Demographic and Political Transformations in Israel and Palestine: Prospects for a Negotiated Peace

An Honors Thesis for the Departments of Arabic and International Relations

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction:

The Palestinian-Israeli crisis has relentlessly persisted for generations. Since the time of Israel's establishment in 1948, the policies and practices of each faction have been definitively zero-sum. Thus, there has existed little incentive for the Israeli government to relinquish its control over the occupied territories, and Palestinian advocates have fruitlessly fought for greater governmental autonomy and international recognition. In the past few years, though, this dynamic has undergone a powerful change. In my view, as a result of impending demographic shifts within both territories, Israel is no longer benefitted by Palestinian instability and political fragmentation. Instead, the state's existential safety is dependent on its ability to secure a lasting, comprehensive security agreement with Palestine's leadership. In spite of this development, neither party has successfully gained traction in efforts to achieve long-term peace, and a large amount of attention in academic and diplomatic circles has been devoted to assigning culpability for the conflict's indefatigability. Within this paper, however, I will attempt to take a purely unemotional approach to the issue in order to understand the necessary conditions for each faction to accept a security deal. Ultimately, I conclude that there exists a narrow window for implementing an agreement between Israel and Palestine, but that significant political sacrifices will need to be made on both sides. However, should the parties fail to secure a comprehensive accord within the next ten to twenty years, the manifestation of demographic changes will likely make peace permanently unachievable, and the entirety of Mandate Palestine will become a *de facto* bi-national state.

This paper will be divided into five core chapters. In sections one and two, I will outline the factual basis for my argument that demographic changes threaten the stability and democratic functionality of both Israel and the occupied territories. In chapter one, I describe the history of

Arab populations in Palestine, and the domestic political significance of expanding Bedouin and Palestinian communities. Then, in section two, I transition my attention to the growth of ultra-Orthodox sects within Israel, and the impact of the broader electoral shift to the right. Combined, these chapters form the foundation for my proposition that contemporary demographic transformations threaten the security and political flexibility of both Israel and Palestine. Thus, I posit, the ongoing crisis must be resolved in the next two decades, before these phenomena have time to manifest.

Given this premise, I use sections three and four to examine the present governmental contexts in Jerusalem and Ramallah. In the wake of new parliamentary elections, Israel has decisively affirmed the security policies of Prime Minister Netanyahu, and has undermined the legislative relevance of many leftist groups. This provides the Likud coalition with the unilateral and exclusive ability to unravel Israel's occupation of Palestine. Naturally, though, I ultimately question the likelihood of Israel's right-wing blocs offering major concessions to their Palestinian counterparts, a core requirement for the development of meaningful negotiations in the near future. Simultaneously, as detailed in chapter four, the Palestinian government has evolved considerably in the last two years. Hamas and Fatah, former rival factions, have constructed a unified parliament that spans both the West Bank and Gaza. Moreover, President Abbas has increased diplomatic engagement with the global community, including governing institutions like the International Criminal Court. On a practical level, it remains to be seen whether Abbas's coalition will be capable of advancing the cause against occupation, particularly given the administration's continuous fiscal challenges, but I posit that his government is the most legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in years.

Through these first four sections, I conclude that peace is conceivable, albeit diplomatically improbable. Thus, in section five, I turn my attention to more practical considerations and evaluate the logistical viability of competing security proposals, including one-state, two-state, and regional options. Here, I reach a distinctly pessimistic conclusion, and argue that no plan is politically or logistically feasible in the status quo. Therefore, I ultimately argue that Israel and Palestine are likely doomed to unguided, unpredictable governmental integration. In the near future, this will lead to intensified Palestinian engagement with the international community, and perhaps a subsequent, but moderate, increase in sovereignty for President Abbas's government. In the long term, however, the future of the bi-national state is far less certain. Perhaps Israel's Arab constituents will be responsibly integrated into the cultural mainstream. Equally likely, though, is the escalation of undemocratic and repressive policies that deny Palestinian voters political agency and foster continued division and social unrest.

Evolving Arab Demographics:

In the last several years, a considerable amount of academic discourse has been generated regarding the stakes of demographic shifts in Israel and Palestine. To be sure, these changes carry seismic social and political implications. Nonetheless, this issue has not yet provoked a widespread demand within Israel for territorial reform. It is my belief, though, that a failure to engage with the severity of this subject will precipitate a financial, social, and security crisis of inestimable magnitude in both Palestine and Israel proper.

Before delving into the minutiae of Arab demographic growth in Israel, I wish to include a few notes about the larger motivations of this section. In this chapter, I consciously aim *not* to make value judgments about impending population shifts (in fact, I would strongly argue that all individuals hold an equal right to reproduction, no matter the pragmatic implications of disproportionate growth). Thus, when I discuss the danger or consequences of demographic swings, I am not editorializing these phenomena or commenting on an intrinsic harm to factional expansion. Instead, I am referencing the secondary repercussions of population increases: political tension, stressed infrastructure, and a strained national budget. Second, and crucially, I am indeed conscious of the partial incomprehensiveness of chapters one and two. I acknowledge that some of the historical timelines outlined below omit important context and data. Further, given the contentiousness of this topic, not all authors (particularly those sourced directly from Israel or Palestine) offer guaranteed impartiality. But I have proceeded with the succeeding approach for two reasons. First, on a practical level, there exists a limited supply of quality population forecasts within the region. Thus, I was occasionally required to source information from controversial authorities (e.g. Israeli universities). I do my best to flag these types of disputed materials where needed. Secondly, it is my belief that contemporary Israeli politics are

of outsize importance in the resolution of the Palestinian crisis (as compared to dynamics within Palestine itself), given Israel's direct control over the occupation and its comparative military strength. I therefore believe that Israeli *perceptions* of the demographic crisis are fundamental to the likelihood of a regional peace deal ultimately failing or succeeding. If, in the eyes of the Israeli media or government, Arab population growth is an intrinsic harm, then that sentiment will manifest in secondary social and political ramifications, which I will discuss below.

