

Territorialization and State Formation

The Palestinian Experience in Comparative Perspective

THE IMPERATIVE TO TERRITORIALIZE

National movements engage in two tasks: nation building, which is the creation of an identity around a common set of symbols, and state building, which is the formation of institutions to govern the polity.¹ The first may originate in a people's homeland, but it can just as easily develop in diaspora, where members of an ethnic group are often unwanted or despised. By contrast, political independence—the fundamental goal of state-builders—can only be achieved in a homeland. National movements formed in diaspora must territorialize or risk withering away.

Were one to compare the number of nation-builders and “inventors” of nations who never left their native lands to those with experience abroad, the share of the latter would be substantially higher. Frequently, in fact, it is alien intellectuals living in an imperial center or among nations more developed than their own who forge new national identities. This is hardly surprising, for those living in foreign lands are presented with intellectual opportunities to mimic the more advanced society that serves them as a cultural milieu. National ideologies and identities can thus emerge that are molded in the image of metropolitan cultures even though they are in opposition to both these cultures and the empires that foster them.² These identities may then be adopted by the inhabitants of their homeland. This pattern of alienation and construction of national identity widened as the division of the world into territorial states enlarged the boundaries of diaspora beyond European settings to include neighboring postcolonial states. During the era of imperialism, extreme alienation might have been likely only in a European setting, but as new states nationalized, the scope for alienation of outsiders from neighboring areas correspondingly increased.

In contrast, the principles governing state behavior and resolution of international political conflicts can explain why state building is limited to the

geographic area the nation claims as its own. According to the principles of the state system, most political solutions in international affairs are territorial.³ In those few disputed territories where no past claim to sovereignty has been conclusively accepted by the international community—as in the Palestinian case—the right to independence must ultimately be advanced by the indigenous population, not by its representatives in diaspora. It is the territorial constituency that must voice its claim to sovereignty.

At the same time, the state system contributes to the atrophy of national movements that remain in a diaspora.⁴ Over time, a jealous sovereignty renders what might have been the most welcome political guest unwanted. States are especially uncomfortable playing host to national movements. Their coercive potential, insistence on secrecy, and methods of building up support within the host state, are all troublesome matters that can only be offset by a perception that their presence brings clear benefits to the host state.⁵ Meanwhile, the state whose territory the national movement contests will usually act to reduce these benefits considerably. Retribution can take many forms, from minor subversion to full-scale punitive raids against the host state. Frequently, even minor subversion is costly enough to make the host reconsider its role as a sanctuary state.

For these reasons, diaspora movements must *territorialize*, either directly through transferring of leadership and resources from “outside” to “inside,” or indirectly, by mobilizing the indigenous population to press a claim for independence on behalf of the national movement.⁶ A voice only in diaspora remains a voice in the wilderness. National movements that remain there are fated to political failure.

This was the challenge confronted by two major diaspora national movements of the twentieth century—the Palestinian movement of the last three decades and Zionism, its earlier and closest parallel. Both movements initiated modern nation building in a diaspora and then territorialized. While Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, was writing *The Jewish State* at the end of the nineteenth century and founding the World Zionist Organization in Basle, Switzerland, most of the Jews living in Palestine were patiently awaiting the coming of the Messiah.⁷ Similarly, when Yasser Arafat, in the early 1960s, set up the National Palestinian Liberation Movement—Fath—to liberate Palestine from the Zionists in the name of Palestinian nationalism, most politically aware Palestinians in former Palestine were avowed pan-Arabists and passively waiting for Arab armies to liberate them. Neither the Jews of Palestine in the old Yishuv, nor Arab state Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank, or Arabs residing in Israel in the late 1950s, played major roles in the birth or rebirth of these nationalist movements. Indeed the rise and spread of Palestinian nationalism chronicles a complicated dialectic between the diaspora and the homeland, ranging from Lebanon to the Gulf states, from Europe to North Africa, and from the West Bank to Gaza.

