

Between diaspora and Greater Israel: symbolic meanings of Netanyahu's Policy*

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The war that started with the massacre on 7 October 2023 and saw Israel fighting on many fronts, from Gaza to southern Lebanon has been a constant story in the news for over a year. Everything has been said, geopolitically and emotionally. If, however, we wanted to move on to the deep level of collective imaginaries, a factor that remains fundamental in every war and every type of conflict, a central question arises: what does Israel really propose? What does it intend to achieve in terms of symbolism and identity? What is really at stake seems to be the annexation of the West Bank and, therefore, the construction of Greater Israel. Looking at the question from the point of view of the sociology of imaginaries, it is perhaps possible to go deeper into the actions and reveal their symbolic and identity-based purpose. The construction of Greater Israel implies the annihilation of Jewish diasporic identity, that is, of the millennial Jewish constitutive structure. But is this really the case? Or is Greater Israel in danger of becoming another immense ghetto within the global diaspora?

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Geopolitics and Imaginaries

Everything that can be said about the Gaza war has already been discussed. Political and geopolitical issues have been thoroughly analyzed: the strategies of Hamas and Hezbollah within their vision of regional hegemony, and Israel's approach, which oscillates between the need for security and the pursuit of territorial expansion. On the opposite side, driven by pure instinct and emotion, global outrage has accumulated from both factions - pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli. Even from the most superficial analysis of imagery, much has been asserted: it has been claimed that in this region of the Middle East, a state like Israel cannot afford to appear weak; that such a significant "violation" by the enemy, such as that of October 7, 2023, must necessarily be met with an even stronger response.

This is because, within a predominantly religious framework - which has now permeated even a state originally founded on secular Zionist principles - and in the context of a "holy war" with biblical connotations, any offense against the people of the Covenant is perceived as an offense against God. Consequently, it falls upon this people to respond as if it were God acting through them - not with the measured, all-too-human precept of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," but with the conviction that such a war must be waged in divine proportions, on an incomparably larger scale, as if reenacting a new Great Flood, a new Sodom, or a new Gomorrah.

However, if we shift our focus to the deeper level of collective imaginaries - a fundamental factor in any war or conflict - a central question arises: what is the true objective of Netanyahu's government in launching this offensive in response to the massacre of October 7, 2023? From a symbolic and identity-based perspective, what does it seek to achieve with the defeat of Hamas and subsequently Hezbollah, assuming such an outcome is attainable?

From a strictly theoretical and methodological standpoint, we argue that an approach rooted in the sociology of imaginaries can provide a different lens through which to interpret the phenomena unfolding before our eyes¹. The events unfolding before our eyes each day, relentlessly narrated by the media, create clusters of stereotypes that ultimately obscure the underlying archetypes, as Marshall McLuhan observed (McLuhan 1970). This results in a form of synchronic compression, which can only be unraveled through a diachronic 'analysis'. Archetypes are revealed not through immediate observation but through the gradual process of cultural evolution, emerging and taking shape over time. It is these archetypes that form the foundation of collective imaginaries, just as imaginaries themselves generate the symbolic structures that sustain identities and, in turn, drive collective action.

A further consideration should be made in order to forestall certain recurring objections, in particular that the study of collective imaginaries risks being subjective, interpretive and based on personal impressions. This objection is vitiated by the unfounded idea that the study of imaginaries derives from a kind of 'poetic' and intuitive approach. In reality, such a study starts from a knowledge, which must naturally be deepened, of the metaphorical and narrative mechanisms that define and constitute a given culture or collective identity. The representations that derive from them, and their relationship with socio-political construction, are anything but random and respond to precise space-time coordinates. The analysis of imaginaries tends, therefore, towards a deep and basic knowledge of the way of thinking of

certain collective identities and has no need at all for empirical findings and evidence, which belong to other approaches and disciplinary fields. It can be said that empirical studies are in fact tactical and spur-of-the-moment detections, often already outdated a few months later. We could, for example, carry out empirical and quantitative surveys to understand how many Israeli settlers want the extermination of the Palestinians, but they would give us no answers about the deep-seated, symbolic or even pathological motivations for this desire. It would be like wanting to give, for example, the analysis of non-verbal behaviour a deep analysis value. Non-verbal analysis explains superficial attitudes (e.g. defence, or embarrassment) but not their motivations, it does not delve into the why. It is the same for empirical studies that give contingent but not deep explanations. In this sense, studies on the imaginary can do without empirical studies, but the latter cannot do without studies on the imaginary, which analyse and unveil the hidden, radical and identity layer of metaphor.

