

Road landscape, Palestine



# OCTAGON 2021

**New perspectives for the  
Israel-Palestine conflict:**  
a roadmap for global justice  
in the 21st century

Madrid, Spain | 20 November

OCTAGON 

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# PRESENTATION

The **Common Action Forum** (CAF), a transnational, non-profit organization founded in Madrid, Spain, in 2015, serves as a global network. It convenes renowned and emerging experts from diverse backgrounds, including academia, politics, journalism, and activism.

Advocating for alternative narratives oriented toward fair, global cosmopolitanism, CAF establishes and promotes independent platforms of cooperation, research, innovation, and advisory. It seeks to encourage alternative solutions, supporting an active citizenry and forming a new social contract in the process. In doing so, CAF addresses urgent issues including, neo-fascist politics, increasing inequalities, the social impacts of technology, and the planet's environmental limits.

Since its founding in 2015, CAF has organized a forum annually, examining a series of progressive issues to expand a productive conversation oriented towards change. In 2019, CAF extended this to a program of two annual events, allowing for even further exchange and action among relevant experts and actors. From this, OCTAGON was born, as a private encounter under Chatham House rules, which annually convenes up to 32 international experts in Madrid.

Furthermore, Madrid, home to the Common Action Forum, has also been a symbol of and a witness to the latest failed chapters of the long-standing catastrophe between Israel and Palestine. For this reason, driven by the latest resumption of hostilities in May 2021 and as aligned with our mission of transformation and our commitment to developing new narratives capable of overcoming the dilemmas of our time, CAF will dedicate several consecutive meetings of the OCTAGON forum to addressing this conflict.

Joining the world in the first steps of a slow and erratic return to pre-pandemic normalcy and after 2020 marked by digital encounters, OCTAGON\_2021 brought together, in November of the same year, 32 international experts from academia and the policy, media, and civil society spheres — particularly analysts specializing in the Middle East and

activists, journalists and university professors from Israel-Palestine.

Thus, through four thematic sessions, "New Perspectives for Israel-Palestine: roadmap for Global Justice in the 21st Century" has sought to address the Palestinian issue by transcending the conceptual framework in which it has been trapped for more than 50 years.

The ideas in the following document constitute a compendium of the main agreements, the many doubts, and the outstanding dissents put forward by its participants. It should be emphasized that this report does not reflect the entirety of the visions and issues presented during the event's discussions and that it does not aspire to be a systematic analysis capable of providing a clear and immediate solution to one of the major socio-political conundrums facing humanity. If anything, it aims to rethink and refocus the certainties and uncertainties about this conflict as much as the global transformation in which we are immersed already demands for all the others.

For more detailed information about CAF's work, mission, vision, and values, please visit our website [www.commonactionforum.net](http://www.commonactionforum.net).



## Introduction

It has been 30 years since the Madrid Peace Conference paved the way for the Oslo Accords, and almost 20 years have passed since the Quartet on the Middle East sat down again in that same city to define its "roadmap for peace." With the current-state-of affairs in mind, it is not hard to note how the international efforts displayed to address the Palestinian question have served the primary purpose of establishing geographical and demographical transformation at its very heart. A transformation that not only violates the human rights of its inhabitants but defends and develops unacceptable political interests. This whole time and, despite all the "compromises" reached, as the threat of antisemitism still lingers, the despair of a dispossessed, oppressed, and besieged Palestine keeps growing. Today, Jerusalem represents an open wound, Tel-Aviv a schizophrenic symbol, Gaza a shadow of a city under a permanent state of siege, while the West Bank is a land ruined by the perversity of ethnic cleansing and colonization.

Few know it was the modern search for a solution to the conflict between Palestine and Israel that eventually led to coining the concept and phrase "peace process," shaping the global imaginary of complex conflict resolution. It is not completely outlandish that the world keeps as a reference a solution that was never really there, though. Not if we consider the international community's complicity is still key in sustaining the regime of permanent crisis that continues to entrench itself between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River. Rather than the tale of the quintessential sovereign dilemma of the XX century, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is the calculated chronicle of a historical failure. A search for peace flawed by design.

