

Palestinian Statehood, Autonomy Or Confederation: The Impacts On Israeli Security
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The Middle East peace process that began with the Oslo agreement in 1993 has reached another critical stage. The initial Declaration of Principles, as well as subsequent agreements, were designed as interim arrangements, while the major issues were left to "permanent status negotiations", which were to begin in May 1996 and to conclude within three years. The "permanent status" issues include the future of the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians, the question of a Palestinian state, borders, Jerusalem, refugees (or displaced persons), water, and the Israeli settlements.

Each of these issues is complex and central to the future of Israel and the region, but the question of a Palestinian state is in many ways the key factor. Without a sovereign state, the questions regarding borders, refugees, sovereignty over Jerusalem, and control over water sources are less critical than would be the case if a Palestinian state is created. Thus, in many ways, the negotiation process, such as it is, and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is increasingly focused on the issue of Palestinian sovereignty.

From the beginning of the Oslo process, the Palestinians have continuously sought to advance, de facto, their claims to sovereignty and statehood, and to develop the basis for unilateral declaration of independence in case the permanent status talks did not reach this outcome. Related actions include efforts to extend the activities of the institutions created under the Palestinian Authority to areas under Israeli control (Area B and East Jerusalem) and to construct an airport and seaport in Gaza (although under the 1995 Interim Agreement, these actions require coordination and agreement with Israel).

The outcome of this process, and the nature of the Palestinian entity, its boundaries, and its authority, will have also profound impacts on Israeli security and the future of the region. In general, the Israeli Right is opposed to Palestinian sovereignty, and following the 1996 elections, the policies of the Netanyahu government policy have sought to prevent a unilateral Palestinian declaration of statehood. In particular, this objective has been pursued through minimizing the territory handed to the Palestinian Authority under the interim redeployments, and attempting to prevent the construction

of the air and seaports in Gaza. In contrast, the Israeli Left, including many Labor Party leaders, including Yosi Beilin, have sought to include support for, or at least acceptance of Palestinian sovereignty in party programs and platforms. For this group, a Palestinian state is viewed as the basis for stability in the region, and for an equitable end to the long Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus, the issue of a Palestinian State has become a central issue, not only in relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, but also in the Israeli domestic political arena.

The Arguments in Favor

The supporters of Palestinian sovereignty among Palestinians, Israelis and in much of the world argue from a normative perspective, asserting the right of this group to determine their own future and control their own lives. Self determination is a moral powerful force, and from this perspective, the Palestinians, like the Bosnian Serbs, Kurds, Shias in Iraq, and even the residents of Northern Italy (Padania), are entitled to this same status. Indeed, this is the core of the Zionist movement and the foundation for the modern Jewish state of Israel.

In addition, Israeli supporters of Palestinian sovereignty cite self-interest and the assert that this would create a basis for stability for the first time since the beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict. From this perspective, partition and a "two-state solution" is the only means of satisfying Palestinian demands for independence and sovereignty. While this opportunity was missed in 1947, when the Arabs rejected the UN Resolution, after 50 years, they have finally opted for stability, and, as Amos Elon claims, if Israel now rejects partition, the next era of conflict will be the responsibility of the Jewish state.

According to this argument, clear boundaries and separation based on international borders would also lower the level of friction caused by the conflicting jurisdictions and lack of boundary lines that have characterized the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians since 1967. Israel would no longer be responsible for the welfare of the Palestinians. The internal pressures and psychological damage caused by 30 years of occupation and daily conflict between Israeli teenagers in the army and Palestinians would end. As a sovereign state in the international community (and dependent on international aid and good will), the Palestinians would be responsible for taking action against terrorism, and for insuring that its territory would not be used as a staging base for attacks against its neighbors.

The Palestinian state could accept as many refugees as can be absorbed (and as want to relocate). Those that chose not to relocate would cease to have the status of refugees, and would become citizens of the states in which they reside. Since 1948, Palestinian insistence on "the right of return" has been seen as a means of destroying

the Jewish state demographically. However, in this way, the long festering and politically explosive issue of Palestinian refugees would be resolved without endangering Israel.

The supporters of Palestinian independence also argue that this would serve to strengthen the position and public support for the "moderates" and pragmatists, such as Arafat and his Fatah organization, while weakening the fundamentalists. Once they have a state of their own, the Palestinian masses can be expected to turn away from radical groups such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, and cut off support for terrorism and violence. However, in the absence of sovereignty, Arafat will be weakened, eventually losing control, and the result will be even greater strength for the Islamic and other radical groups among Palestinians.