Infinite Diaspora

A few years ago, Robert Darnton (Darnton 1984) wrote that it is often in minor episodes and seemingly incomprehensible details that we find the key to understanding the “other” mentalities of the past. Let us, then, take a moment to go back to June 7, 1967 - to the moment when it all began. It is 9:45 a.m. in Jerusalem. Israeli Sherman tanks open fire toward the Lion’s Gate. Captain Zammush, Commander Motta Gur, and his paratroopers, race along the Via Dolorosa, under fire from Jordanian riflemen. Reaching the Temple Mount but unsure how to access the Western Wall below, they ask an elderly Arab man for directions. He points them to the correct path: they break down an old wrought-iron gate, descend a few steps, and finally find themselves in the narrow space between the Wall and the shacks of the Maghreb Quarter.

In an extraordinary photograph taken at that fateful moment, we see the first vanguard of the IDF filling this confined space (the houses visible in the image were later demolished to create the current esplanade). It is the details that prove most striking, revealing a kind of illumination unique to the photographic medium, as Walter Benjamin eloquently explained. Looking more closely, we see that while the Israeli soldiers’ faces express joy, they also reveal bewilderment, even a sense of being lost. This is the famous detail - or perhaps the fleeting glimpse - of which Darnton spoke.

It is likely that Abraham Yehoshua had this very episode in mind when he wrote one of the most powerful scenes in his masterpiece, *Mr. Mani*. In his novel, set in 1899, characters Ephraim and Linka Shapiro, along with Dr. Mani, travel to Jerusalem. Upon arriving at the Western Wall, Ephraim, like the soldiers in 1967, is overwhelmed by what he calls “the last station in history” - a place that strikes him with its simplicity and profound significance.

The shock of feeling as though one has reached the journey’s end provokes an inverted resurrection - not from the diaspora to Jerusalem, but from Jerusalem back to the diaspora; not from exile to the Promised Land, but from the Wall of Zion to the remote Polish village

where the character was born and from which he had once set out for the Holy City. Within the reassuring confines of that village, he had first heard this strange tale as a child:

The Christians would rise from their graves where they lay, but we Jews would crawl through underground caves and emerge in the Land of Israel [...] which is exactly what I have done these days, but in the opposite direction - from there to here - crawling through caves and turning over in many graves - as if traveling not on the globe, but deep beneath its surface - with the coaches groaning and moving in such a way that they can no longer drive [...] as if traveling not on the globe but beneath its surface - with the carriages rumbling and the locomotive lamenting and the smoke and soot and the great showers of sparks at night - from one tunnel to another and from one remote station to another - each time the same flickering of gas lamps, and the same wave of darkness, and then the same total nothingness - and where one looked into the distance in the mist, our flour mills standing like titans - speaking of resurrection! I am happy, Father; because, for a little while we did not grieve [...] (Yehoshua 1993, 201)

It is this return to the diaspora that ultimately brings about the tragedy. Dr. Mani, who had pleaded with Ephraim to at least leave him his sister Linka, a fervent Zionist, takes his own life. For Yehoshua, the diaspora is the true problem. He perceives it as a neurosis - a perpetual oscillation between dispersion and centrality, a mechanism that deliberately prevents a definitive choice between religion and nation, between being Jewish and being Israeli. Yehoshua's solution is straightforward: Israel should become a normal state, where citizenship is determined by nationality rather than religion (Yehoshua 2004). And so, what could have left the Israeli soldiers so astonished, if not the unconscious, almost primordial realization that their oscillating journey had come to an end? Is their unease at the Western Wall - or Yehoshua's character fleeing hastily back to his shtetl in Poland - justified? What is at the heart of this reaction? Is it a fear of stability? A fear of maturity? A reluctance to leave behind the familiar shores of a neurosis that has shaped Jewish identity for nearly two thousand years? After all, Freud taught us that neuroses, despite their precarious and often distressing nature, provide a form of stability - ritualistic, even - offering a security far greater than the uncertainty of questioning and change.

