination of the Bush administration to take steps toward resolving the Palestine conflict and contributed to the victory of Yitzhak Rabin's Labor Party in the 1992 Israeli general elections (Telhami 1999: 386).

In the immediate aftermath of the Second Gulf War, the Palestinians were certainly in the weakest position. The "strategic mistake" of the PLO of associating itself with Saddam Husain under the impact of the new international order brought the organization to the brink of economic collapse.¹⁷ For decades, the Palestinian communities in the Gulf States had, to a large extent, secured the funding of the PLO. The Kuwaiti government, for example, collected a "liberation tax" among Palestinian employees (al-Husseini 2000: 55). The Second Gulf War and the subsequent expulsion of more than 250,000 Palestinians from Kuwait suddenly deprived not only the PLO of major financial resources, but also many refugee families who relied on the remittances of their relatives of this source of income (Beck 1997a: 639). Given its full dependency on political rents and the rising political assertions of the population in the occupied territories, the PLO leadership in Tunis had no other choice but to join the peace process under initially unfavorable conditions. Since the Oslo agreements, however, international assistance of 2.5 billion US dollars for the period 1994-1998 has granted a large "peace dividend" to the Palestinian authority under Arafat (Brynen 1996: 79).

Against the background of international change, the conclusion that "peace was made out of necessity" seems evident (Maddy-Weitzmann 2000: 44). Triggered by the end of bipolarity, the peace process can be interpreted as the rational adaptation of regional states to the conditions of a new international system. Viewed through the prism of international structures, three major steps in the evolution of both the Palestine conflict and the Middle Eastern state system find their explanation in close relation to international change:

¹⁷ In retrospect this "strategic mistake" can also be interpreted as a necessary adjustment to the factual support that Saddam Husain enjoyed among the Palestinian people. Indeed, a major cleft between the international and the societal level of analysis is visible here. While the PLO became temporarily isolated in the international arena, joining the Iraqi side was vital in order to guarantee public support for the PLO leadership (cf. Noble 1991: 156-159).

- 1) The creation of Palestine as a political entity and the transfer of the territorial principle occurred together with the break-down of the multi-polar order. The fact that both Zionists and Arab nationalists associated themselves with Britain laid the foundation stone for the so-called two-state solution of the Palestine question, which during the mandate period sporadically escalated into armed clashes - the major one being the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939 - that were confined by limited sovereignty.
- 2) In the context of decolonization and superpower confrontation, the territorial political structures of the mandate period were put into the international legal framework of the Westphalian system. Accordingly, the Palestine question appeared as an Arab-Israeli state conflict fought out in the classical form of inter-state warfare, both escalated and limited by the conditions and constraints that the international system provided the regional actors.
- 3) Finally, the end of the Cold War offered an opportunity for negotiations. Under the new hegemonic order, the internationally dependent regional states and the PLO had to adjust to the new rules of the game that the United States dictated. The Oslo process and the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO subsequently completed the return to the Palestinian-Israeli core conflict, a historical process which began in the 1960s.

IV. Ideologies and Institutions: Palestine on the Road to Independence

IV.1 Palestinian Nationalism and Its Competitors

The previous section underlined that an international perspective is salient in understanding both the emergence of Palestine as a political territory and the ways in which the conflict about this territory has been fought out. In particular the successful launching of a negotiation process after the Second Gulf War, bringing the Arab states, Israel and the Palestinians together for the first time, was to a large extent due to international factors. Yet to analyze the Palestinian road to political independence, it is equally important to sketch out how the formation of Palestinian nationalism has been conditioned by a set of historical, cultural and social factors, as well as by competing pan-Arab and pan-Islamic ideologies.