Throughout a single day, the four sessions comprising the OCTAGON\_2021 aimed at addressing this conflict beyond the mechanisms with which history still tries to excuse it: from the cynical asymmetries of Oslo to the ethnic cleansing materializing in the occupied territories, through the correlation of forces in the multilateral labyrinth and the conceptual architecture that still today binds us to the one-or-two-states dilemma. Ultimately, this forum reflected upon how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict represents not just the epitome but the symbol of the great ghosts of colonialism and the post-WWII world order bequeathed to us. To that same extent, we wondered if it too hides the potential not just to have the world witness the triumph of dignity and resistance but also to grant us answers to deal with a global paradigm in disarray.

However, this encounter does not intend to fool itself. There are no Solomonic solutions attainable in the place we have searched in for 50 years. We will not find them there now. The challenge we face is to push for strategies capable of changing the narrative, of finding a way to look upon this conflict beyond the engineered stagnation that monopolizes it. Ultimately, we need to find a new territory over which to build a real solution.



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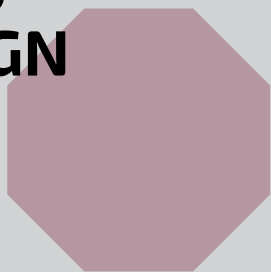
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## CONCLUSIONS: BEYOND THE NATION-STATE?

# 01\_ **FLAWED BY DESIGN**



As highlighted throughout this edition of the OCTAGON, in a matter of 30 years, the post-Madrid diplomacy moved from a “land for peace” formula into a “peace for peace” one. Thus, dropping an alleged coexistence focus favoring one that proposed preventing conflict as an end in itself, with no concessions whatsoever. The perpetual stagnation of negotiations (and of any expectations around them) has acted as the perfect window of opportunity: under the eyes of a nonchalant world, colonization behind the green line continues, just as the unending occupation does.

However, it must be noted that the Israeli reluctance to honor the “land for peace” principle goes back to the foundational ideals of the Likud itself: at the dawn of their rise to power in 1997, Menachem Begin proposed the notion of “autonomy” as the right to economic and housing opportunities, with no more political rights but to an elected local authority capable of coordinating things like commerce, education, health, and transport. Under that notion, Israel would maintain security control, and Jewish residents would remain entitled to acquire land and settle there. This “autonomy”, so suspiciously close to the state of affairs we now find between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River, was consolidated by the Camp David Accords. It is the procedural legacy that prevailed through Madrid and Oslo: failed negotiations as a means to an end, an “autonomy” capable of ruling out Palestinian self-determination. Through this strategy and under the pretext of buying time, provisional agreements managed to alleviate pressure locally, postponing indefinitely key matters (such as the end of the occupation, the right of return, or the status of Jerusalem), all while colonization proceeds.

### **Palestinian “autonomy”**

Israel’s Basic Law already establishes “the development of Jewish settlement as a national value” and that the state “will act to encourage and promote its establishment and consolidation”. This also denies by omission the existence of the Palestinian people, and by extension, their fundamental rights. These provisions already show the way for a legal doctrine that justifies the continuity of the settling policies by the Israeli apparatus, which cynically denies the existence in that land of the very historical communities it evicts in the process. The continued validity of this legal and political mechanism de facto cancels any possibility of Palestinian self-determination in its denial of Palestine’s existence in itself, exposing

Israeli colonial practices that go way beyond the Likud’s ideals. Those are rooted in Israel’s very state model and have been normalized in its political practice. All this can be easily confirmed in how segregation and settlement policies live on under the Naftali Benett-Yair Lapid coalition, whose only reason to exist is to keep the Likud and Benjamin Netanyahu away from power; and which, against all conceivable odds, integrates the Joint List Arab party.

