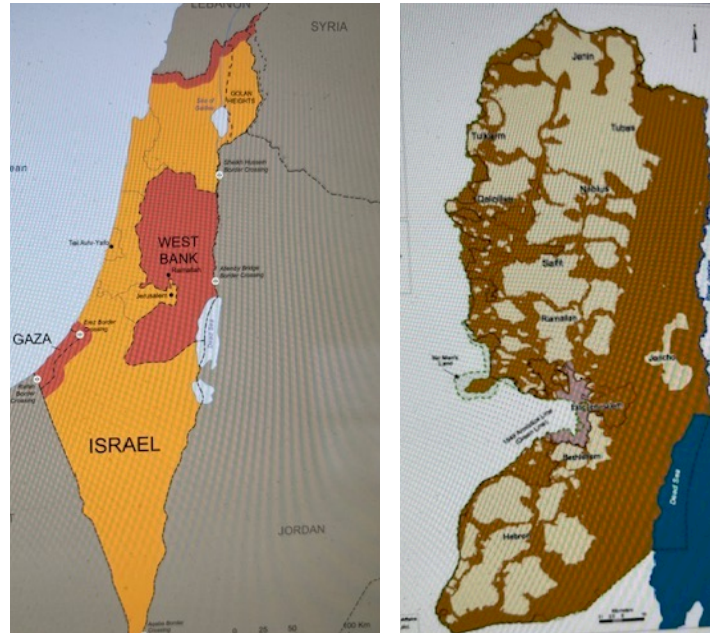


The Two-State 'Solution'



THE MAP ON THE LEFT gives a rather misleading image of the West Bank as a coherent, homogeneous territory. The truth, however, is much more complex. As the map on the right shows, it is in fact a territory broken up by three different zones of occupation, encompassing about 170 isolated patches of Arab territory, surrounded and intersected by military roads, and highways, reserved for the exclusive use of Israeli citizens who live in over 144 Jewish settlements, and more than 100 'outposts', scattered throughout the region.

In contrast the Palestinian Arabs of the West Bank suffer all the indignities and the often, violent, inconveniences of occupation. They are subject to the whims of the Israel Defence Force and in practice have few, if any, defensible rights, while the Jews of the settlements have the full rights of Israeli citizens, and are routinely defended by the IDF, whether they are in 'legal' settlements or 'illegal' outposts.

This situation has arisen piecemeal since 1967

when the Israelis defeated the second attempt by Palestinian militia, and the armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, to destroy the Jewish state; Jordanian rule of the West Bank was replaced by Israeli occupation, and Jerusalem was annexed in its entirety by the Jewish state.

Since then, a tumultuous process of Jewish settlement throughout the occupied region has resulted in a Jewish population approaching half a million living in armed communities amongst Palestinian Arab villages and towns. Inevitably, disputes regarding water and the use of agricultural land abound as the Jews keep expanding their housing and farm holdings. The inequality and oppression suffered by the Palestinians in these circumstances is manifest, and beyond denial.

However, the behaviour of Israeli politicians over the years that have allowed this situation to grow in all its festering complexity has been created by the need to ensure the security of the Israeli state and all of her citizens. The Palestinian Arabs, on the other hand and their political organisations like those of Gaza have never accepted the permanence or legitimacy of the Jewish state, and have sought to destroy it by demanding the right of the descendants of the Palestinians, driven out of Israel in 1948, to return and settle in what is now Israel. This demand has been accompanied at every opportunity, by the random murder of Jews in bomb attacks and shootings, together with thousands of missiles fired from Gaza over the years.

The present leader of the Palestinian National Authority is President Mahmoud Abbas. He has been in power for eighteen years and his dictatorship is shored up by fear of Hamas, which probably has the majority in twelve of the sixteen of electoral districts in Gaza and the West Bank. If elections were held it is a racing certainty that Hamas would carry all before them. This means that while the nationalist movement among Palestinians has steadily withered, the Islamist trend is sweeping all before it, in both Gaza and the

West Bank.

Religious particularism amongst Palestinians is now dominant – meaning that most if not all believe that God gave Palestine from the River to the Sea to Arabs, as a Muslim land for them to hold in perpetuity. This is now a very real problem because most of the half million Jewish settlers, and those living in outposts, believe that God gave the whole of Judea and Samaria (West Bank) to the Jews. A minority of those in the settlements and outposts even believe that the land of Israel should encompass the territory of Jordan and vast areas of land beyond. Both sides find themselves gripped by mystical pledges offered by Elohim (Yahweh) or Allah the most Merciful – for the Jews the prophecies must be fulfilled to prepare the way for the arrival of the Messiah. For the Palestinians entrance to the garden of gardens – Paradise – is achieved by unswerving obedience and submission to Allah and all his injunctions.