A decisive determinant of both Israeli and Palestinian nationalism are the collective traumata the two communities have faced: the Jewish people as target of European antisemitism and later as victim of the *shoa*, the genocide perpetrated by the German Nazi regime against the Jews; and the Palestinians as victims of *al-nakba* (the catastrophe), the expulsion from their homeland in 1948/49. The latter has accorded the “right of return” a central role in Palestinian national consciousness. These historical legacies have deeply molded the worldview of both peoples, thus causing them to view the conflict between them as a struggle for survival in which compromises necessarily lead to defeat (Gaede 1992: 221). Consequently, the conflict structure has become an inextricable part of the national ideologies of both sides, so that they perceive their relationship in essentialist terms, basically as a zero-sum game.¹⁸

However, it would be wrong to consider Palestinian nationalism as an ephemeral ideology that basically developed as a kind of natural reflex in response to Zionism and the experience of *al-Nakba*. Similar to their Zionist adversaries, Palestinian nationalists were able to draw on various aspects of the historical, political and cultural heritage of their community. In territorial terms, for instance, the British mandate of Palestine was not in its entirety without a predecessor. Although administratively fragmented into the Ottoman *sanjak*'s of Jerusalem, Nablus and Akka (Reinkowski 1995: 9), the notion of Palestine as an integrated territory had been developing amongst its population since the 1830s (Schölch 1986: 23). From this territorial perspective, a particular Palestinian identity, centered around the autonomous status of Jerusalem, was already emerging under Ottoman rule (Kimmerling and Migdal 1993: 69). Yet social cohesion and community membership were still strongly related to religion, tribe, family and locality. In this early stage of a rising Palestinian identity, people had “multiple loyalties to their religion, the Ottoman state, the Arabic language, and the emerging identity of Arabism” (Khalidi 1997: 6). While at the end of the First World War

¹⁸ There is no doubt that this essentialist view was partly broken during the secret negotiations in Oslo. There, it was possible to create among parts of the Israeli political elite and the PLO leadership an unprecedented atmosphere of dialogue leading to an overt mutual recognition of the legitimate rights of both sides. Indeed, given the long history of mutual non-recognition, this was a major success of Oslo (cf. Behrendt 2000). Yet the Al-Aqsa Intifada showed how easily this atmosphere could be eroded. Street fighting and random attacks against civilians further prove that this atmosphere of mutual recognition had not yet trickled down from the elite level to the people.

patterns of a distinct Palestinian identity existed, the specifically nationalist congruence of a Palestinian identity in cultural and political terms was still in its infancy.¹⁹ Consequently, the political resistance during the mandate period was essentially hampered by traditional forms of political factionalism among notable families and the competition of pan-Arab, Arab-Islamic and Palestinian ideologies (Diner 1982: 61).

It was the Arab defeat in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948/49 that initiated an important political transformation towards legal political authority in which new radical political forces with a middle-class background took power. In becoming increasingly involved “in a process of outbidding each other over the Palestine question” (Kazziha 1990: 303), these regimes temporarily eclipsed the nascent Palestinian nationalism by pan-Arabism.²⁰ The Arab monarchies, which were dependent on the colonial powers, along with the notable leaders in Palestine, had proven their inability to support the Palestinian course. From now on, Arab nationalist parties such as the Nasserists in Egypt and the two branches of the Baath Party in Syria and Iraq combined social revolutionary ideas with the decolonization of the Middle East and the Palestine question. Their perspective, the “alliance of Zionism and colonialism” and therefore “Israel’s imperialist image”, was seemingly confirmed by the second Arab-Israeli war, which began with a joint military assault of Israel, Britain and France against Egypt. The Suez War (1956) facilitated the rise of Egypt’s President Nasser as the almost undisputed champion of Arab nationalism, who engaged in a dangerous rhetorical war against Israel. The Six-Day War (1967), then, marked the beginning of the end of pan-Arab radicalism. The humiliating Arab defeat and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza shattered the high expectations that the radical rhetoric of the pan-Arab discourse had raised. Since then, the Arab regimes have gradually shifted their political orientation towards the West

¹⁹ A comprehensive account of the emergence of a specific Palestinian national movement after the First World war is given by Porath (1974).

²⁰ Despite the destruction of the rather embryonic Palestinian nationalist infrastructure in the first Arab-Israeli war, the domination of pan-Arab rhetoric contributed heavily to the “disappearance” of Palestinian national identity between 1948 and 1964 (Khalidi 1997: 178). Equally important from the Western perspective was the fact that Palestinians as a people were not on the agenda of the subsequent U.S. administrations (cf. Christison 1998).

and introduced policies of economic liberalization,²¹ leaving behind radical political approaches to Islamist movements whose ideologies also seem to be the last remaining competitors to Palestinian nationalism.

