

the Palestinian Democratic Republic

The Palestinian national liberation movement is united in demands national self-determination, but it differs significantly when asking what should come afterwards. What kind of nation should Palestine be once its people are free? Islamists propose an Islamic state, Arab nationalists propose integration into a single Arab nation, and communists propose a secular, socialist republic. On this point I agree with Naim Khader's suggestion for a democratic republic of Palestine. The new Palestinian republic would be both secular and socialist in its form, and most crucially it would cover all the territory of Palestine under the British Mandate, including what is now called Israel.

Currently Palestine is a dependent capitalist state as the periphery to the core of Israel. Palestine relies on remittances from migrant workers in Israel and foreign aid to sustain its economy. Meanwhile Israel uses Palestinian migrant workers as a source of cheap labour and treats Palestine like a large external market for its goods. Tax revenue for the Palestinian Authority is also collected by Israel, and this is a major of dependency from Palestine on Israel.

This partly comes down to a problem of border control, while Palestine can't control its own borders it's easy for Israel to manipulate import and export tariffs. In turn Israel can impose high tariffs on external goods and low tariffs on Israeli goods so as to undercut the competition. It also shows up the deeply economic aspects of occupation.

Palestine is also kept in a state of permanent underdevelopment. Very few Palestinian capitalists have accumulated enough capital to create large enterprises and the unpredictable future for the country puts off foreign investors. Israel makes this situation worse by imposing harsh export restrictions on Palestinian goods and making life difficult for Palestinian companies which compete directly with Israeli products. The tourist sector could be very promising, however Israeli-operated tours take pilgrims to the holy sites in the West Bank in Israeli buses, give them packed lunches and take them back to Israel at the end of the day. Palestinians see very little of the revenue which is brought by these tourists.

As a result Palestine has a large sector of small capitalists: shopkeepers, landowning farmers, small factory owners, etc... These small capitalists tend to be well educated and run family businesses which circulate money back into the local economy. Also, as Palestinians they remain loyal to the national cause.¹ Unfortunately they have a low productive capacity and would benefit from working on a larger scale. There are some initiatives pushing for this, such as in agricultural co-operatives. However, the majority of large businesses operate in Israeli-controlled industrial zones which form another part of the apparatus of Israeli colonialism.²

Socialists at the moment can't talk about nationalisation of industry because there is currently no national industry, there's nothing to nationalise. Any future Palestinian state would have to balance development work against keeping the economy in the hands of the Palestinian people. Accepting development loans and aid from the IMF and the World Bank might be necessary to create an modern economy but it would come with the risk of giving up sovereignty. I think maintaining control over the economy should be a priority because political sovereignty needs be secured by economic sovereignty.³

1 <http://pflp.ps/english/strategy-for-the-liberation-of-palestine-palestinian-petit-bourgeoisie/>

2 <http://electronicintifada.net/content/hegemony-through-free-trade-interview-daoud-hamoudi/7384>

3 <http://www.marxists.org/archive/connolly/1897/01/socnat.htm>

This shouldn't be too much of a problem for the West Bank and Gaza because at least initially most of the businesses there are owned by Palestinians. However, including the highly-developed Israeli economy means a new state would have to deal with the influence of large companies owned by imperialist countries. The USA currently has a great deal of interests in the Israeli economy⁴ and these would have to be brought under popular control.

Aside from a socialist economy the future Palestinian state would have to be officially secular. No religion should be allowed to dominate the state, this would prevent any sectarian conflict. Jews would enjoy the same rights as any other citizen and the rights of religious minorities would be respected. There are fears amongst the current Israeli population that any majority Arab state would be anti-semitic, these fears need to be put to rest by assuring the complete separation of religion from the affairs of the state. Religion would be a private affair for the individual to practice as they like so long as they don't try to impose it on others.

Lastly I want to argue for reunification of Palestine and Israel into a single state. The immediate goal when resolving the conflict is to gain peace. This peace could be defined in a number of ways and the most simplistic understanding is just a disarmament of both sides and a cessation of hostilities. Unfortunately unless this kind of peace deals with the underlying issues for the conflict then it amounts to nothing more than a temporary ceasefire. Systemic aggression on behalf of an occupying power will always be met by resistance, thus so long as the Israeli occupation of the West Bank continues a permanent peace is impossible. This means zionism and imperialism must be overcome in order to realise an end to the conflict. There can be no solution which leaves in place an occupier and an occupied.

The two-state is the most realistic way of ending the occupation at the moment, given the balance of power tipped in favour of Israel. But the two-state solution is not a permanent solution, it can't solve the refugee right to return, and it would leave the country divided. Reunification into one state is more unlikely at the moment, it's an almost utopian suggestion because it would mark an end to the zionist project. At least in a two-state solution Israel would keep its zionist state within its own borders.

Despite this, if the two-state solution is not put in place before the resolution of social grievances within Palestine the one-state solution will become inevitable due to the irreconcilable contradiction of the occupier and occupied. Along with this there's an implicit understanding that under the two-state solution the Israeli state would have to undergo a complete transformation to purge it of its expansionist character. Without a political shift within Israel, the Israeli state would be unwilling to give up its economic exploitation of the West Bank. Tension would remain between the two states, an Israeli state with residual colonial ambitions and a Palestinian state existing on only a fraction of its original territory. These two antagonisms are diametrically opposed, resolving them requires negating them in a new synthesis, a single Israeli-Palestinian state.

4 <http://www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-us-companies.html>