What is most striking here is that, according to Yehoshua, this psychological mechanism is so deeply ingrained that it extends even to the spatial organization (Bachelard 1957; Castells 1996; Castells 1997; Lotman 1969; McLuhan 1964) of the Jewish state. He interprets the settlements and colonial outposts in the West Bank as a new form of diaspora. The settlers live within their fortified enclaves while simultaneously looking toward the center - Jerusalem - which, though only a few kilometers away, remains an object of perpetual longing. They oscillate continuously between the central identity of return and the isolation of the ghetto.

The fundamental difference between this structure and the traditional diasporic experience is that, in the past, the surrounding environment was not inherently hostile - at least during the day. Instead, it served as a space for commerce and cultural exchange, fostering a degree of integration. In contrast, this West Bank pseudo-diaspora perceives the surrounding territory as dangerous and impassable - a no-man's-land inhabited by hostile peoples, viewed with unyielding suspicion and confronted as such. Moreover, this new diaspora is not solely rooted in an imagined connection to a center. For 1,900 years, the Jewish diaspora lacked any tangible means of linking its scattered communities to its

foundational nucleus. As a result, the “mythologization” and “imagination” of the primordial identity reached its highest level of expression. When no direct connection exists, imaginative fantasy flourishes - just as the virtualization of identity intensifies. By contrast, today’s “diasporas” - which, more accurately, should be termed migrations - such as those from Pakistan or North Africa, maintain direct communication with their homelands. This ongoing connection allows for minimal integration with host communities. Historically, Jews, however, were “forced” to engage deeply with these communities. Today, the situation has shifted. With modern communication technologies, the internet, social media, and, in the specific case of the West Bank, an intricate network of fortified roads linking settlements to Jerusalem, the ancient diasporic condition has been fundamentally transformed. It persists, but only as a rigidified mental framework - one that defines a closed, encircled community in an entirely different geopolitical landscape. In this context, the dream of a protective wall has become a tangible reality. The space surrounding the “ghetto”, once full of opportunities (Zanini 1997), has instead turned into a nightmare - while simultaneously becoming a space to be “liberated” and “occupied,” as West Bank settlers have been doing for over twenty years in their relentless expansion and systematic carving up of land for new outposts.

Maps and territory: between diaspora and the imperfect state

One constant protagonist in the representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the map. It is said that in 1995, when Yasser Arafat was presented with a map outlining the proposed Palestinian state - a fragmented entity resembling a collection of floating islets within Israeli territory - he reacted with indignation, exclaiming: “But these are just cantons! You expect me to accept cantons? Then you want to destroy me!”². The map serves as a symbolic representation of territorial organization, offering a spatial abstraction of the land (Weizman 2007). However, it also marks the endpoint of a conceptual journey - one that envisions territorial presence not merely as physical occupation but as a symbolic assertion of identity and redefinition. Observing these maps, one can perhaps gain a clearer understanding of the history of the past 70 years.

Let us begin, then, with Map 1, which illustrates Zionist presence in Palestine prior to 1947, the year of the UN partition plan. The Zionist “settlers” were, in essence, modern diasporic Jews transplanted to the land of their ancestors. For the most part, they did not envision the creation of a state; rather, they reproduced an identity shaped by millennia of dispersion - one that, by day, enabled them to engage with the surrounding world, and by night, in a universe that had turned increasingly hostile, allowed them to mentally reunite with their spiritual center, the safety of Jerusalem. Amos Oz captures this sentiment beautifully in the following excerpt from *A Tale of Love and Darkness*:

During my childhood, at the end of the British Mandate, all of Jerusalem was confined indoors [...]. At eight in the evening, the city shut itself in due to the curfew imposed by the British, and when there was no curfew, it voluntarily stayed inside [...]. The whole house, in short, was sealed every night and gradually sank like a submarine beneath the surface of winter. And indeed, right near us, the world suddenly ended: it was enough to turn left outside the courtyard, walk about two hundred meters to the end of Amos Street, then left again and after another three hundred meters, to the last house on Zephaniah Street, which was

also the end of the road and the end of the city and the end of the world: from there on, only steep, empty rocky terrains in the thick darkness, cliffs, caves, barren heights, valleys, stone villages lashed by rain and darkness [...]. All around, we were surrounded [...] (Oz 2004)

Oz's submarine is nothing more than a metaphorical descent into the unconscious - a space that harbors the enduring longing for Jerusalem, the eternal ideal pursued for millennia. All around lies nothingness, darkness, and danger. Indeed, at that moment, historic Jerusalem - the Old City, with the Western Wall - remains but a dream, a virtual destination, something to be imagined rather than possessed. What is taking shape is a paradoxical reality: a *diaspora within the Promised Land*.

The two-state hypothesis emerges later: first with the UN partition proposal (Fig. 2), and then with the actual territorial reorganization following the 1948 war (Fig. 3) and the subsequent Palestinian dispersal. At this point, one might cynically argue that the framework is nearly set. Two distinct entities exist - though riddled with contradictions - alongside the millions of refugees who have fled to neighboring states and the continued political control exerted by Egypt over Gaza and Jordan over the West Bank.

Yet, the newly established Jewish state retains a paradoxical characteristic: while founded on Jewish religious and cultural identity, it remains orphaned from its symbolic core - East Jerusalem, the Old City, the "End of History" toward which Jewish aspirations have been directed for two millennia. Paradoxically, even a secular-Zionist state continues to define itself in relation to this unattained ideal, gravitating toward its symbolic center while never fully claiming it. In this sense, the modern Jewish state is born without a nucleus, still carrying within it the syndrome of diaspora.

The Six-Day War or 'Creation' Failed

The true turning point came later, with the 1967 war and Israel's conquest of Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and Sinai. At that moment, the state became unified, extending its control over the entire territory from the Jordan River to the sea (Fig. 4). The symbolic center had been reclaimed. And here we return to the bewilderment of the Israeli soldiers standing before the Wall. Is the diaspora over? Must a new model of identity now be constructed? The IDF vanguards might have believed their journey had reached its conclusion - but in reality, this was not the case. From the very beginning, the West Bank paradoxically became a new opportunity to continue the historical narrative, opening up yet another horizon, one that seemed to suggest that the journey was far from over.

Beyond its implications for international politics and internal governance - ranging from demographic challenges to territorial control, from economic considerations to geopolitical and strategic concerns³ - the West Bank immediately takes on a deeper significance. It becomes a materialization of a mental space, a laboratory where identity solutions are tested, as if on a vast, unfolded map - a new frontier, in short.

Each of the proposed solutions for reorganizing this space serves as an answer to a fundamental question about Jewish identity. Thus, in the West Bank, beyond the material

tragedies unfolding before the world's eyes, we also witness a profound act of symbolic communication - a dialogue in which Israel negotiates with itself and, above all, with its own diasporic roots.

Let us now examine these proposed solutions.

1) The first is the extremist vision of Greater Israel, championed by Menachem Begin - initially a minister without portfolio in the government of national unity formed during the 1967 war, and later Prime Minister (1977–1983). Begin sought to incorporate all the newly conquered territories, aligning with a vision of an imagined community that could be traced back to vague “historical” borders (Bright 2000), oscillating between the eras of the First and Second Temples (Yehoshua 2004). This idea is also linked to geopolitical theology, particularly the concept of Greater Israel (Hashlemà Yisra’el), which, based on a literal reading of *Genesis 15:18*, envisions the land promised by God to the chosen people as stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates (Caracciolo 2024, 25). However, both territorial expansionist hypotheses remain unrealizable, given the presence of neighboring states. As a result, an alternative vision of Israel as a state confined between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River has increasingly taken shape.