In both movements, furthermore, the locus of institution building moved from abroad to the territories. By 1936, the Israeli state-in-the-making was firmly in the hands of Jewish Zionists in Palestine. As for the Palestinians, by 1988 the conflict was being played out by Palestinians in the occupied territories, mostly in the name of Palestinian particularism. And while territorialization in these two movements took a different course—for the Zionists, bringing Jewish immigrants to the Holy Land to press their claim; for the PLO, mobilizing Palestinians already in the territories to support the PLO—they shared in the long run a common journey. Only for the Palestinians the journey was much harsher, with correspondingly fewer rewards.

CONTEXT AND TIMING IN PALESTINIAN TERRITORIALIZATION

A certain detour that the Zionists never had to make reveals the relative harshness of the Palestinian journey. Before the PLO territorialized, it went through a dramatic process of *diasporization*—one relocation after another—between the nation-building era of the 1960s and the final territorialization of the movement that began in 1988 and was completed when the outside leadership arrived in the homeland and the Palestinian Authority was established there in the summer of 1994. The PLO center emerged in Gaza and Jerusalem, shifted in time to East Bank Jordan, was forced to relocate to Beirut, where it lost its physical contiguity with its “inside” population center, and was forced again to relocate, this final time to Tunis, two thousand miles away from the homeland. Why this historical detour? What were its implications for state building? Posing these questions allows us to analyze why PLO territorialization proved so much more difficult, yielded fewer diplomatic results, and led to a much more problematic political entity than had the Zionist case before it.

Probably the most important difference between the two movements lies in the nature of the regimes they encountered. The study of decolonization has shown a robust link between colonial regime type and duration, on the one hand, and intensity of conflict between national movements and states, on the other. Since World War II, national movements have fared best against *imperial* regimes that view their colonies as no more than strategic resources to secure wide-ranging geographic control.⁸ Alternatively, conflict persisted on in *settled colonies*, whose European inhabitants ardently combated the liberal pressure in the home country to withdraw.⁹ One very long such conflict took place in Algeria, which had many by European residents and was considered, at least for some time, to be an extension of France itself.¹⁰ Even more protracted were the struggles against *settler regimes*, where administrative rule, formerly wielded by the imperial power, was transferred to the settlers themselves (as in Eritrea, Zimbabwe, and Namibia).¹¹

Of the four types of regimes that national movements may face in the period of decolonization, however, it is the struggle against the *nation-state* that has proved most durable. Against this formidable foe, the national movement contests the state center rather than its periphery and arouses the mobilization of another "nation" against its own. In such a case, the state's organizational and logistical advantages are considerably augmented. And while European imperialists could always, however painfully, withdraw to their metropole, this option is unacceptable to the communal nation-state, which views its territory as an inviolable whole. This zero-sum perception is vividly portrayed in the Israeli-Palestinian case, where polling data, on the eve of the Madrid Conference in late 1991 that opened negotiations between Israel and its adversaries, indicated that at least two-thirds of the Israeli Jewish population felt that Palestinian statehood threatened Israeli security regardless of whatever the land mass it would cover.¹² These fears were amplified by the fact that the conflict against the PLO was closely linked to the inter state conflict between Israel and its Arab state neighbors, and by the PLO's covenantal commitment to the destruction of Israel rather than solely to its territorial diminution.¹³ While the Zionists territorialized under the most benign regime possible—a British mandatory power formally committed to the creation of a Jewish national home—the Palestinians who created the PLO in 1964 battled against, in some respects, a much less flexible foe.