Islamist movements in the Arab world have heavily capitalized on the ideological power that the Israeli-Arab and the Jewish-Islamic dimensions of the Palestine conflict offer.²² Various militant Islamist groups in Egypt, for instance, equate their struggle against Egypt's authoritarian state elite with the Arab-Israeli confrontation (cf. Endres and Jung 1997). Another example is the "Islamic Resistance Movement in Palestine", *Hamas*. In line with the analytical distinction of the Palestine conflict previously mentioned (III.2), *Hamas* delineates its anti-Zionist struggle into a Palestinian, an Arab and a Muslim sphere. In its manifesto, *Hamas* opposes the idea of a secular Palestinian state and reminds the Arab and Muslim people that it is a personal duty for all Muslims to fight against Israel (Azzam 1990: 130-146). Yet, behind the pan-Islamic rhetoric of organizations such as *Hamas* and *Jihad*, it is increasingly the Palestinian sphere and the nationalist demand for an independent state that comes to the fore. Moreover, although the Jewish-Islamic dimension can serve as an ideological platform to undermine any kind of peaceful settlement with Israel, concluding peace is nevertheless possible from an Islamic point of view. It is not a matter of substance, but a matter of interpretation. This was demonstrated in a legal ruling (*fatwa*) of the highest legal body in Sunni Islam, the Egyptian *Al Azhar*, in which the treaty of Camp David, and thus peace with Israel, was approved as in the interest of the Muslim people (Hartert 1982).

Since late Ottoman times, Palestinian nationalism has been shaped within the political and legal coordinates of the international system that largely defined its territorial components. In this context, two forces were decisive in transforming the traditional rootedness of Palestinian peasant society with the land, the religion and its folk culture into a nationalist culture. On the one hand, there was the encounter with the Zionist settler movement and the subsequent

²¹ For a general discussion on policies of liberalization in the Middle East, see the two volumes of Brynen *et al.* (1995). The Syrian example is covered by Kienle (1996).

²² Given the bulk of literature on political Islam, it is impossible to present here a fair bibliographical account. For a first reading, see Arjomand (1984), Etienne (1987), Esposito (1997), or Jansen (1997). Abu-Amr (1994) deals with the phenomenon in the West Bank and Gaza.

formation of the Israeli state. From the first Palestinian attacks on early Jewish settlements, through rural resistance and urban opposition to Zionism during the British mandate (Khalidi 1997: 115), until the establishment of the PLO, the contours of Palestinian nationalism have been formed in the struggle against Zionism. In this century-long process, the Palestinians developed their national consciousness explicitly in confrontation with the nationalist formation of the Israeli state. On the other hand, Palestinian nationalism evolved first within the dominant political streams of Arabism and Islamic modernism. As a specific nationalist ideology, Palestinian nationalism had to emancipate itself from competing and overlapping loyalties to pan-Arab and pan-Islamic ideologies. It therefore developed not only against an emerging state, Israel, but also in the emancipation from and the integration of subordinate ideologies of regional state formation. Moreover, the previously presented analytical structure of the conflict, i.e. its Israeli-Palestinian, Israeli-Arab, Jewish-Islamic and colonial/ Western dimensions, became an integral part of Palestinian nationalism. The following section will briefly discuss what impact this complex process of transformation, confrontation, emancipation and integration had on Palestinian institution building.

IV.2 Colonialism, Exile and Occupation: The Social Conditions of Palestinian Institution Building

The institutional constant of the conflict can be found in a structural asymmetry concerning the organizational levels in the formation of Israeli and Palestinian political and economic institutions. Already during the mandate period, the Zionist movement had a clear programmatic strategy, and, with the Zionist World Congress, the Jewish Agency, the *Histadrut* (trade union federation) and the paramilitary *Haganah*,²³ it had powerful political organizations at its disposal which facilitated the Jewish colonization of Palestine. In addition, these institutions helped the Zionists to monopolize the modern economic sector of the mandate for the Jewish population. In this way, the social transformation of traditional Palestinian society was essentially hampered, and traditional forms of political factionalism severely limited the efficiency of Palestinian resistance

²³ For the formation of the Zionist militias and then the Israeli armed forces, see Schiff (1985).