2) The second idea, positioned at the opposite end of the spectrum, was proposed by Abba Eban, Israel's Foreign Minister (1966–1974). He advocated for the return of all occupied territories to Jordan, supporting a vision of a Small Israel - a modern but geographically reduced state, reverting to its pre-1967 borders.

3) A third hypothesis was formulated by Moshe Dayan, Israel's Defense Minister (1967–1974). As a military strategist, Dayan doubted the feasibility of maintaining full military control over the West Bank. He thus proposed the “four fists” strategy - establishing four military and civilian settlements strategically positioned from north to south in the West Bank: Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, and Hebron.

4) A fourth approach (Fig. 5) was put forward as early as 1969 by Yigal Allon, who briefly served as Prime Minister. He envisioned placing outposts and settlements just beyond the Green Line, forming a belt of settlements that would annex the Jordan Valley in the northeast and the Judean Desert in the southeast. This configuration would allow for Palestinian territorial continuity, but in practice, the Palestinian state would be encircled on three sides by Israel, making it highly controllable. Allon's idea later influenced Ehud Barak's plan (2000–2001) and, more drastically, Ariel Sharon's vision, first conceived in 1978 but implemented during his premiership (2003–2006). Sharon coupled Allon's concept with the separation wall, roughly following the pre-1967 border, to prepare for a strategic withdrawal of settlers behind it. This approach was continued under Prime Minister Ehud Olmert (2006–2009), who proposed the complete withdrawal from the West Bank, except for the annexed territories beyond the Green Line, which would be compensated with land of equivalent size in southern Israel.

5) The fifth solution (Fig. 6) has, in practice, been progressively envisioned and implemented over the fifteen years of Netanyahu's government (starting in 2009, with some intervals). In this approach, the government has actively supported settlers, facilitating a policy of territorial appropriation in the West Bank.

This colonial vision seeks to establish a network of fortified strongholds within external territories, resembling modern ghettos - initially conceived as defensive enclaves but later evolving into strategic outposts, gradually transforming foreign lands into Israeli national space. These fortified outpost-colonies are seamlessly connected to the Israeli heartland through an intricate network of bypass roads, which crisscross the West Bank. These fenced-off roads disrupt the territorial continuity of the West Bank, effectively dividing and fragmenting Palestinian lands into isolated enclaves.

Small outpost settlements, often inhabited by ultra-Orthodox settlers, are in continuous expansion, pushing outward from central settlements. As many have noted, this process has turned the West Bank into a Middle Eastern equivalent of the Far West (Baquis 2005, 33-40). The colonial minorities of the 'capturing the hilltops' project are constantly moving in for illegal occupation, carrying out real raids. From the original settlement usually placed on a hill and fortified, they choose a nearby deserted hill. Suddenly they attack it, occupying and defending it with caravans set up in a circle, water supplies, a camp synagogue. The "capturing the hilltops" strategy has fueled a cycle of perpetual illegal expansion, characterized by strategic raids: settlers establish an initial fortified settlement on a hilltop, then target an adjacent unoccupied hill, which they suddenly seize, occupy, and defend - using encircling caravans, water supplies, and even temporary synagogues. The new outpost then holds its ground until a connecting road is built to link it with the original settlement. At that point, the annexation is complete, and the expansion process moves on to the next hilltop.

In essence, this strategy represents a gradual, stage-by-stage expansion, aimed at territorial conquest and the appropriation of Palestinian land. However, its true strategic objective is the consolidation of space in pursuit of the Greater Israel project. The network of elevated fortifications, interconnected by a labyrinth of Israeli roads, is guarded and defended primarily by settler patrols - with military intervention occurring only in exceptional cases. This approach introduces a new symbolic paradigm within Jewish historical imagination - one that has no clear precedent in the 2,000-year diasporic experience, nor in the modern history of the State of Israel. It can be seen as a reconfiguration of the frontier concept, adapted to the restricted geography of the Middle East - a regional reinterpretation of the frontier ideology that shaped the expansion of the United States. However, unlike the European model, where a frontier functions as a fixed border (limes) demarcating and resisting the separation between two states, this Middle Eastern frontier is envisioned as an ever-shifting space, one that does not seek to repel but rather to assimilate and expand - a space in perpetual transformation that, rather than imposing limits, actively invites incursion (Tarzia & Iardi, 2015, 211-217).

