

Liberal Democracy (One Person - One Vote) and Bi-nationalism in Israel/Palestine

Self-determination and sovereignty are at the core of understanding Israel/Palestine. Therefore, it would be unreasonable for various reasons to overlook them, as they are so central and dear to both Jews and Palestinians. However, they should not be understood exclusively on the basis of the Westphalian notion that requires a state. The concepts can be manifested in multiple ways, like in Post Westphalian notions of sovereignty and non-statist interpretations of self-determination/independence.

The shift from a state oriented discourse to a rights-based discourse is accompanied by two fundamental concepts: **Settler colonialism**; and **Apartheid**. In the past, in the context of Israel/Palestine these (non-competing and partly overlapping) concepts used to be exclusively heard in academic research. Today they have more public legitimacy, and entered the vocabulary of the diplomatic world and media. In terms of the corresponding normative and ethical principles that inform these concepts are *one person-one vote* (liberal democracy, corresponding to apartheid, and South Africa oriented), and the *binational principle*.

The widespread use of terms such apartheid and settler colonialism is related to the demise and failure of the peace-making discourse to deliver a two state solution, which is calling for new concepts and a new terminology. As such, these terms (settler-colonialisms and Apartheid) indicate the crisis and impasse the paradigm of partition led us to.

For the Palestinians the logic of the two-state solution is promising something that the Palestinians are becoming increasingly disenchanted with. The Peace-making discourse has disempowered the Palestinians from critical tools and concepts and has brought them to the illusion that we are talking about two equal sides, when in reality we are talking about a brutal dominating power relation, one of occupied and occupier, colonized and colonizer.

This conversation on Apartheid and settler-colonialism is therefore becoming widespread as it becoming to penetrate mainstream media (see for example The Economist or BBC). It is a conversation that is not new. Already Jimmy Carter titled one of his books "Palestine: Peace not Apartheid".

Settler colonialism is relevant in the context of Israel/ Palestine as it immediately implies an asymmetrical relationship of colonialism and control. It also brings the centrality of land into the equation. At the core of the concept introduced by Patrick Wolfe is the politics of elimination. The battle of the land does not only or necessarily evolve for economic purposes, but for making the settling community local and native, while seeking to eliminate the present population. In the context of Israel this is done through ethnic cleansing, through confiscation of land, checkpoints, the permit industry, urban planning, displacement, control, confiscation (see for example "The Great Book Robbery" by Aljazeera). This arsenal of colonial policies and practices is strategically applied to "Judaize" Palestine. Zionism is a settler colonial movement par excellence. But it not ONLY a settler colonial movement but created with time Jewish Israeli nationalism. One of the weaknesses for settler colonialism is that it does not imply nationalism.

Unlike settler colonialism, **Apartheid** has a legal connotation. It is a crime recognised by the International law. Apartheid speaks about **racial supremacy and racial segregation**. This segregation is orchestrated **within a political unity** that supposedly has delineated defined boundaries. In the

context of Israel/Palestine, more and more developments on the ground are putting into place emerging realities of such one political unity.

In Israel/Palestine segregation was seemingly happening (surely under the peace-making discourse) with the hope of divorce. However, the realities have shaped such that we are no longer divorcing but we are becoming inseparable, though under colonial and domination conditions.

In the context of South Africa Christianity and Catholicism functioned as a unifying language; this is missing in the context of Israeli/Palestine, where you have Muslims, Christians and Jews.

The prognosis of both settler colonialism as well as Apartheid is the central importance of **historical reconciliation** (see for ex Australia, Canada; South Africa) This process of reconciliation is often assumed as culminating in **one person – one vote** (liberal rights that serves the individual) and the formation of liberal democracy.

This is a post-national concept, and therefore not acceptable to some, both on the side of Israel and also, Palestine.

Egalitarian Binationalism accommodates the right to national self-determination for both national groups under the conditions of parity, reciprocity, mutual legitimacy and equality.

The translation of the one person- one vote and egalitarian binationalism principles into political solutions also impacts the constitutional and institutional designs of the solutions. This includes not only liberal democracy of “the One, rainbow, We” of the one person-one vote of South Africa but also binational state, federation, confederation etc.