Timing was also important. The Palestinians sought to territorialize in an era when 157 members of the state system had divided the globe among themselves and had, as a result, excluded hundreds of national movements seeking entry. Their exclusion was justified on the grounds that the principle of territorial inviolability overrode the principle of self-determination. Here was a complete reversal of norms from the previous era, when self-determination had been the reigning principle justifying the transformation of colonies under imperial rule into sovereign states.¹⁴ Moreover, the tendency of the state system to uphold the territorial sovereignty of existing multi-ethnic states against claims of self-determination was an outstanding feature of the post-World War II era, at least until the collapse, internally, of the USSR and Yugoslavia. Bangladesh was the only successful secession state created in that period. But even then, its success was due almost exclusively to its unique physical separation from the western part of Pakistan by India, which encouraged secession from Pakistan and the establishment of Bangladesh as an independent state.¹⁵

In a technical sense, the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation is not quite a conflict of secession, as Israel never achieved undisputed sovereignty over Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. That most governments, as well as foreign media, refer to these areas as occupied territories is a clear demonstration that the Israeli claim to the territories was not only disputed but, in fact, rejected. This would suggest that the international resistance to secession should not apply

to this case. Nevertheless, while Palestinian claims to the territories have won much more support than most secession movements, and while the international community may have recognized, in principle, Palestinian rights to the territories, many state governments have been reticent about supporting Palestinian statehood. The world community, it seems, has appeared willing to sacrifice particular justice rather than open the Pandora's box by threatening the integrity of the existing state system.

THE DILEMMA OF PALESTINIAN TERRITORIALIZATION

Nation-states, like strong colonial powers, often force national movements into exile or, in the case of diaspora-born national movements, block the initial territorialization of leadership, manpower, and resources. This is what happened to the Palestinians: when Arafat attempted to set up base in the West Bank in 1967, Israel forced him out. A division thus developed between the "inside," the segment of the national movement fighting within the contested territory, and the "outside" leadership. As in similar cases, the Palestinians faced an increasingly acute state-building dilemma as this division solidified. The national movement had to territorialize in order to legitimize its claim to independence. This required, particularly in protracted conflicts, a territorially based organizational infrastructure. But such an infrastructure is a potential breeding ground for local challenges to the diaspora leadership.

The history of Zionism shows how territorialization can foster a strong inside leadership. Up until the end of the First World War, the Zionist movement's leadership and organizational infrastructure was based in London rather than Jerusalem, and it was led by diaspora leaders such as Chaim Weizmann and Louis Brandeis.¹⁶ By 1935, however, it was clear that, after intensive diaspora support for colonization and local institution building, principally through the Histadrut (the central Federation of Labor) and the creation of the territorially-based Jewish Agency in 1929, the leaders who rose through these organizations prevailed over the diaspora leadership that funded them. David Ben-Gurion's assumption of the chairmanship of both the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency in 1935 signified the transformation of Zionism from a diaspora-center/territory-periphery movement into a territorially centered movement. This was emphasized in 1949 when Ben-Gurion became the first prime minister of Israel, while Weizmann had to make do with the honorary but powerless title of president, an office that has yet to fill a vital role in the Israeli political structure.

Aware that they might lose control, the PLO preferred to follow the example of another diaspora-based national movement—Algeria's National Liberation Front (FLN). In the Algerian case, the diaspora leadership prevailed

over its inside competitors in the consolidation of the state. In 1956, "inside" leaders convened a rump congress of the FLN near the Valley of the Soummam to contest the power of the "outsiders," some of whom had fled to neighboring states while others were sitting in French prisons. The congress attempted to "virtually eliminate the latter from the effective command of the FLN by requiring that the five-man executive be stationed on Algerian soil."¹⁷ This was even before four of the nine historic "outside" founders had been kidnapped by France in mid-air two years later. But it was the outside—at first, exiled politicians under Ahmad Ben Bella and later the outside military wing—that prevailed.¹⁸ Eventually, Houari Boumedienne, the chief of staff of the Army of National Liberation (the ALN) that was formed outside of Algeria along the borders of Tunisia and Morocco, seized power in a coup, placed Ben Bella under house arrest, and went on to rule until his death in 1978.¹⁹ By contrast, the surviving guerrillas, who fought within Algeria and suffered most in the war of liberation, gained little: by 1967, there were no guerrillas left in positions of power. It was only natural that the PLO would adopt the FLN as a symbol, if not an exact model, in its fight to maintain hegemony,²⁰ while Palestinian territorialists looked more to Zionism as a successful model of (internal) territorialism.²¹