According to Abraham Yehoshua, this repositioning in the West Bank represents nothing more than an almost unconscious and admittedly neurotic reproduction of the diaspora - a scattering in foreign territory that nevertheless remains symbolically and psychologically

oriented toward the center, Jerusalem (Yehoshua 2004, 58). This interpretation may hold some validity in the early stages of West Bank colonization. However, as settlement expansion has intensified - particularly under the Netanyahu government - the ultimate objective has become increasingly clear: the creation of a large Jewish state and the prevention of a neighboring Palestinian state.

Within such a state, the Palestinian entity would not possess a contiguous territorial structure, as envisioned in the Barak-Sharon-Holmer project. Instead, it would be fragmented into a network of isolated enclaves - effectively ghettos, sealed off from the outside world and tightly controlled. In this sense, the ideological objective is no longer a reiteration of the diaspora model, but rather the construction of a Jewish state firmly rooted in cultural and religious identity. More significantly, it represents an exorcistic reversal of the millennia-old diasporic condition - one in which the identity of exile is not abolished but rather displaced, reimposed onto the Palestinian population.

Assumptions about the future

To conclude. Attempting to outline possible future scenarios, despite the extraordinarily complex and ever-evolving nature of the situation, we can envision three potential trajectories.

1) The first scenario is the one rhetorically invoked by Western media narratives and endorsed by many governments, including the Biden administration (though not Trump's, of course) and the Vatican: the creation of two neighboring states. However, we believe that the last viable opportunity to implement this solution was Ehud Olmert's 2008 proposal. At present, this scenario appears practically impossible. There are approximately 700,000 settlers in the West Bank, and relocating them beyond the separation wall - behind the Green Line - would be politically and logistically feasible only at the risk of inciting a civil war within Israel.

2) The second scenario is the opposite hypothesis - the establishment of a single, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious state, incorporating both Jews and Palestinian Arabs as equal citizens with the same legal and political rights. Yet, this prospect also seems highly unlikely at the moment - unless there is a radical shift in Israeli public opinion, which would, in turn, drive future governments toward a different political course. It is worth noting, however, that this idea is not entirely foreign to Israel's historical foundations. Early Zionist thought, for instance, envisioned a network of interwoven territorial spaces, fostering a relationship of coexistence with Palestinian territorial enclaves. In many respects, the original 1947 UN partition plan (Fig. 2) was conceptually aligned with this vision - although structured in macro-regional divisions rather than the decentralized constellation originally imagined.

3) Finally, the third hypothesis - the one we have sought to describe throughout these pages: the creation of an expanded Jewish state, incorporating a series of Palestinian enclaves,

fragmented into a constellation-like arrangement, with Gaza as the most significant and geopolitically relevant enclave. This weakening of Palestinian territorial cohesion would also be pursued through a policy of demographic depletion.

According to Israeli military strategists and the ultra-Orthodox right-wing factions that dominate much of the government, the targeted actions in Gaza and the West Bank should lead to the forced expatriation of as many Palestinians as possible to Egypt and Jordan. The plan envisions Israel financing well-equipped refugee camps in these neighboring countries and persuading their governments to accept Palestinian displacement through substantial economic incentives (Caracciolo 2024, 12-16)⁴. The plausibility of this scenario is already evident in the first statements of newly elected U.S. President Donald Trump, who has openly entertained the possibility of such population transfers.

In essence, the military elimination of Hamas and its expulsion from Gaza would serve a primarily tactical purpose within this broader strategy. Gaza, rather than being an independent entity, is expected to become a secure enclave within Israeli territory, much like the Palestinian enclaves in the West Bank. The strategic objective is clear: to abandon both the path leading to two contiguous states and the alternative of a single, multi-ethnic, and multicultural state with equal citizenship rights for Jews and Palestinians. Instead, the vision is the establishment of a singular Jewish state, incorporating tightly controlled Palestinian enclaves, a modern reconfiguration of Eretz Yisrael.