Given that context, it makes sense to begin this section by evaluating the demographic origins of Palestine. Since the Ottoman Empire's initial occupation of the territory in 1517, the percentage of Arab individuals living on the land has fluctuated continually.[1] In 1596, the year of the first Ottoman census, the Palestinian population numbered just over two hundred thousand residents.[2] At that time, nearly ninety-five percent of permanent inhabitants were Muslim and just three percent were Jewish.[3] More than three hundred years later, in 1914, Palestinian inhabitants numbered over five hundred thousand. Seventy-six percent of the territory was Muslim, ten percent was Christian, and the remaining fourteen percent identified as Jews.[4]

These figures supply context to the radical demographic transition seen in the period leading up to the establishment of Israel in 1948, and the continuation of that trend for several decades more. For instance, between 1914 and 1947, despite an increase in the Muslim-Palestinian population of nearly forty percent, the share of Jewish inhabitants in Palestine and Israel rose from fourteen to thirty-two percent (a trend accelerated by the simultaneous expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Arabs during Israel's establishment).[5] By 1967, Jews made up sixty-five percent of the permanent population west of the Jordan River, Muslims held a share of thirty-three percent, and Christians accounted for the remaining two percent.[6] These changes are

striking, and reflect the growing strength of Judeo-Israeli nationalism after 1948, bolstered by repeated waves of immigration following the state's formation.[7]

As a result of this trend, for many in Israel, the notion of Jewish dominance within the state is a forgone conclusion. The most recent projections of future demographic breakdowns, however, paint a starkly different picture. Despite the pattern of rising Jewish control through 1967, a decline in immigration numbers and a soaring Arab birthrate mitigated, and then reversed this trend in the 1980's.[8] Within a generation, this reversal will be fully realized. By 2034, Jews are estimated to make up less than half of "British Palestine (including Gaza)," and will constitute a slim majority of the state excluding the Gaza region.[9] By 2050, Arabs will enjoy an absolute majority in the West Bank, Gaza, and many parts of Israel itself.[10]

In order to fully understand the socio-political implications of this demographic shift, it is necessary to analyze specific regional transformations. First, the border districts of Israel have become "magnets" for new Arab communities, greatly changing existing political dynamics in these areas. To the east, new settlements and high birthrates have led to climbing populations. Within the next twenty years, the number of Arabs living on Israel's borders is expected to double, creating new challenges regarding the just distribution of resources and water, and complicating options to divide land during negotiations for peace.[11] The same is true in Gaza, already among the world's most densely populated territories.[12]

Border activity in the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, located along Israel's southwestern face, has also evolved considerably. Since the outburst of the Egyptian revolution in 2011, the Sinai region has been largely neglected, introducing new opportunities for Bedouin and Islamic militias to seize control.[13] According to a 2015 report from the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich, the growth of militant activity in the Sinai Peninsula has significant ramifications

for both Egypt and Israel. The rise of groups like the Mujahideen Shura Council and the Sinai Province group (formerly ABM) has contributed to drug and weapons trafficking in Israel and Gaza, a growth in Bedouin militarization, and a closer alliance between Sinai groups and international Islamic extremism.[14] Certainly, these changes, and the growing participatory populations, are a substantial security concern to Israel, and further reduce the likelihood of multi-party land swaps that require Egyptian involvement. That consequence is of direct relevance to both Jewish and Palestinian factions.

Perhaps the most pressing concern, though, are the changing population dynamics within Israel itself. In the northern districts, such as areas of the Galilee, Tzfat, and other communities, Palestinian numbers have steadily risen.[15] Simultaneously, though, imbalanced policies from the Israeli government have left many Arab communities poor, neglected, and underfunded. This inequity has manifested in inadequate education for Palestinian youth, higher disease rates, and overall marginalization.[16] In the long run, as Israel encounters a universal population increase, these kinds of inequalities will foment social unrest and will likely contribute to political polarization.

Demographic swings have materialized in Jerusalem as well. More than a third of the city's eight hundred thousand inhabitants are Arab, a percentage that has continued to grow as secular Jews move farther west.[17] This has precipitated the spillover of tens of thousands of Palestinians into traditionally Jewish neighborhoods. Moreover, the growth of Jerusalem's Arab population (of which only five percent enjoy full citizenship) has stressed "the education system in East Jerusalem," intensified wealth inequality, and pushed thousands of Palestinians into abject poverty.[18] Further, the mixing of Jewish and Arab communities, which has been resisted

most strongly by Zionists and Israel's far right, undermines proposals that would grant each faction autonomy over particular areas of the capital.

As discussed anecdotally, Arab birthrates outpace those of Jews in nearly every corner of Israel. Nowhere is this phenomenon more significant and dangerous, though, than in the Bedouin communities of the Negev. With growth rates approaching five percent, this population will create social and economic challenges for the entire Israeli state.[19] (Again, these problems are often reflective of inadequate care and funding from Israel's political elite, not an *inherent* harm in Bedouin reproduction). And the issue is quickly intensifying. As noted in a 2013 study from the University of Haifa (a right-wing Israeli publication, though with a seemingly objective methodology), "Among Jews [in Israel], the proportion of children aged up to 18 years approaches thirty percent. Among the northern Arabs of Israel it is around forty percent; for the Bedouin it reaches sixty-three percent."[20] Furthermore, the Bedouin population is expected to continue to double "every twelve to fifteen years."[21] These staggering figures demand immediate attention and raise causational questions as well. The source of this issue is twofold. First, the traditionally nomadic Bedouin people have a longstanding history of unique marital practices.[22] More than one-third of Bedouin households are believed to contain at least two wives.[23] Additionally, the Israeli government has an established practice of incentivizing reproduction (either through tax breaks or welfare benefits). Originally intended to serve the interests of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, this policy has accelerated birthrates universally. For this reason, Bedouin families average more than eleven children per household.[24]

Naturally, such high population rates have tested the limits of Israeli infrastructure. In the remote desert region, there is frequently inadequate access to water, employment opportunities, stable housing, law enforcement, and educational systems. These problems have been present for

generations. Despite a historical presence in the Negev that stretches back hundreds of years, the Bedouin people were stripped of many of their land rights following the establishment of Israel in 1948. In the 1950's, the Israeli Knesset officially "dispossessed" many tribes from their territory, consolidating thousands of individuals into a small number of concentrated cities.[25] Today, sixty percent of Bedouin-Arabs live "in seven failing government-planned towns. The remaining forty percent live in dozens of villages that are not recognized," sparsely located throughout Israel's south.[26] At present, both the official settlements (which are significantly underfunded) and the informal villages are straining under the pressure of mounting quantities of inhabitants.