Furthermore, supporters of this position see the creation of a Palestinian state as the basis for the transformation of the Arab world.

Despite clear limitations, the Palestinian press is the most open in the region (except, of course for Israel), and the extent of free peace and democracy is greater than in neighboring countries. After many years of direct contact with the open Israeli hyper-democracy, Palestinians have become "infected", and despite the authoritarian and anti-democratic preferences of Arafat and many of his aides, the hope is that they will be able to maintain and strengthen these tendencies. Since democracy is seen as the foundation of peaceful coexistence and rational policies, a democratic Palestinian state is viewed as a positive addition to the region.

The Case Against Palestinian Sovereignty

In contrast, there are many Israelis who reject these arguments, and view the possibility of the creation of a Palestinian state with trepidation. From this perspective, at this time, and under present conditions, the declaration or creation of an fully sovereign Palestinian independent state, in the few kilometers between the Israeli coastal plain and the Jordan river and in the Gaza Strip, is the path to even greater instability, terrorism, violence, corruption and political repression in area in which these plagues are already all too familiar.

For opponents, the issue is not an abstract normative issue. Few would reject the argument that, in theory, all peoples, however they define themselves, should be entitled to self determination.

But this less than ideal world, national sovereignty is often abused in order to deny self-determination to others, and terrorism and aggressive war are common occurrences, and in which independence for some means death and loss of liberty for

others. The history of the 20th century serves as a reminder that misplaced idealism has often been the foundation for war and genocide.

The track record of the current Palestinian leadership and their policies do not provide much evidence for the conclusion that an independent state would be a stable and civic neighbor over the long term. Until a very short time ago, Palestinian organizations were all visibly dedicated to the violent destruction of the State of Israel. Palestinian terrorism introduced air piracy and hijacking, suicide bombings, Olympic massacres, attacks on diplomats, and other forms of violence. In January 1991, just 6 years ago, Yassir Arafat was embracing Saddam Hussein, Palestinians were celebrating on their rooftops as Iraqi Scuds were falling on Israeli cities, and Saddam was the most popular name for newborn boys. The screams of the terrible suicide bombings of last year, which were planned and executed from areas under Palestinian control, still ring in our ears. Perhaps yesterday's terrorists can become today's peacemakers and police, but the risks are great and there is good reason for caution, particularly given the terrorism that has continued.

The vast majority of Israelis, both those who favor a Palestinian state and those who are opposed, agree that the transition in Palestinian behavior that has been promised since the 1993 Oslo agreement has not occurred. Terrorism continues, with at least the tacit and perhaps the explicit support of Yassir Arafat, and substantial agreement of the Palestinian masses. Indeed, by their own accounts, and as public opinion polls have clearly shown, the Palestinian people have made a formal and unenthusiastic peace. For many Israelis, this behavior recalls German policy in reaction to the Treaty of Versailles, which was readily renounced as soon as conditions allowed. Most Palestinians still view Israel as a foreign entity, an agent of the West, a temporary Crusader state that usurped Arab land, and the deep Jewish historical, religious, and cultural roots in the Land of Israel are still unknown or rejected. It may take generations to reverse the damage of Arab rejectionism of the past 75 years, and until this fragile peace grows, a Palestinian state can easily be turned into a platform for renewed attacks.

Indeed, the violence, verbal and physical, is continuing, contrary to the spirit and the letter of the agreements with Israel. Under the terms of the Oslo Accords, the leadership of the Palestinian Authority (PA) pledged to refrain from incitement to violence against Israel. In the exchange of letters with the late Prime Minister Rabin on September 9, 1993, Chairman Arafat wrote "The PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and will assume responsibility over all PLO elements and personnel in order to assure their compliance, prevent violations and discipline violators." The Interim Agreement (Oslo 2) of September 28, 1995 states that Israel and the PA "shall seek to foster mutual understanding and tolerance and

shall accordingly abstain from incitement, including hostile propaganda, against each other."