The Algerian outsiders triumphed against the French and their own insiders first by waiting out on the sidelines, and then by engaging in concerted negotiations with the French under intense international pressure. Perhaps this is why the PLO hesitated to try territorializing a second time and attempted, in its stead, to build a quasi-state in the diaspora. This was the historical detour mentioned earlier. It ended in 1982 when Israel forced the PLO to leave Beirut and left the organization with no other choice but to come to grips with the dilemma of territorialization and to figure out organizational strategies of mobilization that would reduce the chances that an alternative leadership would emerge in Gaza or the West Bank.

The PLO employed four techniques to create a territorial voice while avoiding the emergence of an alternative leadership. First, it encouraged antiregime mobilization and violence over the creation of institutions that could provide public services to the local population. Second, it sought to subordinate local leaders to those abroad, using neopatrimonial methods widely employed by Arab regimes toward their citizens, rather than sharing power with them. Third, it permitted institutional fragmentation instead of facilitating the creation of translocal and centralized institutions. Finally, it maintained a monopoly over international diplomacy rather than promoting political devolution from Israel from within. Generally, the territorialists, for reasons that will be amplified in the course of this book, preferred the alternative in each of these paired dichotomies. But unlike the Zionists, the PLO never transferred the bulk of its resources to the occupied territories.²²

THE IMPACT OF ZIONIST TERRITORIALIZATION ON STATE BUILDING

As we have seen, territorialization is an imperative both for achieving independence and for maintaining hegemony within the national movement. But *how* diaspora national movements territorialize has a major effect on the *form* the future state will take. Operating under a mandate government that sanctioned the creation of a Jewish national home, Zionist territorialization was characterized by the territorialists' alliance with a diaspora and then by their ascendancy over diaspora leadership. Priority was accorded to colonization over diplomacy or war as institution building—the spawning of settlement and public welfare institutions preceded the mobilization of violence. Zionist territorialization by characterized by the creation of strong central institutions, rules, and procedures for conflict resolution over personalized and diffuse power structures.²³

In the Zionist case, perhaps the most important element in initiating a state-building process before independence was the creation of a territorial leadership. The emergence of such a leadership may be traced back to the establishment of two territorial parties, HaPoel HaTzair and Poalei Zion, among the earliest to emerge in the Yishuv and in the Zionist movement.²⁴ HaPoel HaTzair was involved in the first experiments of “national” settlement, where the World Zionist Organization (WZO) provided the funds and the political party provided the manpower, the ideology, and the leadership.²⁵ In time, new settlements became affiliated to these parties, whose leaders included state-building visionary leaders such as Berl Katznelson, Ben-Gurion, and Yitzchak Ben-Zvi. These were the same leaders who formed Achdut HaAvodah in 1919 and the Histadrut one year later. In the 1920s, both parties monopolized labor by drawing workers into the Histadrut with the help of WZO funds. Once the two territorial parties merged in 1930, they were then ready to tackle control of the WZO and the Jewish Agency.²⁶ Their dominance in both ensured political control over diaspora-based financial resources and hegemony within the Yishuv as a whole. Thus the pronouncement that appeared in the official journal of Poalei Zion in 1910—“that the destiny of Zionism will ultimately be decided neither by the World Zionist Organization nor by the worldwide political and diplomatic efforts of Zionism; the outcome will be decided in the land of the Turk”—was vindicated not in 1948 but already in 1936.²⁷

The ascendancy of a territorial leadership went hand in hand with territorial institutionalization or state building, which reflects a significant stage beyond mere institution building. Institutionalization or state building involves the creation of organizations that make or conform to rules that render decision making predictable, recurrent, and legitimate. Their functions are to prioritize, resolve conflicts, and allocate resources. This is typically the business of political parties, parliaments, and other representative institutions.²⁸

Institution building, by contrast, is concerned with roles; the formation of organizations that are wholly functional and material; they provide power to wage the struggle against the enemy, coercion against potential internal rule breakers, or public services. Institutionalization, therefore, is a complex process that involves competing political factions, groups and ideologies. Its *political* scope is thus wider than that of institution building.²⁹