The exploding Negev populace introduces numerous challenges of both local and national scale. To begin with, crowded Bedouin homes frequently lack access to necessary infrastructure, including clean water and proper sewage treatment. This, in turn, has generated elevated incidences of both short term and chronic diseases.[27] Moreover, the isolation of many Bedouin villages (and their frequently independent jurisprudential systems) has resulted in poor law enforcement by the Israeli government. As such, many Bedouin communities suffer from exceedingly high crime rates, including child abuse, domestic violence, and sexual exploitation.[28] These criminal and social problems have intensified since the start of Bedouin urbanization, and are likely to require additional attention in coming years.

The national impacts of the Bedouin issue are also immense. First, the propensity for Bedouin families to enter cycles of poverty is quickly becoming irreversible. The rise of informal settlements, both illegal and lacking adequate infrastructure (although often a necessary response to insufficient rural housing), undercuts educational efforts, contributing to these high rates of poverty, as well as the spread of violence and unemployment. This intensifies the gap between

Bedouin constituents and the comparatively prosperous secular Jewish community in Israel, increasing marginalization and the potentiality for crime and radicalization (as seen in the Sinai region).[29] Simultaneously, it places enormous strain on the Israeli economy to mitigate the effects of such widespread poverty, and to integrate isolated Bedouin groups into the mainstream. Importantly, particularly given that the Bedouin constitute a relatively small percentage of Israel's overall population, this issue can be extrapolated to the country's other marginalized sects. Palestinian villages, ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities, and other factions removed from the levers of power in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv are often denied necessary investments in infrastructure and education. Again, as Israel grapples with a collective demographic surge, it will be forced to manage these inequities (or will suffer social and fiscal destabilization).

From a security standpoint, the proliferation of Bedouin settlements also directly clashes with the strategic ambitions of the Israel Defense Forces.[30] For the past several years, the IDF (which already controls a majority of the desert region) has been advancing a proposal to construct new training facilities and bases in the south.[31] This has necessitated the displacement and consolidation of Bedouin-Arab villages, a trend that is likely to persist in the coming decades. Such projects not only introduce additional roadblocks to land swap agreements, but also generate new opportunities for ethnic clash in the Negev and beyond.

Given the magnitude of the Bedouin issue, it seems odd that it has generated little concern in contemporary Israeli politics. In truth, a number of attempts have been made to contain the escalation of this demographic quandary, but have been constrained by various social and political obstacles. For example, a large sect of the Bedouin populace has resisted attempts at urbanization. Though consolidating informal villages into established cities would allow for

infrastructural development, it would also necessitate the forfeiture of the traditionally nomadic lifestyle and a large amount of tribal autonomy.[32] Moreover, many families are reliant on subsistence agriculture, a practice that is likely to be unsustainable within the confines of a crowded settlement. To some within the Bedouin community, this is an unacceptable cost.

Reform efforts have also been obstructed within the Israeli establishment itself. Some politicians worry that recognition of illegal Bedouin settlements in the Negev would set a dangerous precedent that might empower other Arab populations to demand official status. This could, in theory, further challenge the solidity of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.[33] Other policymakers suggest that the expansion of the IDF in the south should precede the construction of new Bedouin villages. For this reason, legislators have repeatedly violated judicial commands (some issued by the Supreme Court) to hastily manage the crisis and repay Bedouin territory seized during the 1950's.[34] Whatever the rationale for the delay, Israeli officials have yet to offer a concrete proposal to fully handle the effects of Bedouin expansion.

The most ambitious attempt to manage Bedouin population growth occurred during the first years of this century. In 2007, these efforts were organized under the leadership of Eliezer Goldberg, a former Supreme Court justice and bureaucrat.[35] After a year of negotiations between Israeli and Bedouin representatives (though none from the unrecognized communities), the commission offered a proposal. The vast majority of informal villages would be recognized and developed, and new ties would be established between communities and the Israel government. Controversially, however, the Goldberg Commission did not guarantee Bedouins access to land rights, but offered generous compensation to inhabitants that would be forced to relocate.[36]

These recommendations were rejected on all sides. Many Bedouin leaders, backed by human rights organizations and regional NGO's, challenged the relocation efforts. Despite

compensation agreements, thousands of villagers would be forced to leave their ancestral homelands and move into crowded new cities.[37] As mentioned earlier, this would also necessitate the forfeiture of considerable autonomy and agricultural territory. Inversely, many members of the Israeli Knesset contested the generosity of the relocation packages, which would have paid out billions of dollars in benefits.[38] The Prawer Plan, a legislative bill designed to implement many of the Goldberg Commission's policy prescriptions, was ultimately tabled after months of contestation.[39]

At present, there exist few coherent proposals to resolve the Bedouin issue in a manner suitable to all parties. Further, even the most ambitious plans (none of which have achieved significant political momentum) have operational timelines of more than a decade. Considering that the Bedouin demographic is predicted to double every twelve years, it is my belief that this crisis will simply never be sufficiently managed. Within a generation, I predict that hundreds of thousands of Bedouins will find themselves isolated from mainstream Israeli society and will face countless social and financial disadvantages. This may likely ignite a new set of ethnic clashes in the region, and will provide further momentum to the loss of Israel's Jewish character (a forfeiture that will not be peaceably accepted). Even more importantly, the failure of the Israeli establishment to combat this incontrovertible and imminent crisis casts doubt on the government's ability to manage its general population issues and to quickly resolve the Palestinian occupation. That is a damning factor in my later evaluation of the state's prospects for future stability and peace.

Ultimately, each of these Arab demographic changes (shifting border dynamics, turbulence in the Sinai, growing Palestinian communities in Jerusalem and northern Israel, and the expansion of Bedouin tribes) holds the potential to generate unrest within Israel and

Palestine. Collectively, though, these transformations pose a massive existential threat to the stability of the state (largely by virtue of constituent and governmental reactions) and the prospects for a negotiated peace. To be clear, growing numbers of Arabs and Palestinians living in and around Israel are not generally an *intrinsic* harm. Certainly these individuals ought enjoy the same freedoms as their Jewish counterparts within the state. The danger of population growth lies in the secondary ramifications: reduced flexibility for negotiating land-swap agreements, the continued political and financial marginalization of Arab communities (which will further strain the entire Israeli economy), and a vicious, occasionally jingoistic backlash from many of Israel's Zionist constituents. As will be discussed in the next section, the simultaneous growth of Israel's right-wing and ultra-Orthodox factions further exacerbates this concern, demanding a swift and radical change in policy.