(cf. Flores 1981). This structural asymmetry also conditioned historical events after the United Nations presented a partition plan for Palestine in November 1947. Whereas the Zionists had already developed a state-like institutional structure that now could be merged with the assigned territory, the Arab response was based on a relatively diffuse rejection front tending to be motivated by the competing interests of Arab states rather than by the interests of the Arab population of Palestine.

In the course of the historical events, the Palestinians basically have been divided in three groups: Palestinians in exile, both refugees and expatriates; the populace of the West Bank and Gaza; and the Arab population of Israel. The Palestinian refugee problem began with the first Arab-Israeli war (1948/49) in which more than 700,000 Palestinians fled from their homes (Flores 1984: 384).²⁴ During the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in the Six-Day War of 1967, another 300,000 persons were displaced (Shiblak 1996: 40). According to current estimations, the number of Palestinians in exile is in the range of 4 to 4.5 million people (Smith 1999: 25), thus by far exceeding the population of the occupied territories. More than half of them are registered as refugees by the UNRWA (Brynen 1997: 49), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees. The UNRWA was created in December 1949, and since then it has been providing the refugees with state-like services in the fields of education, health care and social services (Al-Husseini 2000: 51). In the situation of exile and statelessness, the UNRWA, although an international organization, became an essential pillar of Palestinian nation building. Given its prominent role in the sector of education, the UNRWA has played an institutional role of national socialization and represents therefore a major aspect of the international patrimony of Palestinian nationalism.²⁵

²⁴ A comprehensive study of the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem is provided by Morris (1987).

²⁵ Even if the educational policies of the UNRWA and of its major donor, the USA, might have aimed at the “dispersion of Palestinian refugees” and therefore solving the refugee question by permanent emigration, as Hassan Elnajjar (1993) argues, this goal has been contradicted by the factual strengthening of national consciousness amongst Palestinian refugees who had been educated through the institutions of UNRWA. For a brief history of UNRWA, see UNRWA (1986), the legal status of Palestinian refugees is discussed in Takkenberg (1997).

While the envisaged proclamation of a Palestinian state would reconcile political sovereignty and home for the Palestinians in the occupied territories, the simultaneous acceptance of the Israeli state deprives many of the expatriates of their right of return. In particular the 330,000 registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, who constitute a politically, economically, and socially marginalized group without any recognized place in Lebanon's sectarian system, have been bypassed in the Oslo process. Originating from Galilee and coastal areas, they have no chance of returning, while at the same time their settlement in Lebanon is heavily opposed (Sayigh 1995). One can imagine that, under these conditions, the transformation of the nationally ingrained right of return into compensation and resettlement schemes is all but an easy task. On the one hand, the refugee camps are still perceived as symbols of the right of return, and generations of refugees have grown up with ideal narratives about the return to their Palestinian homes (Al-Husseini 2000: 60). This particular situation is a result of both the strong attachment of Palestinian refugees to their "village, farm and social environment" (Tibawi 1963: 509) and the fact that upholding the refugee status was for decades a major political tool of Arab regimes in their policies of non-acceptance of the Israeli right of existence.²⁶ On the other hand, a Palestinian state could indeed solve some of the political-administrative problems and civil rights restrictions most of the refugees have been confronted with for decades.²⁷ Although not living in the Palestinian state, they could be under the administrative protection of its sovereign authority. This ambivalent effect of the peace process is reflected in the resentments that the majority of the refugees, in contrast to the population of the West Bank, had against the Oslo agreements (cf. Smith 1999: 26 and Mi'ari 1999).

The difficulties in solving the refugee question are closely linked to the history of the second pillar of Palestinian national institution building, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Set up under the tutelage of the Arab League in 1964, the PLO became an umbrella body for a multiplicity of Palestinian organizations. Many of them, student, workers, women's, and teachers' unions, as well as the later dominant commando organizations such as the *Fatah* of

²⁶ The situation in Jordan offers a different picture. There, the authorities granted all Palestinian refugees Jordanian citizenship. For more on Jordanian-Palestinian relations, see Hamarneh *et al.* (1997).