In this framework, the separation wall along the Green Line would transition from being a front-line defense to a secondary barrier, and over time, it could even be dismantled to facilitate greater Israeli territorial continuity. Meanwhile, smaller walls would be constructed to systematically confine and “internalize” Palestinian settlements within Israel’s territorial domain.

This vision represents not a return to the original Zionist conception of the Jewish state, but rather its distortion - a reinterpretation shaped by Netanyahu’s policies (i.e., the faction of the Israeli government that still nominally identifies as secular). The Orthodox perspective, in contrast, is even more extreme, deeply religious, and apocalyptic in its outlook.

However, even before Netanyahu, this ideological shift can be traced back to Menachem Begin and, ultimately, to the right-wing Zionism of Ze’ev Jabotinsky. Jabotinsky’s vision for Israel originally proposed the formation of a multi-ethnic but predominantly Jewish state, in which Jewish demographic and political dominance would be clearly maintained (Caracciolo 2024, 24-32). This fundamental principle remains at the core of Israeli governmental strategy, driven by the awareness that Palestinian population growth far outpaces Jewish demographic expansion.

Thus, the ghettoization of Palestinian enclaves is not an accidental consequence but a deliberate mechanism of demographic and territorial control, rooted in the aspiration to ensure Jewish numerical supremacy. What is entirely erased from this framework, however, is the principle of equal national identity among different ethnic groups - a notion that was once embedded in early Zionist thought but has now been largely abandoned.

A final issue that must be addressed is what we might call the counter-indications of this transformation. The new configuration of the Israeli state would, from a symbolic and identity-based perspective, carry an even deeper significance: the transition from a diasporic

identity to a national-state identity - a true anthropological reversal. The people of the diaspora would finally become a people like any other, within a state like any other.

This was Yehoshua's vision, but not in the form of a "container" state, where all Jews are absorbed into a single geopolitical entity. Instead, he imagined it through a two-state solution, where Jewish and Palestinian identities would remain distinct yet coexisting.

And here we return to the aforementioned counter-indications. To fully understand them, we must revisit the very concept of the diaspora and reorganize some of the ideas previously discussed.

One interpretation - Yehoshua's own - views the eternal oscillation between the shtetl and Jerusalem as a spatial manifestation of the perpetual oscillation between nationality and religion. This unresolved movement allows the Jewish people not to choose, to avoid the necessity of defining themselves solely by either national identity or religious identity. In short, it represents a neurotic diaspora - a condition that, while precarious, has endured for centuries.

A second perspective, introduced by Stefano Levi Della Torre, attributes the oscillatory process a completely opposite meaning. In this view, the diaspora is not a neurosis, but a vital and adaptive identity mechanism - one that has ensured Jewish survival for over two millennia (Levi Della Torre, 1995). The historical anchor of this mechanism has always been the ghetto - a space of forced enclosure, yet also of cultural and spiritual preservation. The closed ghetto at night allowed for an idealized reconnection with the spiritual center - Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the gates opening in the morning enabled economic and cultural engagement with the surrounding nations 'of belonging' (Zanini 1997). This, according to Levi Della Torre, constitutes a salvific and vital diaspora - one that balances tradition with integration.

However, there is also a third interpretation - one that we have already encountered, and which represents, in a sense, a degeneration of the latter. Here, the ghetto never opens - not even during the day. It ceases to engage with the external world, sealing itself off completely as a means of defending tradition. This is precisely the model evoked by Amos Oz's metaphors - the fortified house, the submerged submarine, the darkness beyond that is insidious and dangerous. Though Oz himself was an advocate for dialogue, his imagery points to a deep-seated historical imprint on the Jewish people, one that has re-emerged in the territorial reality of the 20th century: the idea that the diaspora must be defensive, vigilant, even suffocating - a state of self-exclusion and self-reflection.

It is this last vision that underpins the logic of the current territorial restructuring in the West Bank and Gaza. The settler expansion operates under two spatial conceptions: one that sees territory as a frontier to be conquered, and another that views it as a wilderness in which to implant fortified strongholds, impermeable to the outside world.