Evolving Jewish Demographics:

As described, the growth of Arab populations within and around Israel poses a threat to the security of the state. Current Israeli policies that actively promote marginalization are likely to intensify poverty, social inequality, unemployment, and rates of ethnic clashes in the coming decades. As suggested earlier, much of the danger in this trend lies in the Jewish response to the demographic crisis. The need for a secure "Jewish homeland" is a narrative that has been carefully cultivated since the state's inception, and has been particularly well guarded by members of the political right. Swelling Arab communities have supplied these groups with talking points that generate fear within the Zionist base and aim to further restrict Arab political engagement. I posit that the anticipated growth of right-wing parties, and the simultaneous decline in political representation for secular and moderate viewpoints, is likely to engender a new, stronger wave of conflict and inequality within Israel and Palestine.

Once again, before delving into the nuances of modern demographic patterns, it is helpful to examine the origins of contemporary Zionism and the history of Jewish migration. For thousands of years, far preceding even the birth of Jesus, the Jewish people have been subjected to intermittent periods of persecution and violence. Following Jesus' death, Jews in Europe were largely governed by Christian institutions that operated with relative tolerance. The church barred religious "proselytization or expansion," but typically offered protection to Jewish holy sites and practices.[40] In the eleventh century, however, with the commencement of the Crusades, such policies were quickly ended. Consequently, Jews were expelled from many European states: England in 1290, France in 1306, and Spain in 1492.[41] Millions of people fled their homes to areas in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire; others remained in spiritual hiding for centuries.[42]

In the aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789, the French people announced a new Declaration of the Rights of Man, which offered all people, included Jews, full equality and representation.[43] This practice quickly spread to other parts of Western Europe, such as Germany, England, Italy, Hungary, and Austria.[44] Jewish people in these regions were permitted to exit their lives of secrecy, but were accordingly expected to integrate into mainstream culture. Millions accepted this invitation, but a small religious population retained a desire for cultural independence and sought a religious homeland. Many turned their attention to settlement in Palestine.

During the same period of the early 19th century, the Ottoman Empire divided its territory into dozens of distinct "administrative districts," called *sanjaks*.[4546] Despite the patchwork in oversight, there were consistent restrictions within the region that controlled settlement and land owning rights. By the mid 1800's, however, many of these regulations were slowly eased. Simultaneously, the formalization of a cohesive Jewish-nationalist movement (the precursor to modern Zionism) was underway.[47] Thus began the first wave of Jewish immigration in 1870. [48] This later came to be known as the first *Aliyah*, a Hebrew term that literally means "ascension," or immigration, to Israel.

Less two decades later, a number of factors sparked the escalation of Jewish immigration to the Holy Land and the continued collectivization of European Jewry. On Europe's eastern front, the enactment of repressive and discriminatory policies within the Russian Empire, and the intensification of *pogroms* (mob violence targeted at the Jewish minority), pushed hundreds of thousands of Jews towards Palestine.[49] To the west, a resurgence in Anti-Semitic rhetoric undermined hopes for lasting religious cohabitation. Following the false imprisonment of a French military-intelligence officer, Alfred Dreyfus, in 1894, the Zionist movement developed

steady momentum within both religious and secular communities.[50] Three years later, the newly unified European-Jewish diaspora assembled in Switzerland for a meeting of the first Zionist Congress in 1897, and established the mission of securing a permanent Jewish homeland.[51] Following a few years of debate, Palestine was selected as the optimal choice for such a state. For the first time, Zionism had collectivized the Jewish diaspora (particularly in Europe) and forged a stronger connection between Jewish identity and biblical Palestine. Notably, though, this was far more of a political movement seeking mutual protection than it was a religious endeavor.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, Great Britain eventually gained majority control of the Palestinian territory. [52] Despite ongoing negotiations with Arab leaders to guarantee their populations full sovereignty over the state, British rulers reneged in 1917 with the Balfour Declaration, which offered support for the creation of a Zionist nation in Palestine.[53] Intended to pressure Jewish lobbies in the United States and Russia to lure their governments into World War I, the Balfour Declaration legitimized and emboldened the Zionist movement in a manner unanticipated by British bureaucrats.[54] Furthermore, it exacerbated a growing rift between Jewish and Arab communities, each of which had competing visions for the future of the land.

By the late 1940's, following the horrific events of the Holocaust (in which more than six million Jews were killed), the international community expressed broad support for the establishment of the Jewish state.[55] In 1947, the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine proposed Resolution 181, which divided the territory into distinct Arab and Jewish states.[56] This proposition was met with widespread disapproval from Palestinian residents and the surrounding Arab nations. Nonetheless, Israel was officially established on May 14, 1948.[57]

Following a war that pitted the new state against neighboring Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Jordan, Jordan and Egypt took control of the West Bank and Gaza, respectively (a territorial boundary that held firm until 1967, when Israel recaptured the land), while Israel seized territory far beyond the borders of the UN mandate. As a result, Israel officially secured itself as a sovereign entity within a universally hostile region, and forced out hundreds of thousands of Palestinian inhabitants.[58]

Following this period, Israel enjoyed several rounds of successive immigration from North Africa, Eastern Europe, and the remaining Jewish diaspora. Between 1945 and 1949, the percentage of Jews in the new state rose from thirty-one to nearly eighty percent (note: different sources offer a slight variation in the exact figure, but the Jewish people undoubtedly constituted a significant majority).[59] This demographic dominance was successfully maintained for generations. As highlighted in the previous section, though, that trend is currently being reversed, and Palestinian-Arabs are expected to outnumber their Jewish counterparts within three decades.

