

September, 2011

The Influence of the Establishment of a Palestinian State on Israeli Arabs

Narrative Report

On Monday, September 12, 2011, the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Strategic Dialogue at Netanya Academic College, in cooperation with the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung for Liberty, Jerusalem, held a joint symposium at Netanya Academic College, in which four researchers presented summaries of their articles that appeared in the publication *The Influence of the Establishment of a Palestinian State on Israeli Arabs*.

The study raised a number of questions regarding the Israeli Arabs' identity in Israel and the Arab sector's relationship with Palestinian nationalism, as follows:

- To what extent would the establishment of a Palestinian state provide a solution to the national aspirations of the Arab sector in Israel?
- Would an end of the conflict enable Arabs in Israel to feel more "Israeli"?
- How have disappointments regarding the progress of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process affected the Arab sector in Israel?
- What is the relationship between this lack of progress and the rise of "the One State Solution"?

The topic itself proved very timely, on the background of current developments, as the Palestinians approach the United Nations for recognition of statehood. This was reflected by the fact that the auditorium was completely full with a high-quality audience (approximately 100 participants), as the general public, academics, security personnel, members of civil society, and the diplomatic corps took a great interest in the symposium.

The publication was distributed to conference participants, and is being sent to decision-makers and opinion-shapers across Israel.

The following report summarizes the presentations delivered at the symposium.

Greetings

Prof. Bernard Pinchuk, Rector and Deputy President, Netanya Academic College

Prof. Pinchuk opened the conference by greeting conference participants, and by offering an analogy from his field of mathematics – he offered the example of the "Prisoners' Dilemma", in which each suspect can only be set free if he trusts that the other side will not act as an informant, and will not inform on the other side. This example, according to Prof. Pinchuk illustrates that a backdrop of trust is required in order to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Dr. Hans-Georg Fleck, Representative of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty, Jerusalem

Dr. Fleck opined that Israel faced two essential problems that divide society – that of the religious-secular divide, and that of the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians and Israel's neighbors. He claimed that in confronting these issues, the majority must accept the responsibility of being a majority – that is, the Jewish majority must accept that each national group has a legitimate and unique narrative, and must cease blaming the minority for its socio-political situation. He advocated the need to listen to the other, and an inclusive version of citizenship.

Dr. Reuven Pedatzur, Academic Director, S. Daniel Abraham Center for Strategic Dialogue, Netanya Academic College

Dr. Pedatzur, the academic director of the project explained the rationale behind the project. He explained that although Israel's Prime Minister had accepted the "two-state solution" in his famous "Bar-Ilan Speech", there has been little accomplished, both from a policy and research perspective, to actually prepare for this eventuality. He claimed that little work has been done to understand how Israel's Palestinian minority will fit into this solution, and how such a solution would affect their standing from the perspectives of citizenship and of nationality.

Presentation of Research

Prof. Aziz Haidar, Senior Research Fellow at the Van Leer Institute and The Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: *The Two-State Solution and the National Aspirations of Arab-Palestinian Citizens of Israel*

Prof. Haidar provided an historical approach towards Arab citizenship in Israel. He claimed that since the 60s, Israel's Arab sector has accepted Israel and attempted to take part in state affairs, politically and socially. Although Arabs want to be part of the state, as long as the state refuses to address the Arab sector's claims, there will be increasing alienation, and more a desire for autonomy. While before, 1967, the Arab sector was concerned with survival, since 1967, they adapted a mode of adaptation. The Oslo Accords did not provide a solution for Israel's Arab sector as part of the Palestinian national movement. However, in essence, Israel's Arab sector had high hopes for the Oslo Accords, hoping it would solve their problems associated with security, citizenship, and loyalty questions.

Prof. Haidar, an author of "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel", pointed out that this document spoke of a solution for Israel's Arab sector as a part of Israel, without any reference to a possible neighboring Palestinian state.

Dr. Matti Steinberg, University of Haifa: *The Palestinians in Israel and the Palestinian State: Diversity within Unity*

Dr. Steinberg spoke of the need to balance the values of democracy and Judaism in Israel, a balance which has tilted in favor of the state's Jewish nature – which has obviously affected Israel's Arab sector. He claimed that the democratic nature of the state is being sacrificed through a series of anti-democratic laws that have been passed. He claimed that these types of laws, as well as the lack of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have caused the "Palestinization" and alienation of Israel's Arab sector. He argued that the "Future Vision", which is felt to attempt to repeal Israel's Jewish character through "consociational democracy", only represents a minority of public opinion among the Arab sector.

Furthermore, he claimed that Israel is mistaken to perceive the notion of a "just and agreed upon" solution to the Palestinian refugee problem as a threat – for if the solution is agreed upon, it could not threaten Israel's demographic balance. Thus, the Arab sector would only be affected by the return of refugees through a small number of cases of family reunification.

Col. (ret.) Dr. Ephraim Lavie, Director of the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel-Aviv University: *The Arabs in Israel at the Time of the Establishment of a Palestinian State: Palestinian National Identity alongside Israeli Citizenship*

Dr. Lavie discussed the feelings of Israel's Arab sector towards Palestinian nationalism and scenarios for Arab-Jewish relations following the establishment of a Palestinian state. Most of the Arab sector does not want to join a future Palestinian state, and prefer Israeli citizenship, despite ethno-centric discrimination. However, Arabs do want more cultural/political autonomy within Israel and feel increasingly alienated through the recent laws that have been passed.

Following the establishment of a Palestinian state, the Arab claim for autonomy and equality would be interpreted through a democratic, rather than through an ethno-nationalist lens. The democratic nature of Israel could be strengthened and additional Arab autonomy would not be interpreted as a threat. However, a second possibility would be an increase in Arab-Jewish tensions, with the Jewish majority wanting to strengthen the Jewish nature of the state, and the Arab minority approaching international bodies to cancel the Jewish nature of the state.

Prof. Mustafa Kabha, the Department of History, the Open University: *The Influence of the Establishment of a Palestinian State on the Arab Citizens of Israel, their Identity, and their Aspirations to Satisfy Nationalist Yearnings*

Prof. Kabha provided a summary of the various political approaches among Arab political movements in Israel with respect to issues related to integration, the character of the state, and Palestinian nationalism. He claimed that Hadash is interested in Jewish-Arab integration, while Balad focuses on converting Israel into a bi-national state or a state for all of its citizens. He claimed that while the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement favors one Islamic state in the area of historic Palestine, the Southern Branch is in favor of the two-state solution.

Prof. Kabha claimed that the "Future Vision" has been read selectively, as Jewish readers have chosen to focus on the sections they find threatening to the Jewish nature of the state, while ignoring the aspects related to integration.

He argued that when speaking of a two-state solution, it is important to delineate whether we are speaking of two states on an equal footing, or whether one state would be dependent on the other. He added that the growth of settlements in the West Bank has contributed to the strengthening of proponents of the "one-state solution" among Palestinians.

Keynote Speaker

MK Prof. Avishay Braverman, former Minister of Minorities, former President of Ben-Gurion University

Prof. Braverman opened his presentation by claiming that the biggest sin of the State of Israel has been its approach towards the Arab sector. He described his attempts to change this approach when serving as Minister of Minorities (although these initiatives did not succeed, due to coalition politics). He claimed that he formulated a program to allocate resources and budgets to Arab communities, to enable their economic advancement. He also initiated a program of National Service, which would not be under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense. However, these programs did not succeed.

Prof. Braverman indicated the need to implement the two-state solution in order to avoid an apartheid situation or a state with an Arab majority and Jewish minority.