The character of Zionist settlement was, in its first stage, politically diffuse and organizationally underdeveloped. The new Yishuv of the first *aliyah* (wave of immigration), a period of ethnic plantation settlement, was characterized by diffuse pre-political local government chafing under an increasingly onerous settlement administration set up by Baron Rothschild.³⁰ Its replacement in 1903 by the Jewish Colonial Association (JCA), an equally non-Zionist and elitist institution, hardly helped matters. What united the twenty-five new settler communities was their growing bond of dependence on an "outside" force dedicated to market profitability. The JCA eventually abandoned Palestine for what seemed then to be greener pastures in Argentina and Russia.³¹

The second *aliyah's* search for a solution to its market predicament set the stage for a more equitable pattern between inside and outside, but also paved the way to growing politicization and the creation of politically affiliated settlement movements in the Yishuv.³² Institutionalization reached its peak when the territorial leadership eclipsed the diaspora leadership in the 1930s, as David Ben-Gurion and his colleagues wrested control of the Zionist movement and its resources from the diaspora leadership, while continuing to obey democratic rules of allocation that were prevalent in the WZO. The Yishuv leadership henceforth controlled resources originating in diaspora. The outside leadership, by facilitating territorial institution building, had basically engineered their own marginalization.³³

Finally, as Shmuel Sandler has noted, the earlier the territorialization of the party and the greater the number of its cadres in Palestine as a percentage of the total party membership, the greater the party or bloc's power and, consequently, the greater its role in the formation and consolidation of the state.³⁴ The strength of the Labor parties, as measured in terms of election performances, was always disproportionately greater in Palestine than it was in diaspora. Thus, for example, in the elections to the Zionist Congress in 1931, Labor won 69 percent of the votes cast in Palestine but only 29 percent of the votes cast in Palestine and in the diaspora combined. By contrast, the General Zionists, the party led by Chaim Weizmann, secured only 7.8 percent of the vote in Palestine but 36 percent of the total votes. The votes cast for the revisionists was more evenly divided, accounting for 16.8 percent of the Palestinian vote and 21 percent of the total vote. It is clear that the parties that made up the Labor movement were the only predominantly territorial parties.

Their growing power signified in time the hegemony of the territorialists over diaspora.

In the post-independence era, the territorially-center/diaspora-periphery relationship basically extended to most of organized world Jewry, a process initiated in 1929 with the establishment of the Jewish Agency, which included non-Zionists from the diaspora.³⁵ Such a political center was later uniquely suited to meet the exigencies of mass immigration in the early years of statehood. The structure was diffuse and voluntary enough to assure pluralism, yet sufficiently institutionalized to make effective and pressing decisions, and to execute policy in a state inundated by immigrants and surrounded by enemies.

TERRITORIALIZATION AND PALESTINIAN STATE BUILDING

Since Palestinian territorialization was very different from Zionist territorialization, it is hardly surprising that the institution-building process before and during the creation of the Palestinian Authority took a very different form from that of its predecessor. The difference was caused primarily by a more intense conflict. The more powerful the enemy, the more able it is to thwart a national movement's objectives. The more violent the conflict between the two becomes, by and large, the smaller the opportunity to engage in effective state making. This reality may be seen not only in the apposition of the Zionist and Palestinian movements but also in a comparison between India and Algeria. In the former, England was willing to accede a measure of self-government and foster relatively free municipal elections contested by the Indian National Congress. In consequence, a reasonably effective and democratic government emerged.³⁶ In Algeria, by contrast, the inside was effectively decimated by the French. Thus when the struggle over internal hegemony within the new Algerian state began, the "inside" was already very weak.