For many contemporaries, these religious obstacles are brushed aside as if nobody really believes in them. They are often thought of as a smokescreen for venal political commitments in the here and now. This may be so. However, it is clear that the dispute between Arabs and Jews on the West Bank and Gaza is not a national conflict, a simple territorial dispute, or even susceptible to rational discourse. There is a deeply ingrained blood-feud at work here in which unyielding Palestinian hatred of the Jews and their state, is met by the implacable resistance, and overwhelming violence, of the Jews in both Israel and the West Bank.

Consequently, a two-state solution would entail the removal of the largely messianic Jewish settlers by armed force from the West Bank. It would require the Palestinians to surrender their 'refugee' status and mindset, by accepting that they have no right to return to Israel proper. It would require Jerusalem to become a condominium ruled equally by Israel and Palestine, and finally, it would mean that the state of Palestine had no right to station artillery or rockets on its territory

– because this would place all of Israel's cities in range of armaments fired from Palestine. Israel could not be secure without this self-denying ordinance. So, a two-state 'solution' would mean that the Palestinian state was a demilitarised state in perpetuity, forever incapable of attacking Israel and the Jews.

It is at this point that the numbskulls of the internationalist left, now often styled as the red-green anti-imperialist alliance, will start talking of a single secular state where all could live in harmony. This is a position which is simultaneously contradicted by Palestinian Solidarity groups, who tirelessly demonstrate their great respect for international law by aligning themselves with Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and the Houthis – who are all committed to the wholesale slaughter of Jews and the destruction of Israel. We can't call them genocidal though, because this epithet is saved up especially for the Israelis.

Aaron Bastani of Novara Media says of the Hebrew-speaking nation: "Israel is a deeply toxic society"; he recently even attacked the Israeli cabinet minister, Itmar Ben Gvir, for opposing women's participation in elections. This is a bizarre observation from someone supporting Islamists, who are well-known as the enemies of female equality and of gay and lesbian rights. It is clear that orthodox Jews, traditionalist Roman Catholics, Pentecostal God Botherers, and observant Muslims, have many bigotries in common – it seems that God in all his instantiations hates homosexuals and is the enemy of women's equality. But this is no bar to the ersatz socialists of Palestinian Solidarity deciding to march in alliance with observant Muslims, against the Jews, – all in the name of hating the Americans, the West, and the democracies.

Islamism, pioneered by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt during the nineteen twenties, asserts the belief that society should be ruled by religion and absolute submission to God. Consequently, it is the real barrier to a political settlement between Jews and Arabs. Islamism is supported by the left because it is

'anti-imperialist' and this ratifies their antisemitism and their campaign of lies and misinformation against Israel – and their support for the destruction of the Jewish state, which they seem to think of as a kind of benighted political movement, *Zionism*, rather than a real Hebrew-speaking country in which people actually grow up and live their lives.

A two-state 'solution' seems to me to be far-fetched, or very far-off indeed. Few of the conditions for a two-state solution, sketched out above, could be contemplated anytime soon, principally because the Islamists will not accept the legitimacy or permanent existence of the Jewish state. Until the influence of Islamism is greatly reduced, not to say utterly defeated, there will be no peace in Palestine, Israel, the Middle East, or indeed in Paris, Madrid, New York, London, or Boston.

The left will often bang on about Islamophobia in answer to charges of antisemitism. They will say we must never hate anything or anybody (except the Zionists and the Jews), because "Islam is a religion of peace". But properly targeted hatred is a perfectly healthy emotion. Let me be clear there is nothing wrong with hating those who want to torture and kill Jews, and homosexuals, hating and fearing Islamists is entirely rational. We should hate those who murder cartoonists in Paris, filmmakers in Amsterdam, and kids at a pop concert in Manchester.

It goes without saying that ordinarily religious Muslims should not be hated or put in the Islamist basket. Hating Muslims because they are simply Muslim is entirely unacceptable and a violation of religious freedom, which we should unequivocally support. However, Islamists are profoundly different. They are Muslims who are opposed to religious freedom and always endorse a dictatorial policy ruled over by leading clerics and religious leaders. This we must fight against with all our might.

Those who chant "From the River to the Sea" have not seriously thought about the catastrophe which would be involved in the destruction of the

Jewish state. The head choppers, rapists, and bombers, of Islamism, those aspiring martyrs who kill young women for not wearing their headscarves in the prescribed manner, those who throw gay men from rooftops or set fire to them in the streets, those who deploy 'morality police' while they commit every crime in the book, must be starved of support, and their influence severely reduced, so that Israel can become a more balanced and lawful state, and that Arab countries can become real democracies. Only in this way can Palestinians have a prosperous and peaceful future.

Nothing less than the political defeat of Islamism will do, if justice, social equality, religious freedom, and democracy, are to survive.