So it is that under the pretext of its provisionality, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) de facto underpinned the very notion of autonomy that upholds these policies by endorsing Oslo; in a sense, sacrificing the basic principles of national self-determination by doing so—Formalizing in the eyes of the world the ceiling of Palestinian self-rule and buying into Israel’s aspirations. Ever since Oslo, this blueprint of sub-sovereignty suspended in time has been the universal template for the Israeli, American, European and wider-Western conception of what Palestinians could or should ever achieve in political terms.

From its inception as an interim organization until today, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has acted as a proxy for the state of Israel in terms of local management, information exchange, PR campaign broadcasting, and general civil suppression. The PA and the PLO are interlinked and functionally analogous structures and share common interests. Thus, in their respective roles as political leaders and official international spokespeople, both have ultimately proven to be obstacles in the true search for sovereignty—by operating against civil movements and blocking international initiatives threatening the status quo, like BDS or recognition efforts.

### One-State reality

The two-state solution, formalized with the signing of Oslo by both participants and witnesses, is the way forward we now take for granted—dismissing the permanent crisis on the ground as a mere matter of time. It has been the rhetorical framework that has enabled the expansion of settlements and the continuity of the occupation, and the “apathy” (or maybe the long-lasting perplexity) of an entire generation of Palestinians. As the course of OCTAGON\_2021 made clear, it is at the very least controversial to speak in such terms of a society inherently based on resistance, whose narrative today continues to inspire struggles all around the world. Furthermore, it is simplistic, considering the enormous differences in mobilization between Palestinian communities and social segments. But in any case, it is pertinent to speak of a Palestinian society mostly resigned to accepting the terms of the peace process and interpreting its options and aspirations through them. At the same time, this so-called solution also serves to disguise the international community's incompetence (both in coordinating real proposals and in fulfilling its commitments), absolving state actors, international organizations, and the foreign public opinion of any dilemmas, difficult choices, and especially of any historical responsibilities for the founding process of Israel and its future. Thanks to the formalized Oslo framework and the two-state solution, most of the major players involved assumed decades ago that their part was done and that, in time, the issue would resolve itself. Today, though, regardless of the rhetorical gymnastics and denial of the facts by that long list of co-responsible parties, that same status quo crumbles indisputably.

In any case, the OCTAGON\_2021 talks made it clear that addressing the Palestinian issue through the old dilemma between one and two-state solutions in itself already promotes an illusory discussion, which only encourages the everlasting extension of that Palestinian “autonomy”. It is not a matter of deciding where to head but understanding what we are up against. Whether or not the failure of one supposed solution validates the possibility of the other, on the ground, de facto, there is one state. And that's the state of Israel. Recognizing this should be the basic premise for any analysis leading to a real solution.

Israel controls the territory both inside and outside its internal “borders” (this includes the land of Israel; the entirety of Jerusalem; the West Bank and all its occupied enclaves; and the besieged Gaza Strip) through various interrelated mechanisms: military occupation and aggression; and policies of segregation and active settlement, with the guarantors of international inaction and the complicity of the PA. Of the above, the policies of systematic segregation and ethnic cleansing affect Arab citizens of Israel, the inhabitants of the occupied territories, and the besieged population in Gaza, and indirectly extend to refugees and exiles. They establish clear limits to their political and civil rights, affecting aspects as diverse as education, marriage, return, urban planning, citizenship, or even the use of roads; and are combined with complex systems of harassment, coercion, selective repression, and control of dissent. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the academic majority of experts on the Middle East who endorse this analysis, considering that it is undeniably analogous to the South African apartheid system, both in its legal and factual provisions.

Let us emphasize, in any case, that to state that the situation in Israel-Palestine is analogous to apartheid is but a functional description. In these dialogues, there is clear agreement that while the South African experience contains elements and references of indisputable value in understanding and navigating the Palestinian issue, it is self-evident that the reality on the ground, the historical trajectory, and the international context are and will be different between both cases. As it is natural in political science, the solution to the Palestinian question will be necessarily and specifically Palestinian.

## 02\_ “MUDDY” GEOPOLITICS



One of the most discussed aspects of these talks has been the enormous obstacle posed by the “muddy” geopolitical arena in which the planet is mired, not only for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also for the global future in general.