Crisis, often the by-product of a violent struggle for independence, accentuates the trend to autocracy. Both the PLO center and the Palestinians in the territories lived in a state of perpetual crisis, the former suffering the hardships of surviving in sanctuary states, and the latter living under a powerful military occupation. Such a condition increased the need for quick decisions, encouraged personal rule at the center, fostered mobilization over institution building (not to speak of state building), and led to organizational fragmentation in the contested territory. As fragmentation increases, the search for a political center to hold the movement together gravitates around a leader. This often gives birth to neopatrimonialism, which is so prevalent in the Third World.³⁷

In the Palestinian case, neopatrimonialism rather than classic patrimonialism took hold. In the newer version, there is a constant tension between "what

ought to be," as defined by modern ideologies, principally liberal democracy and public administration procedure, and "what is," that is, the power configuration existing within the organization, which almost always skewed sharply to the benefit of the chairman, founder, or ruler. In classic patrimonialism, the leader might be challenged, not because the power configuration is illegitimate, but rather because he does not use his power for legitimate ends. In neopatrimonial structures, however, the challenge actually relates to the process of acquiring power, not just the exercise of it. Never totally legitimate, the leader is frequently challenged in the name of ideologies that he presumably accepts.

To counter such illegitimacy, the neopatrimonial leader makes use of modern forms of organization as a power base to counter pressures for reform. But while the bases of support are well organized, decision-making organs are usually in disarray. In fact, the leader prevents the emergence of procedures that would govern decision making. Because the leader must worry about the loyalty of the people within the organization supporting him, a politics of diffusion, or of encouraging a multiplicity of factions, offers the leader room for maneuver between shifting patterns of coalition building. If he feels threatened, he can reduce the payoff to his own organization by distributing more to the opposition or to independents, a reservoir of individuals who can usually be bought for a price. But since the opposition is organized and also poses a threat, the leader must maintain hegemony, and not just dominance, for his organization. Neopatrimonialism is therefore a three-tier system. The ruler personalizes critical decision making; he is supported by a hegemonic organization; and, at the same time, he ensures that the political arena will remain plural and diffuse.

It is ironic that national movements that espouse modernity so often give birth to "traditional" regimes. Like many other national movements, the Palestinian yearning to modernity is reflected in the name of the national movement itself, the PLO, the correct translation of which is the Organization of Palestinian Liberation (to be distinguished from liberation by [other] Arabs). This is demonstrated even more strikingly by the way Palestinians refer to the PLO simply as the "al-munazama," the Organization. The factional clan-based fighting that had consumed the Palestinian movement from within during the Mandate had brought forth a longing for modern organization, participatory decision making, and efficient execution in both the military and political wings of the organization.

Instead of the characteristics Max Weber imputed to organizations, however, the PLO was characterized by a dominant party—Fath—that enjoyed a plurality in a multifaction environment and a leader who maintained control over an autonomous position in respect both to his faction and the overall organization. Pluralism was a balancing device that, while letting the opposition know that the dominant organization was on Arafat's side, also let Fath

know that rival claimants for his patronage existed. Fath's institutionalization has always been weak, probably purposefully so. In the course of nearly thirty years of its existence, the faction convened only five general conferences (not necessarily at critical junctures), the smaller revolutionary councils rarely met, and no one is quite sure of the procedures used for selecting representatives. Arafat's system of balancing personal as well as corporate rivals, and of refraining from punishing deviants, is patterned along lines suggested by John Waterbury in a study of King Hassan of Morocco.³⁸ A live enemy was better than a dead one, as were weakened corporate groups more useful within the system than outside it. Arafat, Palestinian critics often assert, behaves very much like Ahmad Shuqairy, his predecessor, as a one-man show (*bi-tafarud*), but while Shuqairy was ousted, Arafat always had a quasi-organizational power base.³⁹ For Sabri Jiryis, "the [Palestinian] movement, more so than any time in the past seems as if it is like any other Arab regime, or like third world regimes in general which tread a path no one is sure where it will end,"⁴⁰ an organization where a "nonadministrative" (*la-idariyya*) and "nonorganizational" (*la-tanzimiyya*) mentality reigns.⁴¹ Thus, for example, could veteran PLO activist and member of the PLO Executive Committee Abdullah Hurani declare in the summer of 1993 that neither he nor other members ever knew the exact state of the PLO's financial situation.⁴²