The final act of this process will be the complete inversion of spatial categories: the wilderness (Es) will be transformed into the internalized space (In), as the West Bank is annexed to Israel. In parallel, the network of Israeli settlements - once resembling scattered enclaves - will be consolidated into a unified whole, while the remaining Palestinian areas will be fragmented into a constellation of isolated ghettos, embedded within the redefined Israeli space of Judea and Samaria - what was once the West Bank.

If this is the case, then a deeply paradoxical consequence follows from this great symbolic reversal. What was envisioned - and indeed founded - as a new homeland, a safe refuge for Jews worldwide, risks becoming nothing more than an immense ghetto. This time, however, it is not enclosed by physical walls, but by the hostility of the surrounding world, where antisemitism continues to rise with each passing day (Foa 2024).

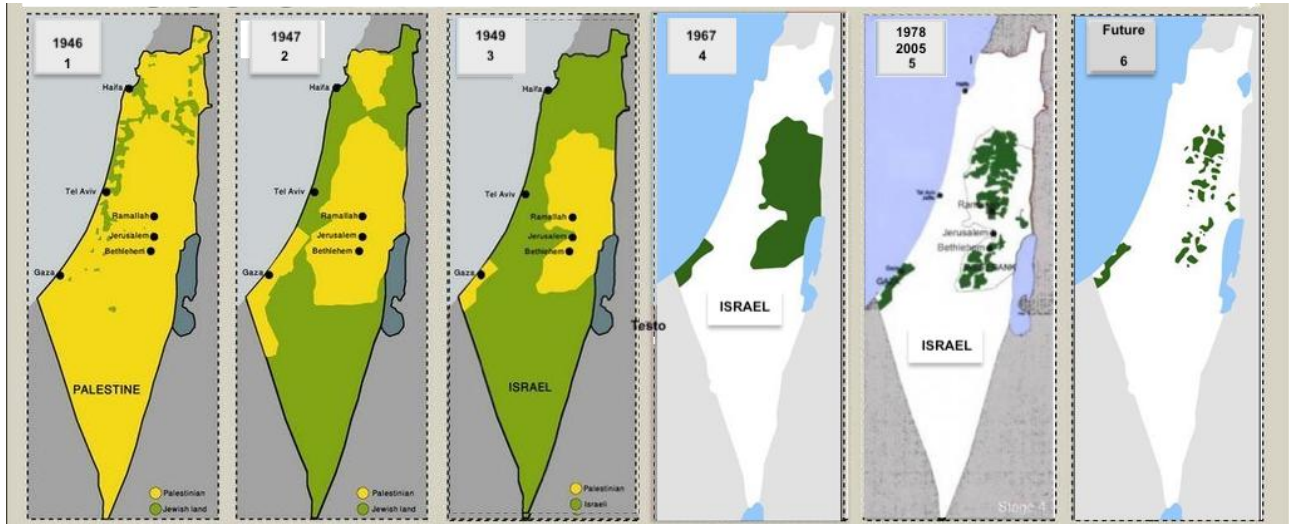


Fig. 1-6_ Territorial distribution between Palestine and Israel from 1946 to the present and future projections

Nota biografica

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Note

¹ For an in-depth study of this angle, we refer at least to the following texts: Morin, E. (1962). *L'esprit du temps 1. Nevrose*. Paris: Édition Grasset & Fasquelle; Durand, G. (1963). *Les structures anthropologiques de l'Imaginaire*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France; Abruzzese, A. (1973). *Forme estetiche e società di massa. Arte e pubblico nell'età del capitalismo*. Venezia: Marsilio; Debray, R. (1992). *Vie et mort de l'image*. Paris: Édition Gallimard.

² <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/shari-motro/2018/04/13/mappe-pace-israele-palestina>

³ Cfr. Limes, 10 (2023). *Guerra grande in Terrasanta*; Limes, 3 (2005). *La potenza di Israele*; Limes, 9 (2024). *La notte di Israele*.

⁴ Cfr. Israel's "Generals" Plan explained: Controversial strategy to "starve" Gaza civilians until Hamas surrenders. *The Week*, 12/10/2024.