We have not faced such geopolitical uncertainty since the end of WWII. The known international order is running out of steam, displaying an unequivocal failure to address global existential challenges such as the climate crisis, the decline of global trust in institutions or the regulation of technology; and historical structural problems, such as hunger or the dramatic increase in inequality. Exceptional circumstances such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in the balance of hegemonic powers further contribute to this instability.

Against this backdrop, the geopolitical game implicit in the Palestinian liberation struggle is even more complex today than it was for our forerunners. On the other hand, to the extent that this conflict embodies the main ghosts of decolonization and the departing world order, the participants of OCTAGON\_2021 agree that continuing to address it is not only a moral obligation but also an unparalleled opportunity to seek answers to the great unknowns of the future of our world.

### Israel in the world

For decades now, the state of Israel has carefully crafted an image of belonging to the liberal-democratic international order (let us call it the West) by dissociating itself from the Middle East. One of its most relevant recent transformations has been its explicit alignment with the global rise of the far-right and neo-nationalist political movements, and the provision of military-grade mass surveillance technology services to authoritarian actors and regimes. It is also clear from these conversations, and this cannot be overlooked, that these technologies (from database-linked facial recognition systems to the now infamous Pegasus spying malware) have been developed with Palestinian society as their experimental subject. The war on terror and post-9/11 transformations, with the resulting increase in global demand for

security services, have been the main driving force behind Israel's development on this path and the redefinition of its international role, especially in regions such as Africa.

This singular form of development has also had critical strategic consequences in the Middle East: while the normalization of relations with its neighbors was thought to be the main incentive for Israel to commit to peace in the early stages of the process that would culminate in Oslo, today the Abraham Accords (2020), under a performative pretext of reconciliation, have come to formalize a model of cooperation that circumvents the Palestinian question—and in which Arab diplomacy today puts more pressure on the Palestinians than on Israel itself, with countries such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at the forefront.

To this, we must add the now traditional “realpolitik chokehold” that the Israeli lobbying capacity maintains over key institutional placements in the US and Europe. Its financing/intimidation mechanisms have been perfected and developed for more than a century. As discussed below, this strategic support translates into a form of international protection that has blocked any action capable of discouraging Israel's humanitarian trajectory for decades.

### **Regional collapse**

Another highlight of these talks reflected how, beyond its contemporary development and its national and international implications, Israeli society is in a state of implosion, immersed in a constant political crisis and a spiral of civil violence encouraged by its own institutions. Palestinian society is also under a new form of crisis, with new generations increasingly fed up with the deceitful narrative of the peace process and in open confrontation with the Palestinian Authority (which

has been postponing elections since 2006) and the rest of the occupation's institutions.

This explosive clash is in turn framed within a generalized regional collapse of the Middle East, which for decades has been showing increasingly dramatic signs of exhaustion the Arab Springs failed to curb. Changes in global trends such as the energy market and the perpetual erosion of nations with chronic severe structural problems (economic stagnation, unemployment, inequality, oligarchic disputes, etc.), often mired in open civil conflict, indicate an inevitable breakdown with potentially devastating consequences. Furthermore, this entirely affects Israel, regardless of its perception of Western membership or its extra-regional strategic alignments. In other words, but perhaps more hopefully, the Middle East, in general, needs a transformation that, like the Palestinian question, can no longer be postponed.



03\_  
**UNDERSTANDING  
THE WAYS  
FORWARD**

Looking to the future, it will be essential to address the Palestinian issue without conflating two distinct challenges: the abolition of the apartheid regime that exists in the context of this one-state and the creation of a new home for all those who today live between the river and the sea. While complementary, these are not the same goals and require different strategies.



### **Fighting an apartheid regime**

The international community and the institutional Palestinian political leadership are committed to preserving a Jewish homeland in Palestine whose basic premise (as reflected in the peace process) is ultimately Jewish supremacism.

