

A history of Anti-partitionist Perspectives in Palestine 1915-1988

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Abstract

The diplomatic and political deadlock in what has come to be known as the Palestine/Israel conflict, has led to the re-emergence of an anti-partition discourse that draws its arguments from the reality on the ground and/or from anti-Zionism. Why such a re-emergence? Actually, anti-partitionism as an antagonism depends on its corollary, partitionism, and as such, they have existed for the same period of time. Furthermore, the debate between anti-partitionists and pro-partitionists – nowadays often referred to as a debate between the one-state and the two-state solution – is not peculiar to the period around 2000. It echoes the situation in the late 1910s when the British were settling in Palestine and authorising the Zionist settler colonial movement to build a Jewish homeland thus introducing the seeds of partition and arousing expressions of anti-partitionism.

This dissertation aims to articulate a political history of the anti-partitionist perspectives against the backdrop of an increasing acceptance of Palestine's partition as a solution. This account runs from 1915 and the first partition – that of the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire – to 1988 and the Palestinian recognition of the principle of partition. Thus, I argue that the anti-partitionist perspectives have persisted throughout history.

Such a historical perspective enabled me to consider the acceptance of partition as the result of a shift from a “national and territorial liberation” strategy to the search for “sovereignty and national independence”, a shift that was operated in the Palestinian national movement as well as in the Zionist movement, and which made statehood the main objective.

In this regard, the Palestinian acceptance of the principle of partition and of a two-state solution may be regarded as a legitimation of the Israeli colonial settler state.

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