Clearly, this historical synopsis ignores a number of complexities regarding the formation of the Jewish state, most notably an absence of the Arab perspective of Israel's establishment. But I have included this version of the country's history for two key reasons. First, it explains the presupposition within many Israeli circles that the state will always enjoy absolute Jewish dominance (and the associated political flexibility it brings). That, as prefaced in section one, is a falsehood. And second, it reveals the psychological foundation behind many of Israel's aggressive security policies. Numerous contemporary Israeli politicians are only a generation removed from the struggle to secure a Jewish homeland and are cognizant of the state's fragile position in a hostile region. Moreover, the country is viewed as an active project that protects a

continually repressed and isolated Jewish diaspora. This is highlighted in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent offer to accommodate France's Jewish population after a series of Anti-Semitic incidents in Europe.[60] On an academic level, many scholars suggest that much of Israeli's modern activity, including the expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank, is rooted in colonialist intentions. My belief, though, is that current leaders view their actions as a method of strengthening Jewish dominance and securing their people with a guaranteed homeland. Perhaps these concepts are not mutually exclusive, and certainly the Palestinian people are victims of such a mentality. Nonetheless, in my view, this partially explains Israeli aggression and clarifies the failure of international institutions to coerce policy change. For many individuals that safeguard the levers of power within Israel, including Prime Minister Netanyahu's party, the state's security is directly linked to the existential safety of the Jewish people, and is therefore nonnegotiable. Somewhat ironically, though, as I will show in this section, these right-wing blocs actually pose a massive threat to Israel's stability from within. The jingoistic attitudes of these parties only further isolate Palestinian Arabs, the international community, and the remaining moderate, secular Jews that provide an essential counterweight in current political discourse. Furthermore, declining demographic figures in secular Jewish communities and a soaring ultra-Orthodox population are likely to engender substantial political and economic challenges in the near future.

The sources of Israel's shifting Jewish demographics are numerous. First, and most obviously, the birthrate for ultra-Orthodox communities dwarfs those of secular and conservative groups. A 2013 analysis of reproduction rates in Israel from the Demographic Research Journal (an independent, peer reviewed publication) shows that ultra-Orthodox women have more than twice as many children as any other religious subgroup.[61] Consequently, Orthodox families are

expected to drive the majority of Israel's Jewish population growth in the coming decades, and will reach a total population of four million by 2059 (and up to six million with more aggressive projections).[62] This will account for about a third of the entire Israeli populace.[63]

In conjunction with this factor, Israel is slowly witnessing the flight of moderate and secular Jews and a decline in overall immigration numbers. According to a 2013 study conducted at the University of Haifa, diminishing economic opportunities within Israel and rising perceptions of impending future political turbulence have repelled young immigrants.[64] Simultaneously, tens of thousands of educated Israelis and many more secular Jews have emigrated in the past decade for similar reasons.[65] As a result, current net immigration figures are at the lowest point in generations.[66] Barring the occurrence of a major world event (as seen after the Holocaust or the fall of the Soviet Union), this trend is likely to persist.[67] The rise of international terrorism and isolated cases of Anti-Semitism in France, Russia, and elsewhere may in fact lead to new immigration influxes. Presently, though, the numbers remain stagnant.

The result of these two factors (the dominance of the ultra-religious and the decline of secular Jews) is that Israel will soon experience two simultaneous phenomena. The first is a swift and rapid growth in total population numbers (due to both Jewish and Arab expansion). Indeed, by 2050, the country is expected to grow from eight to thirteen million residents.[68] Second will be the consolidation of existing populations into two primary subgroups: Palestinian-Muslims (with close ties to moderate numbers of Palestinian Christians) and ultra-Orthodox Jews. The implications of this shift, as prefaced earlier, are extensive.

First, on a purely practical level, Israel is largely unprepared for an explosive population boom. The state already possesses a higher population density than almost any other developed nation at 338 people per square mile (ppsk).[69] This figure, however, does not even consider the

fact that a majority of the country's territory is uninhabitable desert. When accounting for this factor, Israel's ppsk is actually 860, and will stretch even higher as birthrates soar in coming decades.[70] According to the same study from the University of Haifa, this increase will strain existing infrastructure and will require new investment in "public transport, sewage, power stations and transmission of electricity, gas, and water."[71] Presently, though, insufficient measures have been taken to address this growing concern. Furthermore, the cost of inaction is likely to be amplified by the imminent effects of climate change. Recent reports from the United Nations suggest that incidences of drought and water pollution are soon expected to rise, particularly within the Palestinian territories of Israel.[72] Such problems will threaten the water supply of the entire state and demand innovative solutions like large-scale desalination projects (the likes of which are currently being researched).[73] These issues could perhaps force collaboration between leaders in Israeli and Palestinian regions, but may also pose new questions of equitability in resource allocation and infrastructural investment. Presently, for instance, Israeli settlers in the West Bank consume six times as much water as their Palestinian counterparts.[74]

In addition to the issue of resource distribution, rising populations within Israel's borders are likely to overburden residential units and threaten to create "slum-like" urban centers in many areas of the country.[75] This, in turn, will generate new waves of crime, an intensification of poverty cycles for poor Arabs and Jews, and a strain on government funded social services including welfare, childrearing benefits, and education subsidies. As noted in the breakdown of Arab demographic trends, Bedouin communities (and other marginalized Palestinian subgroups) already suffer under exceedingly high poverty rates. This is also true of Israel's ultra-Orthodox population, which has an employment percentage of just forty-two percent (as many of these

families prioritize religious education over direct economic production).[76] To summarize, within the next forty years, populations of Palestinian Arabs and ultra-Orthodox Jews will skyrocket within Israel while hundreds of thousands of middle-class, secular residents leave. That will deprive the state of a significant portion of its tax-contributing workforce while also necessitating billions of dollars of expenditures in welfare disbursements, education subsidies, and infrastructural costs. Naturally, each population subset holds the right to make independent decisions regarding settlement and lifestyle choices. From a governmental perspective, however, contemporary demographic trends are simply an unsustainable endeavor.

The second ramification of impending demographic changes is anticipated ethnic fragmentation within Israel's borders. Some of these concerns were detailed in the chapter on Arab demographics, but the inclusion of Jewish population numbers adds valuable nuance. For instance, the growth of Arab communities in Jerusalem (the capital will be at most sixty percent Jewish within a decade) has pushed thousands of Jews westward.[77] In the last ten years, 220,000 Jewish residents have moved out of Jerusalem, as compared to "only 100,000 who have arrived."[78] Many of these citizens have relocated to the center and periphery of Tel Aviv, a region that will soon house more than half of Israel's population.[79] A similar phenomenon has ensued throughout other regions of the country as distinct municipalities are becoming dominated by separate ethnic groups. The long-term impact of this issue is that the probability of comprehensive cultural integration will decline (a factor directly relevant to the prospects for stable bi-nationalism), as will the likelihood of land swap agreements neatly dividing Israeli territory.