²⁷ An account of these civil rights restrictions is given by Shiblak (1996: 42-45).

Yasir Arafat or the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) founded by George Habash, had been formed in the diaspora from the early 1950s onwards.²⁸ At its first national congress in East Jerusalem (1964), the PLO adopted the Palestinian National Charter, calling for the establishment of a democratic and secular state on the territory of the former British mandate. On the occasion of the seventh summit of the Arab League in Rabat in 1974, more than 27 years since the release of the UN partition plan, the PLO was officially announced as the “sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people”, aiming at the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Yet as Palestinian nationalism had matured and liberated itself from Arab tutelage, there was no more territory left. On the contrary, in the same year of the Rabat summit, the Jewish settler movement, *Gush Emunin* (“Block of the Faithful”), began with the programmatic colonization of the occupied territories. Ironically, the PLO now faced a comparable situation to that with which the Zionists were confronted earlier in the twentieth century. With the Palestinian National Council, the Executive Committee, the Palestinian National Fund, and its various military organizations, the PLO had developed into a “state in exile” (Sayigh 1997). Thus Palestinian state formation followed the “Zionist example”, i.e. building state-like institutions without having a territory or enjoying political sovereignty.

The 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza had a tremendous impact on the internal evolution of both Israeli and Palestinian society. Indeed, besides the previously examined crucial role of changes in the international system, it was the societal developments in the aftermath of the Israeli occupation of the remaining territories of Palestine that prepared the social background against which the peace process was initiated. In 1977, the election victory of the Likud Block marked a watershed in the political history of Israel. For the first time, the representatives of the revisionist Zionist wing replaced the so far dominant Labor Zionists in governing the country. The founding father of the Revisionists, Jabotinsky, demanded already in the 1930s the establishment of a Jewish state in the whole of Palestine. It was precisely this goal that the Likud Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir pursued with their settlement policies. The Likud governments

²⁸ For this period of early Palestinian institution building in the diaspora, see Brand (1988), who examines the cases of Egypt, Kuwait and Jordan.

massively supported the settler movements, and the number of Jewish settlers in the occupied territories rose between 1977 and 1985 from 5,023 to 53,000 (Lustick 1993: 11).²⁹

The social changes of the 1970s and 1980s culminated in the *Intifada*, the uprising in the occupied territories that broke out in December 1987.³⁰ The *Intifada* symbolized two interrelated but nevertheless distinct developments: the erosion of consensus in Israeli society and the move of the political initiative from the Palestinians in exile to the Palestinian people of the West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli army, so far involved in a series of inter-state wars and guerilla attacks, was suddenly confronted with stone-throwing youths who brought the violent face of the conflict into the center of Israeli society. There and in the outside world, the Palestine conflict acquired an image of heavily armed Israeli soldiers fighting Palestinian civilians. But the uprising did not only damage Israel's public image worldwide, it also caused heavy social and financial costs.³¹ Eventually, the policy of the "iron fist", announced in 1985 by the then Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin, turned out to be a political and economic disaster for the country, putting the question of the occupied territories high on the agenda of both Israeli and world politics.

From a Palestinian perspective, the *Intifada* was, on the one hand, a response to twenty years of occupation, to being gradually deprived of their land by Jewish settlers, and to a deteriorating security situation under the daily experience of military force. It was estimated that until 1984 approximately 200,000 inhabitants of the West Bank, i.e. around 20 per cent of its entire population, had been in Israeli prisons (Flores 1989: 47). Under Israeli military administration, the rule of law was almost abolished, and people were frequently confronted with human rights abuses. On the other hand, the uprising was also an expression of the social crisis that affected the entire region. The socio-economic transformation of the

²⁹ Later governments followed this settlement policy and the presence of meanwhile almost 200,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza are a major obstacle for peace.

³⁰ The following books give a comprehensive account of the *Intifada*: Flores (1989), Hunter (1991) and McDowall (1989).

³¹ Concerning the economic losses that were caused by the *Intifada*, see Hunter (1991: 147-48). The political and social transformations of Israeli society are the topic of Eisenstadt's book (1987); Zadka (1999) briefly presents the polarization of Israeli society that was brought about by these transformations.