Outside actors also had a role to play in the establishment of neopatrimonialism in Palestinian society. Conservative Arab rulers sought to draw Arafat into their fold and away from the radical leftist organizations that also operated within the PLO. They were equally suspicious of many elements within Fath itself. Needless to say, they found in Arafat a cooperative interlocutor. Since they were heavily involved in funding the organization, they could channel their money mainly to him. As a result, Arafat has always enjoyed a near monopoly of control over the PLO's financial resources (and also over those of the Palestinian Authority). Meanwhile, support from more radical Arab states assured a multiplicity of factions in the PLO, through which Arafat's neopatrimonialism could come into play. After all, multiple and competing groups form the basis of patrimonialism at the base. Thus, radical and conservative Arab states, who so often challenged each other on many other levels, unwittingly joined forces in strengthening neopatrimonialism within the PLO. The conservative states promoted it at the top through personal linkages with Arafat, while the radical states promoted diffusion at the base.

These institutional features obviously have retarded Palestinian state formation. Arafat's leadership in the PLO was institutionalized before the politicization of mass society in the occupied territories. As a leader, he was also affected most by the territorializing dilemma and, therefore, had a strong vested interest in adopting a strategy of diffuse and suboptimal institution building, of diplomacy over devolution, and of subordination rather than power sharing with territorial organizers and leaders. Ironically, however, while the

neopatrimonial leader can typically make quick decisions, unencumbered by compliance to formal rules, and thereby hasten the establishment of political authority, he may do so at the expense of cheapening the quality of the final product. Territorialization, therefore, must be analyzed by the impact it has on both achieving statehood as well as the eventual form of the state.

THE LEGACY OF FRAGMENTATION

It would be wrong to think that the PLO actively fragmented society and local leadership in the territories so much as it maintained existing fragmentation. Joel Migdal, in his synchronic comparison of the Zionist Yishuv with Palestinian society, has pointed out how an immigrant society is more likely than a dispersed, predominantly rural society to produce a strong state with a high level of institutionalization.⁴³ Immigrant societies, because they can, so to speak, begin from scratch, are presented with unique opportunities to bring into being new social forms of organizational life and test their efficiency in meeting broad societal objectives. Rural societies are less flexible and cannot strike out in new directions without considerable violence directed against notables, headmen, familial groups, and other segments of society that would feel threatened by new social forms. The Zionist movement was especially innovative in creating such institutions. These institutions in turn were linked to strong state building because of the unique nature of the conflict between a minority of colonizers and an indigenous majority where land was relatively scarce. Shafir has shown that in settlement areas where the ratio between colonizers and natives was high, subsequent state capacities during consolidation were low.⁴⁴ The Palestinians, on the other hand, particularly in the West Bank, were predominantly rural, linked almost exclusively to local towns, and were characterized by high levels of emigration that fostered a high level of dependence on aid from emigrants and a sense of local parochialism ties between expatriates and villagers create.

The PLO's fears of a strong alternative local leadership also dovetailed with the interests and policies of two other external actors—Israel and Jordan. Emile Sahliyeh makes this point well:

The conflicting interests of these three have only served to deepen disunity and fragmentation among the ranks of the local elite. Indeed, the net effect of their policies has been to weaken the position of the traditional politicians without allowing for the emergence of a new, viable leadership. In their attempt to affect West Bank internal political dynamics, Jordan, the PLO, and Israel have not confined their competition to the manipulation of economic resources and inducements. They have frequently used coercive techniques to penetrate and weaken the sphere of influence of the rival actors.⁴⁵

Thus, for a variety of reasons—ecological, institutional, and political—the difficulties of state making for any potential Palestinian leadership were greater than the challenge to the Zionist movement had been. No wonder the PLO tried to avoid overcoming these difficulties by engaging instead in diaspora state-building, as the following chapter analyzes.