A second geographic concern is the expansion of settlement activity on Palestinian territory. To be sure, many construction efforts have been undertaken to secure new land for

Israel and to preemptively undermine the prospects of a Palestinian state (motivations that I will detail in chapter five).[80] However, the growth in settlements can be partially attributed to a swelling Israeli population that requires new agricultural and residential terrain. Since 1996, the number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank has increased by an average of over five percent per year.[81] Seventy-seven percent of these residents were attracted to the region by "quality of life considerations, rather than ideology."[82] No matter the intent of the settler communities, the consequence of expanded settlements (partially by design) has been the disruption of normal life for millions of Palestinian refugees, the alienation of much of the international community, and the diminishment of opportunities for a negotiated peace. This problem will only intensify as Israel struggles to accommodate its growing overall population.

The third implication of evolving Jewish demographics is an increase in social and political hegemony for ultra-Orthodox factions. This religious subset of the general Israeli populace is already culturally removed from the more secular mainstream, and operates with a separate set of customs and social norms. This is typified, for instance, by the IDF's longstanding practice of exempting Haredi Jews from military obligations (though the Israeli Knesset controversially ended this policy in 2014).[83] Ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities also have distinct educational institutions that operate independently from normal supervisory boards, but nonetheless receive seventy percent of their funding from the Israeli government.[84] Many of these orthodox schools have curriculums that emphasize Torah study, Zionism, and Jewish ethics over secular academic subjects. For this reason, growing Orthodox communities are not likely to contribute economically to the state, and are equally unlikely to identify with more moderate Jewish sects. Once again, I emphasize that this data has *not* been included for the purposes of editorializing the status quo, and I remain agnostic regarding the *intrinsic* harm or value of

demographic changes. Indeed, Orthodox, Mizrahi, and Haredi populations have historically been granted cultural and civil independence in Israel simply by virtue of their exceptional presence in the general populace. Nonetheless, in a pure economic sense, the expansion of these sects (and the concurrent decline of more productive, secular subgroups) will pose a fiscal challenge to the state in the coming decades.

In addition to the projected division between secular and hyper-religious Jewish factions, the rise of the ultra-Orthodox is likely to push Israeli politics farther to the right. This is demonstrated in current alliances between many Haredi parties, such as Shas and United Torah Judaism, and the Likud government of Prime Minister Netanyahu.[85] That relationship can largely be explained by the ideological similarity between Likud and the ultra-Orthodox on many social issues, though the collaboration frequently extends into security questions as well. Importantly, Haredi political blocs have occasionally been willing to moderate on territorial disputes, such as the "disengagement from the Gaza Strip" in 2005, but I expect the long-term trend to be less restrained in both secular and religious circles.[86] Recent polling in Israel suggests that the younger generation is veering to the right (which is partially explained by demographic patterns).[87] In the next section, I will document the specific political consequences this trend has engendered, but it is critical to note the pragmatic implications as well. The dominance of the Israeli right is an unlikely context for meaningful bilateral negotiations to materialize, and it is certainly a less conducive environment for the achievement of significant compromise. Moreover, the future duality of Israel's political constituency (largely ultra-Orthodox and Palestinian) may likely precipitate the intensification of voter suppression efforts and perhaps the absolute eradication of the state's democratic status. To a certain extent, this phenomenon has already arrived. Many Bedouins and poor Palestinians lack the right or resources to vote,

particularly in the most rural stretches of Israel's territory.[88] Moreover, during the 2015 parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Netanyahu transparently encouraged right-wing nationalists to vote so as to counter the political influence of Arab citizens.[89] Clearly, the strength of Arab voting blocs will only grow in coming decades. If a territorial compromise is not reached soon, the state will be pushed into a *de facto* one-state solution. At that point, leaders will either be forced to integrate Arabs into the broader, Jewish mainstream, or will directly suppress Palestinian democratic rights in a way that irreparably changes the political character of the existing Jewish state.

These past two sections on demographic trends outline the ramifications of evolving Jewish and Arab populations within Israel and Palestine. The laundry list of impacts, from inadequate water access to the absolute disappearance of democratic rights, highlights the need for immediate reform within Israel. But such reform will require a level of political energy and cohesion that has not yet been seen. In the simplest sense, I have included such a granular account of forthcoming demographic changes as a means of demonstrating the likely (and pernicious) outcome of status quo policy. Presently, it is strikingly easy for politicians on both sides to continue established narratives that blame and antagonize the opposition. Clearly, though, this is no longer a sustainable strategy. Failing to engage with the severity of inaction will precipitate an incalculable social, political and security catastrophe for Palestinians and Israelis alike. Additionally, it seems likely that any significant territorial divisions *must* occur before these demographic phenomena materialize. Given that, I will devote the remainder of this paper to considering means of avoiding a demographic crisis through a comprehensive security agreement. Specifically, I will first consider the political climates within Israel and Palestine in

order to understand current patterns of leadership. Then, I will use that contextual information to analyze the probability of any resolution finding success.

Contemporary Israeli Politics:

The main takeaway from Israeli and Palestinian demographic trends is the narrow window for implementing concrete, comprehensive policy reform. Once population changes are fully manifested (within the next two decades), it seems likely that territorial exchanges and other peace efforts will be pragmatically unachievable. At that time, without a security resolution that divides ethnic factions, Israel's democratic status will hang in the balance (unless hardliners forfeit the state's Jewish identity, an implausible policy shift) while the state simultaneously faces an unprecedented budget crisis. The question, therefore, is whether the present political climate is one in which these demographic problems can be avoided. Phrased simply, what are the current patterns of leadership within Israel and Palestine and what does this signal about the willingness of each party to engage with the peace process? In this section, I will evaluate contemporary Israeli political trends. Then, in the succeeding chapter, I will conduct a similar analysis of Palestinian governance in Gaza and the West Bank.