Beyond the fact that they adhered to a two-state solution in which complete Palestinian sovereignty was never on the table, these agreements are rooted in the idea that Palestine can and must be partitioned to make room for a Jewish homeland. That partition already separates the Palestinian population into citizens of Israel, inhabitants of the occupied territories, refugees, and exiles. In itself, it is a reaffirmation of the current apartheid regime and its settler-colonial essence. Furthermore, while we are at it, the international community was aware of the immoral implications of Israel's founding from the very beginning, as it continues to be in its neglect of the current state of affairs. For decades, the international legal apparatus (which is also of colonial origin) has endorsed the fact that issues related to colonization and decolonization processes are to be dealt with as domestic conflicts, through national courts. However, the actual effectiveness and value of international justice, in general, is an issue for another day.

There are many possible strategies to abolish an apartheid regime, but summarizing the inputs issued during OCTAGON\_2021, could be narrowed down to two main groups: altering the Israeli incentive structure and finding a new narrative for the conflict. Both, however, are inextricably linked by the same necessity, the advent of a new Palestinian leadership.

### **Altering the incentive structure**

For the BDS movement and the international diplomatic and criminal avenues to truly gain traction, it is imperative to address the incentive structure upon which Israel sustains its actions, which it has been strengthening with newer sets of hegemonic relations in the world.

For decades, the handling of this conflict has been instrumentalized to the point of establishing a coexistence industry designed to mobilize political capital locally, regionally, and internationally, and which is yet to solve any structural problem whatsoever. Furthermore, let us be clear, Israel is not the only actor mobilizing such capital to pursue its interests. The solutions that today address the issue from the standpoint of economic peace and conflict mitigation are an extension of the notions of 'autonomy' and 'peace for peace' as ultimate goals (which, as mentioned before, endorse the status quo and operate within the same discourse-validating it), and should therefore be abandoned.

The OCTAGON\_2021 talks have made clear that the US remains the main guarantor of Israel's international impunity. Its protection has prevented any accountability and has encouraged behavior that did not generate consequences. It is true that among American public opinion, particularly in the progressive sphere, there is an increasing de-exceptionalization of the Palestinian issue. However, although this could lead to transformations of interest in time, there are still no straightforward ways for such a change to influence a US strategic trend that moves in the opposite direction. All the more so if we consider that the US may find itself on the threshold of a period of political and civil conflict capable of overturning even its own institutional rules. While this could imply a significant withdrawal of its international presence, it could also mean the advent of unpredictable and enormously destructive behavior.

All these factors suggest that while we must remain vigilant of the US' role, looking beyond US hegemony is now more important than ever.

These dialogues have highlighted the importance of transcending the Western scope and building new alliances that provide legitimacy and symbolic support —by understanding which state actors could benefit today from a direct alliance with Palestine: countries in Latin America and Africa, or Muslim-majority countries such as Turkey, Malaysia, or Qatar.

An overtly contested aspect of this conversation concerns the implications of reaching out to state actors such as the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its entourage. Countries such as Iran could be of strategic interest, given its frictions with Israel, but Russia is an internationally ambivalent and unpredictable actor, and China remains focused on its aspirations of territorial integration and its area of economic influence. In the latter case, Israel is a key player in its international macro-investment initiative of the Belt and Road. As the only country on the current geopolitical chessboard that fosters good relations with both Sunni and Shiite governments, it is to be expected that the primacy of its commercial interests will remain the pinnacle of its foreign policy. On the other hand, as a political reference, China's trajectory runs the risk of resembling Israel's current thesis, since it endorses a state strategy according to which political reform is not necessary with a given level of economic development.

Moreover, the importance of the anti-terrorism discourse as an alibi for China's ethnic cleansing policies, such as that of the Uyghurs, also raises doubts about the possibilities of this approach and how desirable it would be. Furthermore, this opens up a whole range of more abstract considerations: despite knowing that the geopolitical game is based on strategic interests, if the main asset

of the Palestinian struggle is precisely moral legitimacy, how would a potential partnership with authoritarian actors affect it? Could a narrative of struggle based on principles of freedom, equality, and dignity approach regimes, regional and extra-regional, that feel openly threatened by similar discourses? To what extent can we operate geopolitically based on humanist values? Is an international model with interests far removed from the moral foundations of its societies at all sustainable?