West Bank and Gaza even accelerated under Israeli occupation, and the structures of Palestine's traditional agricultural society eroded. On the eve of the *Intifada*, nearly 165,000 Palestinians were working in Israel under legally insecure conditions (Samara 2000: 22). In economic matters entirely dependent on Israel, the prospects for the Palestinian youth were bleak. Taking into account that approximately 46 per cent of the population in the occupied territories were under fourteen years of age (Khalidi 1988: 498), it did not come as a surprise that the Palestinian youth and local grassroots organizations, not the established guerilla fighters, spearheaded the uprising. Both the PLO and the Islamic resistance movements³² were at first taken by surprise, and it was the young Palestinian middle class that strove for political participation and demanded the foundation of a Palestinian state on the territory of the West Bank and Gaza.³³ What is crucial here is that the *Intifada* twisted the focus from the diaspora to the people in the occupied territories and it thereby "seriously undermined any claims neighboring Arab states may have had to the territories themselves or to tutelage over the Palestinian people" (Noble 1991: 156). Most specifically, the uprising finally defined the territory on which a future Palestinian state should be erected.

The initiative from the occupied territories put massive pressure on the PLO leadership in Tunis, which came in danger of losing political control. In November 1988, at the session of the Palestinian National Council in Algiers, a majority of the representatives endorsed the new political program that linked the establishment of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories with the acceptance of the Israeli state. In this way, the Council meeting in Algiers marked the abrogation of the National Charter of 1964 and the final shift from "the mystique and rhetoric" of an armed struggle for the whole of Palestine towards a territorialism that was defined by the occupied territories (Tamari 1991: 13). Although the Palestinians were, at the beginning of the peace process, only represented in Madrid in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, the PLO was able to consolidate its leadership behind the scenes. Moreover, it succeeded in integrating the societal network of the popular

³² About the strategic changes in the policies of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood and of *Hamas*, see Shadid (1988) and Abd al-Qadir (1990).

³³ Frish came to a slightly different conclusion in arguing that not "new men" were instrumental in organizing the *Intifada*, but rather veteran PLO members who belonged to a subordinate middle command (Frisch 1993: 254).

committees in the occupied territories that had organized the *Intifada*, thus merging the political structures of localities with the exile institutions in the overall framework of the PLO (Tamari 1991: 25). Since the Oslo agreements in 1993, the PLO has officially retaken the political lead.

In sum, the establishment of the Palestinian authority in the Westbank and Gaza finally marks the convergence of the institutions and territory of a Palestinian state. The fact that this state is still deprived of political sovereignty seems to be in the continuity of the asymmetric character of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet this Palestinian state with suspended sovereignty has been built at the expense of a decisive part of the Palestinian nation. During the entire peace process, the refugees have been marginalized and their interests have almost been neglected by the Palestinian authority (cf. Brynen 1997). The only expatriates who have profited from the peace process seem to be the members of Arafat's *Fatah* movement. So far, the establishment of the Palestinian authority, and therefore the institutional building process of the Palestinian state, resembles an uneasy compromise between the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza and expatriates close to the PLO leadership and to *Fatah* (Brynen 1996). In this respect the convergence of state, nation and society has only partly been achieved.

V. Conclusions

The coordinates of the Palestine conflict have been shaped by the dynamics of the overlapping international and regional state systems. In this setting, the evolution of Palestinian nationalism took place in the context of internationally constrained competition among Arab states, and between them and Israel. Global conditions and global constraints led to a confusion of international, regional and local influences on both the territorial formation of Palestine and the building of a Palestinian nation. Taking the role of UNRWA into account, Palestinian national consciousness was even partly constructed by an international organization providing the necessary civilian framework for a nation-building process that was in its political and military dimension conducted by the exile organization

PLO. Given the state-centered international environment in which the Palestine conflict has been embedded, the foundation of an independent Palestinian state is the only logical end to any future peace process. Only lacking its formal approval, this Palestinian state has almost become a *fait accompli* (Inbar and Sandler 1997: 23), and the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* could be interpreted as the violent struggle for the necessary international approval of Palestinian sovereignty. In this way, the Palestinian demand for international intervention could be understood as a call to acknowledge the international paternity of the Palestinian nation.

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