The most recent period of Israel's political history can largely be characterized as the age of Benjamin Netanyahu. Having served in several elite units during his tenure in the IDF, Netanyahu entered politics as an established cultural hero.[90] After working as Israel's permanent delegate to the United Nations in 1984, he ran for a post in the Israeli Knesset four years later, quickly becoming a high-ranking member.[91] In 1996, after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, he defeated Shimon Peres in the prime ministerial elections to become the youngest executive in Israel's history.[92] During this term, Netanyahu hesitantly ceded autonomy of territory near Hebron to the Palestinian Authority (PA), which was a partial reversal of his earlier criticism of the Oslo Accords. In response, he faced a massive political backlash from Israel's rightist bloc, so he intensified the construction of settlements as a means of appeasing the Likud base.[93] These

actions caused ongoing peace talks between Israel, the United States, and the PA to unravel, and earned Netanyahu the reputation of an intransigent ideologue within many American and Palestinian circles. In the 1999 elections, following these political challenges, Netanyahu lost to Ehud Barak, head of the Labor party, who promised a renewed effort for peace.[94] Nonetheless, he retained his position as an influential Likud politician, later serving as foreign minister, and subsequently finance minister, in the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.[95]

In 2005, Netanyahu resigned from his ministerial post in protest of Sharon's decision to disengage from the Gaza Strip.[96] That same year, Sharon split from the Likud base to form the centrist Kadima party, which supported the withdrawal from Gaza.[97] Consequently, Netanyahu once again rose to the top rank within Likud, and was reelected as prime minister in 2009 after defeating incumbent Ehud Olmert (who replaced Sharon when the former leader suffered a stroke in 2006).[98] He formed a winning coalition with Shas, Yisrael Beiteinu, and Jewish Home, all right-wing and center-right parties, and governed with an associated conservative approach.[99] Then, in 2012, Netanyahu allied with the Kadima party to form the largest coalition in Knesset history, though the alliance fell apart after only two months.[100]

In the 2013 elections, Likud successfully formed a governing coalition with centrist groups Hatnua and Yesh Atid and the far right party Jewish Home.[101] But since then, Netanyahu has endured several bouts of political turbulence, including direct criticism from members of his cabinet.[102] He fired Justice Minister Tzipi Livini (of Hatnua) and Finance Minister Yair Lapid (from Yesh Atid) in December 2014 for publicly undermining his authority.[103] This resulted in the collapse of his parliamentary coalition, and prompted a new round of elections in March 2015. After one of the shortest governing periods in Israeli history, Netanyahu risked his leadership in order to restructure deteriorating Likud partnerships.[104]

Initially, Netanyahu seemed poised to win an easy reelection. During the campaign season, however, his position gradually worsened. The Zionist Union party (which had been jointly formed by Livni and Isaac Herzog) waged a political assault on Likud's social and economic policies that quickly developed momentum.[105] Numerous anti-Netanyahu rallies attracted tens of thousands of supporters, and by March, most analysts viewed the race as a coin toss.[106] In the end, though, after employing a series of controversial election-day tactics, Netanyahu picked up ten additional seats, and is effectively guaranteed to form a winning coalition.[107] At the time of this paper's completion, a new parliamentary majority had not been formed, though Likud is expected to ally with Kulanu, Shas, United Torah Judaism, and Jewish Home.[108] For the purposes of this document, despite the absence of a confirmed new coalition, the most recent election cycle still offers a number of important political insights.

First, it appears inevitable that Netanyahu will secure a fourth term as prime minister, and that his policies will persist for several years more. Despite low approval numbers in early 2015, he demonstrated his ability to rally the rightist base and overcome widespread discontentment and controversy. This, I argue, will embolden Netanyahu in coming years on matters of security, but will likely also force him to focus on economic issues as a means of preempting left-wing challengers. Given the evolving demographics within Israel, I believe that this election was the narrowest victory that the right will enjoy for the foreseeable future. The Likud party has already controlled the prime ministership for twenty-seven of the last thirty-five years, and it is easy to imagine that this trend will continue.[109]

Second, the role of the left in Israeli politics has changed immensely. For the past several decades, leftist parties have served as a valuable counterweight to right-wing rhetoric in domestic political discourse. Prime Minister Barak, for example, as head of Labor, aggressively pursued

an accord with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) at Camp David.[110] In recent years, however, the power of the left has been diluted considerably, and Netanyahu's governing coalitions have largely shut out liberal perspectives. Superficially, the most recent elections seemed to reverse this trend, as several left-wing parties picked up new Knesset seats. For instance, the Arab Joint List, a united party of all Arab political factions in Israel, won two more slots than in 2013.[111] Furthermore, the Zionist Union, led by Herzog, came close to defeating Netanyahu during the elections, and picked up three new Knesset seats.[112] Upon closer inspection, though, it is clear that the left no longer provides a meaningful counter-narrative to right-wing security policies. The Zionist Union achieved success by focusing almost exclusively on economic issues, and the vast majority of Israelis believe that Netanyahu and Likud are more capable of protecting the state's security interests than the left.[113] This signals the likely perpetuation of many of Netanyahu's political and military strategies, including settlement expansion and a disinterest in peace negotiations. Moreover, and somewhat strangely, it reveals the apathy within Israel's electorate towards serious engagement with the Palestinian issue. Given the encroaching manifestation of demographic changes, I find this to be of massive concern.

The final takeaway from the 2015 elections is that present political conditions do not inspire optimism concerning the emergence of a comprehensive peace deal. This, again, is true for many reasons. Firstly, Netanyahu has failed to cultivate the necessary unity within Israel's government to forge a major security accord. It is unavoidable that any engagement with Palestinian leadership will stir controversy within Israel's rightist political base. In order to overcome this degree of turbulence, Netanyahu will require enormous credibility among the Israeli electorate and the broad support of Knesset leaders. But the partisanship of the most

recent election suggests that such unity is not currently present. Isaac Herzog, for instance, has stated that the Zionist Union will not collaborate with a new Likud administration. Moreover, many of Netanyahu's strategic choices during his campaign alienated former political allies. This includes his controversial decision to speak to the US Congress on the American nuclear deal with Iran, which was widely seen as an act of defiance towards President Obama.[114] It also includes Likud's intentional proliferation of a forged video that claimed to demonstrate support of the Kulanu party for Netanyahu's reelection.[115] As stated, this has undermined Netanyahu's integrity in the eyes of Israel's voters, competing political parties, and the international community at large.