Looking ahead, we will have to continue to navigate and question the relationship between international law, state and para-state actors, strategic interests, and civil strife and legitimacy. However, the key of any geopolitical approach to this issue remains in the hands of a PLO subservient to Israel, which is the only official Palestinian stakeholder recognized and legitimized in the eyes of the international community. Therefore, supporting the articulation of a truly unifying political actor in Palestine is a vital step toward altering this incentive structure.

### **A new leadership**

In addition to an effective international boycott campaign and the given legitimacy of their struggle, the fundamental element in the equation that led to the abolition of apartheid in South Africa was the existence of a well-structured civil organization such as the ANC, capable of acting as a representative and of exercising certain forms of resistance. Thus, we cannot dismiss the potential of civil movements to translate into more or less direct political power, nor the value of mass mobilization in itself.

The last decade has evidenced a growing global tendency to approach the greatest conflicts of our time from a social justice perspective and contextualizing the Palestinian struggle within this trend necessarily involves approaching the

conflict from the perspective of anti-racism. We are witnessing a form of international intersectionality that is different from the feeling of national solidarity of the last century. And the civil actions of the Palestinian youth, increasingly detached from local institutions and their discourse, are also part of this trend.

A solid and well-structured civilian platform could become an international pressure group, aspiring also to bring together the diplomatic, financial, and media capabilities of millions of Palestinians in exile. In the mid-term, though, it would be essential to nurture a civil society capable of leaping into the institutional politics it now distrusts. Achieving a peaceful and democratic solution will require a project that aspires to accumulate and deploy political power, a change capable of uniting the various Palestinian communities and generational strata.

Looking ahead, it will require not only structures that go beyond the PA and PLO's subservience but also beyond their organizational models, aspiring to something which can keep up with the spirit of the times and engage with realities such as digitization, globalization, and the fragmentation of the Palestinian diaspora. And resistance is not only to be expected from Israel's side: the perpetuation of the PA is also in the interest of a large number of Palestinians who today constitute its structure, all the way from grassroots officials to institutional representatives.

## 04\_ **A PARADIGM SHIFT**



New leadership is the key to establishing and promoting a new narrative on the conflict, but the narrative itself will also be needed beforehand to change the equation and aspire to solve a problem unsolvable by design. It is essential to transcend the conceptual framework of segregation that the tale of the peace process has imposed. The Palestinian people need a new language to understand themselves, outside the paradigm of colonialism and structural racism with which they are oppressed — a narrative of their own. Moreover, the world, both the global civil society and traditional state actors, will need it as well to re-understand the reality of their cause.

Unsurprisingly, though, this language—the thousand pieces of this bottom-up narrative—is naturally brewing within Palestinian civil society, and the distancing of the younger generation from Palestinian institutions and traditional avenues of political action is an obvious symptom of this. So, there is nothing to create, per se. We must nurture this language and let the worldview it brings emerge, understanding the dilemmas it faces and, especially, the forces that are already working to thwart it.

### **The media problem**

Needless to say, the role of media is and will be crucial in the fight for justice, but also in framing the facts. The global decline of reliable and independent media will be as much an obstacle to all this as the growing weight of information flows framed by digital platforms where verification is impossible. The level of control large transnational conglomerates hold over these platforms exposes their interests, as much as their enormous capacity to create and manage narratives.

Therefore, in thinking about the need for new narratives, we must also understand that the tools we have at our disposal to deliver them are changing. And fast. If we do not take action as soon as possible regarding the regulation and transparency of this technology, the problems we will face go far beyond the Palestinian issue.

Financial support for independent and public interest media is essential to develop an international understanding of the cause, but also to broadcast a decolonized language that does not hide words such as "occupation," "segregation", or "repression." To re-frame the conversation as circumstances require it is vital to recovering the emotionality of the facts and their human significance as a drive for inspiration, giving more

voice to the thousands of stories already being shared through means like social networks.