However, the violations are numerous and continuous. Palestinian leaders have not stopped referring to Israel as the enemy, nor have they stopped referring to terrorists, bus bombers, and murderers as heroes, and their acts of sadistic murder as "military operations". This language serves as the foundation and justification for continued terror. The Palestinian Covenant, with its denial of the legitimacy of Israel and the numerous calls for its destruction, has not been amended, despite numerous pledges to do so. Shortly after the Oslo agreement was signed, Arafat called for a Jihad to liberate Jerusalem. In October 1996, Hani al-Hasan, called Fathi Shikaki, the leader of Islamic Jihad "a giant among the giants of the Palestinian people, one of the giants of the nation. He was the teacher of generations" [An-Nahar, Oct. 29, 1996] When Ichya Ayash (the "engineer"), leader of the Hamas suicide bombers who took so many innocent lives, was finally killed, thousands of Palestinians came to pay him homage. Arafat told a rally in Gaza: "We are committed to all martyrs who died for the cause of Jerusalem starting with Ahmed Musa until the last martyr Yihye Ayash." [Jerusalem Post, July 28, 1996. Musa was the first member of Fatah to be killed in 1965, and Ayyash, known as "the Engineer", was the mastermind behind a series of Hamas suicide bombing attacks prior to his death in January 1996.] In another speech, Arafat called Ayash a "a hero of the Palestinian people" [New York Times, Jan. 8, 1996] In October 1996, Chairman Arafat spoke at the Dehaishe refugee camp: "We know only one word: jihad, jihad, jihad. When we stopped the intifada, we did not stop the jihad for the establishment of a Palestinian state whose capital is Jerusalem. And we are now entering the phase of the great jihad prior to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state ...We are in a conflict with the Zionist movement and the Balfour Declaration and all imperialist activities." [Yediot Ahronot, Oct. 23, 1996] Muhammad Dahlan, a senior Gaza PA security official was straightforward: "The Palestinian Authority does not exclude the return to the armed struggle, and it will then use its weapons." [Jerusalem Report, Nov. 28, 1996] In the midst of the violence that began in Jerusalem in September 1996, Arafat told Palestinian security forces in Gaza to "fight for Allah, and they will kill and be killed, and this is a solemn oath...Our blood is cheap compared with the cause which has brought us together and which at moments separated us, but shortly we will meet again in heaven...Palestine is our land and Jerusalem is our capital" [Ma'ariv, Oct. 4, 1996] A few days later, after the fighting had stopped, Arafat still called for "mass confrontations in all cities and villages to confront the Israeli aggression against Al-Aksa mosque." [Cited in the New York Times, Oct. 4, 1996]

Thus, in their statements and actions, the Palestinian leadership provides evidence for those in Israel who fear that the peace process represents a change in tactics towards

the unchanged goal of the elimination of Israel. From this perspective, the central problem comes from irredentism, and the fear that the Oslo process is a means towards the implementation of the 1974 PLO policy to destroy Israel in stages. The unamended Covenant is seen as a reflection of these unchanging goals.

On more than one occasion, Arafat has provided evidence that these concerns are more than justified. "This agreement, I am not considering it more than the agreement which had been signed between our prophet Muhammad and Quraish, and you remember that the Caliph Omar had refused this agreement and considered it a despicable truce ... But the same way Muhammad had accepted it, we are now accepting this peace effort." [Ha'aretz, May 23, 1994 or Israel Radio, May 17, 1994; Jerusalem Post, May 18, 1994 check this] In a speech at Bir Zeit University, Faisal Husseini declared "Everything you see and hear today is for tactical and strategic reasons. We have not given up the rifle. We still have armed gangs in the areas and if we do not get our state we will take them out of the closet and fight again." [Ma'ariv, Nov. 24, 1993] Rashid Abu Shbak, a senior PA security official, pledged that "The light which has shone over Gaza and Jericho will also reach the Negev and the Galilee." [Yediot Ahronot, May 29, 1994]

At the end of the 20th century, it would be naive to take the view that the words of leaders are unimportant, the unrealistic hopes of dreamers, addressed to domestic audiences. The same words were used sixty years ago, after Hitler's mass rallies in Nuremberg and after Munich. Arafat's calls for violence and praise of martyrdom and jihad came just a few days before the terrorist bombing in a Tel Aviv cafe that killed three young women. Similarly, just before the September clashes in which the PNA urged thousands of civilian to attack isolated Israeli military positions, and then armed Palestinian forces using rifles equipped with sniper scopes killed 15 Israeli soldiers. The words of leaders express their objectives, and for this reason, the plans and hopes Palestinian leaders as expressed in their own words are given great weight. In this context, the statements of Arafat and Nabil Shaath [Jerusalem Post, March 15, 1996] , threatening that "If Israel rejects our demands there will be a reaction and we have a 30,000 man armed force," cannot be ignored. [Israel Radio, June 7, 1996] The language of violence has accompanied war and terrorism for three generations, and opponents of a Palestinian state argue that at the very least, before we take the risks of a Palestinian state, these words must change.

