

Peace in the Middle East

Bar-On, Mordechai. *In Pursuit of Peace; A History of the Israeli Peace Movement*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996.

Darweish, Marwan, and Andrew Rigby. *Palestinians in Israel: Nationality and Citizenship*. Bradford, UK: University of Bradford Peace Research Report No. 35, 1995.

While the Arab-Israeli conflict is not over, as recent events have shown, it is clearly in the twilight of its existence. The winding down in the past few years of this globally important conflict has spawned numerous books and papers dealing with the reasons for its demise and its uncertain aftermath. The two books under consideration are welcome additions to this growing literature as they address key issues: the first explores the rise of Israel's peace movement which made 'thinking the unthinkable' possible in Israeli society; the latter examines the problematic and unfinished business of fully incorporating Palestinian citizens of Israel into the Jewish state.

Mordechai Bar-On's book is the most comprehensive account yet in English of the history of the Israeli peace movement. It has the added benefit of being told by one of the leading figures in Peace Now, the major peace movement in Israel. While at times this connection perhaps blinds Bar-On to the significant criticism within the Israeli left of Peace Now's persistent timidity and indecision, it is more than made up for by the first-hand account of many of the most significant events in the struggle for peace.

Organized chronologically, Bar-On's book begins with the creation of Israel in 1948. He notes that from 1948 to 1967 no significant peace movement existed in Israel. It was only after the conquest of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and Sinai peninsula in 1967 that a nascent peace movement arose, in part because Israel now had 'chips' with which to negotiate, and in part as a response to the view that Israel's desire to keep these territories risked missing an historic opportunity for peace. In fact, Peace Now itself was formed in the late 1970s by Israeli military officers who believed that Prime Minister Menachim Begin's policies might ruin the chance for peace that Egypt's Anwar al-Sadat offered. The book chronicles the growing strength of the peace movement resulting from Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon and, most important, Israel's brutal suppression of Palestinian dissent before and during the *Intifada*, or 1987-93 Palestinian uprising. The book ends with Yitzhaq Rabin's November 1995 assassination, and before the reversal of the 'peace process' by his successor, Benyamin Netanyahu.

Bar-On acknowledges, as other observers have, that Peace Now's simultaneous strength and weakness is that it comes from the mainstream of Israeli Jewish society rather than the margins. IDF reserve officers have remained at the centre of its leadership. Its mainstream character has allowed it to construct a mass base far greater than rival 'fringe' movements, such as Yesh Gvul or Women in Black. However, the price Peace Now has paid to maintain its unified, influential position in Israeli politics is a vacuous platform

with a vision consistently years behind other 'cutting edge' peace groups. Peace Now was slow to arrive at what seems obvious to all today: that military occupation was corrupting the occupier as well as brutalizing the occupied, that an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza is a necessary component of peace, and that recognition of and dialogue with the PLO was the only way to get there. In effect, Peace Now had to be dragged along by other peace groups to these conclusions, and it in turn had to drag mainstream Israeli society along with it.

Bar-On is at his best when he links the peace movement with larger Israeli society. The book contains a fascinating argument about why the *Mizrahim*, or the Sephardic Jewish community in Israel (i.e., non-European Jews), have been the most hostile to the peace movement. Bar-On argues that the *Mizrahim* - always the poor 'ethnic cousin' to the European *Ashkenazi* Jews in Israel - were gaining a measure of acceptance and dignity through the election of the Likud party in 1977. *Mizrahim* viewed the overwhelmingly *Ashkenazi* Peace Now as just another attack by European Jews to keep the 'Oriental' Jews down, this time by opposing Menachem Begin and *Likud*. Thus, *Mizrahi* opposition to Peace Now was not at base a disagreement about what to do with the occupied territories, but rather about internal Israeli issues of ethnic cleavage and social justice.

In the end, Bar-On recognizes correctly that the various peace agreements Israel has signed (with Egypt, Jordan and the PLO) have been driven more by geostrategic concerns than any decisive influence of Israel's peace movement. He does, however, want to suggest that the peace movement provided the social opening for such geostrategic decisions to be made - and be accepted by most Israelis.

While Israel has largely made peace with its Arab neighbors, it has not necessarily done so with its own Arab citizens. The creation of Israel in 1948 resulted in the expulsion of about 750,000 Palestinians to the surrounding areas. However, 120,000 Palestinians stayed behind and became citizens of the Jewish state. Today they number around 750,000 and constitute about 17 percent of Israel's population. Yet, 50 years after Israel's birth, the central problem of the position of non-Jews in a Jewish state remains unresolved. Marwan Darweish (an Israeli Arab himself) and Andrew Rigby tackle the main issues of Israel's Palestinian community in their brief but insightful monograph.

The book is divided into three essays, each bolstered by primary source material, mainly interviews and survey data. The first essay deals with the political and social development of Israel's Palestinians from their first nearly two decades of living under military government to the present. The authors survey the various kinds of institutional discrimination Israeli Arabs continue to suffer, from land expropriation to unequal education to discriminatory taxation policies and social services. More important, in many ways, is the existential discrimination of being Arab in an explicitly and legally Jewish state: Israel was established unashamedly, even with pride, to serve Jewish citizens, to help fulfill their needs and aspirations, to provide for Jewish 'security', and as such to differentiate against Arabs. Therefore, "the entire ethos of the state of Israel, its organs and apparatus have conspired to construct a system that includes all Jews and

inevitably excludes Arabs . . . leading to their marginalization and generating a significant amount of hostility." (p. 21)

In spite of all these problems, the authors argue that Israeli Arabs have gradually created a synthesis identity combining both their Israeli citizenship and their Palestinian national identity. At the same time, the community has gone from complete weakness and marginality in the early years of Israel's history, to becoming a relevant collective actor in contemporary Israeli politics.

In their second essay, the authors examine the evolution of how the Palestinian national movement related to Israeli Arabs. In the immediate post-1948 period, Israeli Arabs were generally viewed with suspicion, even as collaborators, by the exiled Palestinian community. Even with the creation of the PLO in 1964, Israeli Arabs were marginal to the Palestinian movement and generally ignored. This changed gradually as the PLO began to understand that Israel's Palestinians could prove helpful in the search for statehood. By the time the *Intifada* began in 1987, Israeli Palestinians were in the unusual position of playing relevant but often peripheral roles in two polities, Israel and the Palestinian national movement, and central roles in neither. The authors refer to this condition as "double marginality."

Finally Darweish and Rigby conclude by asking how Palestinian statehood in the West Bank and Gaza might impact on Israeli Arabs. Most Israeli Arabs view such an outcome with enthusiasm, believing it would not only help their Palestinian brethren, but also ease the discrimination against them in Israel itself. The authors are not as sanguine that the end of the conflict will necessarily lead to a significant improvement in the material or existential condition of Israel's Palestinian community. Even with the drawing down of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel is clearly not prepared to transform itself from a state for a nation (Jews everywhere) to a state of its own citizens, Jews and non-Jews alike. Such a change would violate the very *raison d'être* of Israel's establishment. However, until Israel confronts directly the central issues raised by the disjunction between nation and citizen, it will have an increasingly vocal civil rights movement on its hands.

Both books under review are well-written and generally well-edited, and contain a wealth of information that is presented in a sensible and non-sensationalist manner. Both are recommended for classroom use for courses on Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Darweish-Rigby book is also suitable for courses on ethno-nationalism and minority politics.

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