Promoting these voices is also vital in transcending the image of the Palestinian people as perpetual victims (if not the retrograde and violent society Israeli propaganda tries to portray). Let us speak of a society forged in resistance, but also of a vibrant culture, rich in history, heritage, innovation, art, and knowledge.

### **About zionism**

In framing this new conversation about Palestine, as we keep addressing the political aspects of a humanitarian crisis, we must also turn to the humanitarian aspects of a political project and its roots. The root problem of Zionism transcends academic debates about apartheid or the harshness of occupation. As we have discussed, those are but tools. Zionism itself is not even the only ideology at stake here: the crux of the issue in the main dimensions of this conflict is settler colonialism and its underlying racism. Ultimately, the Palestinians are fighting against the idea that an exclusively Jewish home can be implanted in Palestine.

Furthermore, perhaps the most effective ideological device of modern Zionism has been the cynical and systematic association of any position contrary to its tenets with antisemitism. This mechanism has blocked and continues to block the emergence of Palestinian narratives by policing its language, and can only be countered by doing precisely what it is designed to prevent: furthering the conversation. Let us be clear, antisemitism is real, it is out there, and poses a serious threat to the world. This discourse, however, exploits Jewish cultural concerns and historical Jewish suffering as a rhetorical prop to justify an inhumane and colonial project. The dissociation between Zionist ideology and Jewish identity is of the utmost interest and,

deciphering the conundrums it raises will be key to the success of true solidarity between the two peoples. However, it is not a challenge that the Palestinian people can or should undertake in articulating political visions for their future. Who and how will support Jewish society in addressing this question is a different matter. To promote real action, we will have to differentiate the two, just as with building a common home and the abolition of the apartheid regime.

In addressing this paradigm transformation, it is also worth considering that the Israeli propaganda and policy apparatus is already moving to influence global pro-social justice discourses. Since 2006 and before its recent merger with the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the primary objective of the Ministry for Strategic Affairs has been to combat the “international de-legitimization” of Israel through targeted lobbying, directed at state agendas, elites and media conglomerates. However, in recent years much of its budget has been focused on campaigns directed at civil society. They are aware that the traditional intimidation tools of political lobbying will not work with grassroots movements. Nevertheless, they will continue developing alternative ways to sustain the status quo, particularly regarding technological capacities applied to civil society's primary means of communication and coordination: social media.

### **Building a new home for all**

The idea of a shared home for Jews and Arabs as existed before British colonization is almost as old as its counter-narrative: the position of weakness and potential oppression in which the Jewish population would be left in the face of an Arab majority. This idea also weaponizes and deforms Jewish idiosyncrasy and reminds us how, for many, the colonization of Palestine remains a matter of historical reparation or at least an alibi for it.

One of the significant conceptual advantages of relinquishing the narrative of the two-state solution is that it also entails questioning that the existence of an exclusively Jewish state is the only solution to antisemitism; so, we should not be afraid to raise such possibilities. As happened in South Africa with the Afrikaner population, we will face the challenge of convincing the Jewish society that renouncing this colonial project is actually in their interest. Even if none of the solutions we can imagine today will bring about a clear social harmony, any of them is better than the current scenario of uncontrolled violence that threatens both societies—which already trails an immense generational and cultural damage. Yes, we will have to work to align Palestinian society with the idea of a shared home, but that work will not be feasible until Israeli society begins to take it seriously. Just as in the 1970s, when they did not recognize the existence of the occupation, any Israeli actor with the will today to build something new will have to acknowledge the existence of the apartheid regime. There is no joint narrative possible between colonizers and the colonized. The only real choice lies between a colonial narrative and a decolonial one, requiring great but different psychosocial efforts on both sides.

To achieve this, it may be instrumental to favor real shared political spaces, mechanisms to create pockets of equality capable of developing that common narrative, one that looks to the future without denying the past. Furthermore—in addition to anti-Zionist Jews in Israel and the world—it will be vital to deepen the alignment of Palestinian civil society with social and democratic movements in Arab countries. This conflict cannot be resolved without the Arab world. It may seem paradoxical but pretending that the territory remains independent of the region (in an artificial effort to continue to ascribe it to the West) will only perpetuate the imbalance of power that today links it to its authoritarian hegemonic powers.