Furthermore, if, as is frequently claimed by supporters of Palestinian statehood, Arafat and the PLO are the moderates in Palestinian society, where does that leave the other groups that enjoy considerable public support? What are the risks of a Palestinian state in which Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the PFLP, and other such hate-filled organizations play a major role or even become the dominant actors? This state will

then become another Algeria, Iran, or Iraq, in which civil violence and external aggression inextricably linked.

From the perspective of Israeli security, the military impact of a Palestinian state must be examined in a wider regional context, in which Israel remains a very small state and in which some Arab states, such as Syria and Iraq, maintain a state of war and are continuing to build up their military capabilities. Even Egypt, with which Israel signed a peace treaty in 1979, continues to spend billions and to hold exercises clearly directed at Israel. While it is true that Israel would maintain overwhelming strategic superiority vis a vis a small Palestinian state, during a regional war, Palestinian forces could severely disrupt Israeli military operations. Small tactical missiles would hamper the operation and mobilization of Israeli ground forces, and anti-air missiles would curtail the activities of the Israeli Air Force. [Gerald M. Steinberg, "Israeli Security in the Context of the Peace Process", Security Dialogue Vol. 25, No. 1, March 1994; Michael Widlanski, Can Israel Survive a Palestinian State?, Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, Jerusalem, 1990]

The threat posed by a Palestinian state would extend to other states in the region as well. In the past, Palestinian violence has destabilized Lebanon and Jordan. In September 1970, the PLO, with active Syrian assistance, sought to stage a coup designed to capture control of Jordan and turn it into a Palestinian state. There is good reason to ask how long the Palestinian military and political leadership would be satisfied with a small state, even if it included all of the West Bank regions of Judea and Samaria. With a large Palestinian population in Jordan, would we see a repeat of the events of 1970, with Syrian or Iraqi backing? And would a Palestinian state seek to extend its domain by fomenting unrest and encouraging secession among the Israeli Arabs in the Galilee? This scenario is more than merely plausible.

These dangers are exacerbated by the specter that the creation of an independent Palestine would add another failed state to the world, one that is located close to the intersection of Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. The world has gained a great deal of experience with failed states in Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, and Algeria. Iraq is another candidate for this status, and perhaps Syria in the event of a civil war after the death of Assad. Since the PNA was established in Gaza and Jericho in 1994, its performance has shown all the characteristics of a failed state, including corruption, economic failure, nepotism, intimidation, systematic police violence and torture.

A functioning state is, by definition, one in which the state has a monopoly on the use of force, providing security for its citizens and not allowing its territory to be used as a staging platform for terror. The Palestinian authority does not have, nor does it appear able to exert a monopoly on the use of force. Mr. Arafat has not made a good faith

effort to disarm groups such as Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, and the PFLP. Until the Palestinian Authority fulfills these basic obligations, it is unable to claim a right to statehood.

Failed states are also characterized by internal unrest and instability, reflecting internal conflict and the regime's lack of legitimacy. This description is applicable to the Palestinian National Authority. [Human Rights Watch/Middle East, "The Gaza Strip and Jericho, Human Rights Under Palestinian Partial Self Rule", Vol. 7, No. 2, February 1995; Nadav Haetzni, "In Arafat's Kingdom" Commentary , October 1996, pp.42-48] An Amnesty Report of Dec. 2 1996 stated that since the PNA was created in 1994, 2000 Palestinians, including journalists, businessmen, and human rights activists have been arrested and detained, most without charges. [Amnesty International, Palestinian Authority: Prolonged political detention, torture and unfair trials , 2 December 1996; Justus R. Weiner, "Human Rights in Limbo during the Interim Period of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process: Review, Analysis, and Implications", Journal of International Law and Politics , New York University, Vol . 27, no. 4, Summer 1995] Eyad Saraj, the head of the Palestinian Committee for Citizens' Rights, has already been held 3 times. One year ago, the editor of an Arabic newspaper was arrested after he refused to run a story dictated by Arafat's office on the front page of his newspaper. Bassam Eid, a Palestinian who worked with B'Teslem, an Israeli Human Rights group, was kidnapped from his Jerusalem home and held in the Ramallah headquarters of the PLO's Force 17 for 24 hours, before an international outcry forced his release. During the Intifada, Eid was a hero to Palestinians for publicizing alleged Israeli abuses, but he was never threatened by Israel. He was branded an Israeli agent after criticizing the killing of between 750 and 950 alleged collaborators by PLO and Hamas forces. A recent report by B'Teslem and the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group (created recently by Eid) concludes that no investigation meeting even minimal judicial standards was conducted. [Human Rights in the Occupied Territories Since the Oslo Accords: Status Report , A joint report of The Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group and B'Tselem, December 1996, Jerusalem, Israel]