The great challenge this will pose is that if these spaces and alliances reproduce the same patterns of domination present today in Israel-Palestine, they will only contribute to sustaining the current structure of oppression.

In any case, and as this forum's participants agree, we do not know what this shared home would be like. We do not know the alternative to the dilemma of one-and two-state solutions. Simply because we must build it, we must let it be born. We must transcend the idea that we cannot move forward because we have not yet articulated that alternative. Whatever model it is, it will be specific to Palestine and will be determined by the Palestinian people, with the support of their allies. It will emerge in the struggle against an apartheid regime and rethinking ideas like sovereignty and homeland.

Now, in this process, and considering all the global circumstances in which we are caught up, we will have to ask ourselves whether the Palestinian issue can be solved in a vacuum at all. When we begin to consider that, we will be able to ask ourselves how visionary we can ultimately aspire to be.

05\_  
**CONCLUSIONS:  
BEYOND THE  
NATION-STATE?**





We have wasted 50 years engaged in a false debate. Decolonization is and will be an extremely complex process and an extremely messy project. It is not something that can be carried out with clinical precision and in which goodwill and justice alone are sufficient; but reinforcing and protecting a moral architecture parallel to any pragmatic approach will remain indispensable.

Furthermore, when we say this process is complex, we are not just saying that forcing the arm of an economic and diplomatic superpower is difficult in itself, but also that it will be difficult for the Palestinian people to see themselves beyond the shackles of the segregation regime and the unfulfilled promise of a state of their own. Moreover, as we navigate a reality traversed by new forms of resistance, it is worth bearing in mind that the power of social struggle lies in its capacity to stir consciences, to reawaken our imagination without getting stuck in the alleys of the material. Overcoming the crisis of political imagination of the 20th century is part of the unfinished work of decolonization for Palestine and the rest of the world.

Maybe we no longer speak quite as much of "national liberation" anymore because nation-states no longer inspire the same trust they used to. In the search for a new imagination, we will have to redefine the essence of what that liberation consists of. We know its form. In the 21st century, liberation takes the form of the anti-racist struggle, the fight against securitization and mass surveillance, the climate movement, and the fight for dignified living conditions. In principle, this struggle does not need to walk the same aisles as traditional power because it presents itself as a new way of doing politics, but insofar we are living in a time of transition, it will have to interact with it sooner or later and that encounter will inevitably raise new questions.

We live in a historical moment, in which the Palestinian issue is a symbol of the inability of political elites to solve local and global problems, of how they can exploit false solutions to perpetuate themselves in power, no matter the cost. The civil society at the forefront of the new forms of struggle does not and will not accept their formulas because they know that political interests precede the need to address these challenges. Faced with this crisis of imagination, the new intellectual frontier we must confront is how to define a nation-state out of this new paradigm, or if we can or should take advantage of the momentum to overcome it completely. Or, whether the paradigm itself will not already do so independently. For now, we know what dilemma Palestine will face re-understanding itself. Furthermore, we will witness it: how to find a new liberation that does not leave behind the generations and generations of Palestinians who have devoted their lives and identities to building a national narrative that has been taken away from them. How to bridge the past and the future.

Therefore, we must all build bridges between the institutions that already exist and those that do not just yet. That historical transition we inhabit will not occur overnight, but it will entail understanding what can be renewed, what should be gone, and what will have to be created from scratch. For centuries, we have fragmented reality to grasp the problems it continually poses, separating humanity, nature, or technology as factors capable of existing in a vacuum. Let us now look to the future to find a way to reintegrate ourselves. To be more transversal, global, and inclusive, and at the same time to re-root ourselves, to find our place in the territories we link and sustain as much as they link and sustain us.

The Palestinian question may well be a touchstone capable of revealing the answers we seek.





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