Rather than using its formidable police power to prevent terrorism which it is obligated by formal agreement to do, this power is being directed against journalists, domestic political opponents and those who seek to extend civil liberties, such as Bassam Eid and Eyad Saraj.

Even for supporters of Palestinian sovereignty, it is difficult to dismiss the abuse of police power against internal opponents as merely a transitional issue. At least 12 detainees have died in custody, as a result of torture, which was described by Amnesty International as systematic. [Amnesty International, Palestinian Authority: Prolonged political detention, torture and unfair trials , 2 December 1996;] In its December 7

1996 edition, the Economist described the PNA as a military regime. ["We are the Law", The Economist, December 7 1996, p.49] More of the same, in a Palestinian state, would clearly not be "the best hope for peace", but the reverse -- another Haiti or Somalia. Instead of becoming a "beacon of democracy, free speech, and tolerance in the Arab and Islamic world, as its supporters so fervently hope and believe, opponents of Palestinians sovereignty see a state under Arafat and the PLO as another failed totalitarian entity in the Middle East.

To survive and to avoid the consequences of failure, a state must also provide the framework for economic development and prosperity. Failure in this area creates conditions of unrest and instability. It is patronizing to argue that that a Palestinian state is a priori too small geographically and demographically to sustain economic development. That is the same argument used by the British and others in the 1930s and 1940s to justify opposition to the establishment of a Jewish state.

However, it is self evident that the challenges facing the Palestinians are enormous. After three years, there is no evidence that the Palestinian leadership can create a viable economic foundation. The per capita GNP in Gaza is approximately \$1000 and has declined under Palestinian control, while the very high jobless rate increased. The hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid that have already been transferred have disappeared without accountability, and without any significant new investment in infrastructure or job-producing industry. As a result, many foreign donors have stopped providing funds, as there is no evidence that the money is being used for the purposes for which it was intended -- namely to provide a foundation for economic development and stability in the areas under Palestinian control. The ritual of blaming Israel for this condition is no longer credible, and there is no evidence to conclude that the creation of a state, under such conditions, would change this. Realistically, the evidence points to the conclusion that in fact, with more independence, the mismanagement would only grow worse.

A flood of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have lived in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon (many since 1948) would only add to the existing problems of employment and the provision of the basic requirements for food and shelter. (Estimates of the number of refugees and displaced persons varies widely, from 800,000 to over two million. [Justus Weiner, "The Permanent Refugees' "Right to Return" and the Peace Process", Boston College International and Comparative Law Review, Vol. XX, No. 1, Winter 1997, p.8]) Far from solving the refugee problem, opponents of a Palestinian state view a massive increase in the Palestinian population within a small state as an additional threat to Israeli security. As evidence, the cite statements by the PA leadership, including Arafat's recent threat to "make life unbearable for Jews by psychological warfare and population explosion". [Report of a speech by Arafat to a closed meeting of Arab diplomats in Stockholm, January 30 1997, as reported by

Andreas Vistnes, Dagen, Feb. 16, 1996, and cited by Justus Weiner, "The Permanent Refugees' "Right to Return" and the Peace Process", Boston College International and Comparative Law Review, Vol. XX, No. 1, Winter 1997, fn. 2] In this way, the Palestinian leadership is continuing the policies that date from the early 1950s, in attempting to use the refugee issue against Israel.

In much of the Arab world, from Cairo to Baghdad, mismanagement and corruption are the norm, while the Palestinian leadership continues to expect Israel to provide most of the income through jobs for Palestinians. A sovereign state cannot base its entire economy on the good will of its neighbors, particularly if, as in this case, the influx of foreign workers into Israel also increases the probability of terrorism.

Corruption is a major problem. For decades, the PLO has built up foreign currency reserves and created a major corporate empire. In 1993, the British National Criminal Intelligence Service estimated that the PLO had worldwide assets of \$10 billion, with an annual income of up to \$2 billion. [Jerusalem Report, January 12 1995, p. 22] With millions of Palestinians living in poverty, one would expect these assets to be used for national development rather than personal gain.

The Palestinian economy is mismanaged, or rather managed, as one analyst reported, "out of Arafat's hip pocket", without separation of personal funds, party or state accounts. The Washington Post revealed that Arafat maintains a former wife, Yassin, in an opulent villa in Tunis. PLO sources report that "She received from him great wealth. The jewels she has would be enough to build all Gaza anew." Calls from the donor states and the IMF for a proper system of accountability have been ignored. Investment laws have not been enacted, and the bloated bureaucracy is maddening . As a result, foreign investment is close to zero. The surrounding Arab states, including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are reluctant to contribute, and even under intense American pressure, account for less than 5 percent of total external aid and investment. Even Palestinian investors have stood on the sidelines. Plans for industrial parks and cooperative factories at the intersection of Israel and Gaza, that were expected to provided thousands of jobs to Palestinians, were dropped when Palestinian officials blocked Israeli participation and insisted that the import of materials await the construction of a port in Gaza (an economic megaproject which is motivated by personal and political factors). [Jerusalem Post, 23 December 1995] Other megaprojects, such as Arafat's reinforced command center, built in the Saddam Hussein style, vast villas on the Gaza coast, an airport that may never open, and an airline that may never get off the ground, are attempts to buy prestige, not an improved standard of living.

The Alternatives to Sovereignty

The debate regarding Palestinian statehood, like many other such debates in the Middle East, is often couched in black and white terms, when the reality allows for many shades of gray. Proponents of Palestinian sovereignty argue that the only alternative is a return to the situation that characterized the period between 1967 and 1993 -- Israeli occupation with all of its costs for both Israel and the Palestinians. A return to this framework is extremely unlikely and even implausible, and there are clearly other options. These include limited sovereignty and autonomy models, in which Palestinians would enjoy a maximal extent of political, economic, social and cultural independence, while responsibility for security would be withheld. Under such conditions, and with the development of stability and confidence building measures, as well as a radical decrease in the risks to Israel, the scope of independence and sovereignty could be extended gradually. This type of limited sovereignty is increasingly being examined in other conflict situations, such as Bosnia, and should be considered for the Palestinian situation as well. (In contrast to the other examples of limited sovereignty, such as Puerto Rico and Andorra, in the Palestinian case, this is seen as a temporary or interim measure and limited to security related factors.)

The transition towards a more traditional state could also include a stage in which Jordan plays a wider role. Neither the Palestinians nor the Jordanians are particularly enthusiastic about such a confederation. For Jordan, with its already large number of Palestinian residents (close to 50% according to some estimates), and in the wake of the Palestinian coup attempt of 1970, resuming some responsibility, even in part, for the large Palestinian population would represent considerable risk. Any government in Jordan would be wary of new entanglements with the Palestinians.

Nevertheless, for Jordan, as for Israel and even the Palestinians, a confederation may be the least problematic of the available alternatives. As an interim measure, a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation could provide relative stability for all the parties. Many Palestinians, particularly in the West Bank regions of Judea and Samaria, have close family and business ties with the East Bank, and might welcome such an arrangements. This would not mean a return to Jordanian control and occupation, as occurred between 1948 and 1967, but rather, in such an arrangement, the Palestinians still be able to manage their own affairs, health, welfare, education, and economics, while Jordan would work with the PA and Israel in foreign relations and security. If, over time, a new generation of Palestinian leaders develop that are able to combine aspirations for greater independence with the need for regional stability, a real end to the use of terrorism as a political tool, and a respect for democracy and individual human rights, the extent of sovereignty can be expanded.

Prospects

The issues raised in this context are all complex, and they are central to the debate over permanent status and the questions regarding the impact of a Palestinian state on regional security and stability. These issues and the consideration of the alternatives are not only of importance to the Palestinians, but are also of central importance to the future of Israel, Jordan, and indeed all of the Middle East. In this context, simplistic slogans and appeals to strictly normative ideals will not solve the problems raised in each of the alternative scenarios. The Oslo process that began in 1993 did not promise Palestinian statehood, and it is not inevitable, at least in the short term. At the same time, the other alternatives, such as limited autonomy and confederation with Jordan are also problematic, particularly from the Palestinian and Jordanian perspective, as well as for Israel. In reality, the debate over this central issue has only begun, and is likely to continue for many years.