Secondly, Netanyahu has actively alienated many of his counterparts in the PA, undermining the trust necessary to implement a difficult peace agreement. In 2009, he took the unprecedented step of acknowledging potential support for the creation of an autonomous Palestinian country next to Israel.[116] During the 2015 election cycle, however, after slipping considerably in domestic polls, Netanyahu insisted that he would never tolerate the construction of a Palestinian state.[117] Though he has since walked back on these statements and suggested that he would be willing to engage under the right circumstances, many believe that his comments revealed an internal commitment to oppose or sabotage any negotiating efforts. This problem was exacerbated by Netanyahu's last-minute plea for right-wing Israelis to vote in the election so as to counter Arab political influence.[118] These actions have unsurprisingly angered Israel's Arab constituents and members of the Palestinian government, but have also denied PA leadership the essential credibility within Israel to be viewed as a trustworthy negotiating partner. If Netanyahu is unwilling to respect the Arab voice domestically, it seems unlikely that he will be capable of making the necessary sacrifices for peace.

Given the present conditions, it is unsurprising that few within Israel are optimistic regarding the likelihood of a peace agreement materializing in coming years. A 2015 poll from Tel Aviv University reveals that only five percent of Jewish Israelis strongly believe that negotiations will soon lead to a security deal between Israel and Palestine, while nearly seventy percent expect a continuation of the status quo.[119] Somewhat hopefully, though, almost two-thirds of Israeli Jews (and a similar percentage of Arabs) support continued bilateral dialogue as a means of resolving the ongoing dispute.[120] Indeed, there have been a few recent cases that inspire moderate optimism. Most notable is the 2013-2014 attempt by US Secretary of State John Kerry to restart discussions between the two parties.

In March of 2013, following President Obama's trip to Israel and the Palestinian territories, he instructed Secretary Kerry to resume peace talks. Initially, both sides were hesitant to participate. Prime Minister Netanyahu was uneager to slow the expansion of settlements, a necessary prerequisite to legitimate negotiations.[121] Concurrently, leaders of the PA questioned the genuineness of Netanyahu's offer to deliberate, and faced significant constituent opposition to participation.[122] In order to overcome these political obstacles, the Palestinian leadership made three foundational demands: the "negotiations would be based on the lines of June 4, 1967," Israel would release 104 prisoners that had been incarcerated since before the Oslo Accords, and all settlement activity would be temporarily frozen.[123] Kerry consulted with the Israeli government, which signed off on the conditions, and talks began in July 2014.[124]

Almost immediately, the discussions encountered a series of roadblocks. Despite earlier promises, Netanyahu endorsed the construction of new settlements in both East Jerusalem and the West Bank.[125] Israel also refused to discharge all 104 prisoners, and instead agreed to release 80 over a period of nine months.[126] Naturally, this incensed Palestinian delegates and

undermined support for the talks within the occupied territories. Nevertheless, the negotiations continued (though without much traction) for several months more.[127]

By March of 2014, it was obvious that Secretary Kerry's efforts were losing steam. A self-imposed nine-month negotiating deadline was quickly approaching, and delegates had little to show for their work. That month, Mahmoud Abbas, leader of the PA, traveled to Washington, DC to meet with American officials and outline his criteria for continued deliberation.[128] Of greatest concern was the release of the final twenty pre-Oslo prisoners, a condition Israel refused to satisfy until the negotiating deadline was extended. Despite the frantic efforts of US diplomats, no such extension was realized, and talks disintegrated in April.[129] Following this collapse, relations between Israel and Palestine deteriorated further. In June, three Israeli Yeshiva students were kidnapped and murdered in the West Bank. Subsequently, a Palestinian teenager was tortured and killed in Jerusalem in retaliation.[130] As a direct result of these incidents, protests erupted throughout Israel and Palestinian regions, and retributive rocket fire intensified in the Gaza Strip. Thus began a month-long hostile conflict between Israel and Palestinian activists that resulted in the deaths of 2100 Gazans (as well as fifty Israeli casualties), including hundreds of children.[131] Presently, relations between the two groups remain tense, particularly following the reunification of Hamas and Fatah and the Palestinian application to join the International Criminal Court.

On paper, the 2013-2014 deliberations were an absolute failure. By the end of official discussions, the ideological divide between Israelis and Palestinians had been enlarged, and the US Department of State had expended a tremendous amount of political capital on the issue. Despite this, the negotiations were successful in achieving numerous diplomatic milestones. Most significantly, Netanyahu became the first Likud leader in thirty years to seriously engage

with his Palestinian counterparts.[132] Additionally, he demonstrated an unprecedented willingness to slow (and occasionally halt) settlement expansion in the occupied territories, a vital precondition to any future peace talks.

Ultimately, Secretary Kerry's attempt to foster peace between Israel and Palestine did not work, and may perhaps have pushed the states farther apart. Moreover, it is unlikely that the United States will be willing to expend the necessary political energy to broker a security agreement in the near future. However, the 2013-2014 negotiations contain glimmers of hope that suggest the potentiality for future compromise (perhaps given a new intermediary, such as Arab states or the European Union). That, however, will require partisan unity and sacrifice within Israel, as well as a stable, flexible negotiating counterpart in Palestine. In the next section, I will examine the political climate within Palestine to determine whether such a counterpart exists.

Contemporary Palestinian Politics:

As described in chapter three, the realization of a comprehensive peace accord not only requires the alignment of disparate political blocs within Israel, but also demands a credible, unified negotiating partner in Palestine. In this section, I will evaluate the latter condition on two fronts. First, I will offer a brief historical timeline of Palestinian leadership in order to understand the origins of contemporary political dynamics. Then, I will discuss multiple specific transformations that have unfolded within the West Bank and Gaza in the last few years. This analysis will form the final portion of my contextual assessment of Israel and Palestine, and will facilitate a more nuanced evaluation of competing peace proposals in the succeeding chapters.

Since the time of Israel's establishment, the territorial holdings of the Palestinian people have changed continuously. The original United Nations decree that divided land between Zionists and indigenous Arabs was forcibly altered after the war in 1948.[133] Since then, other conflicts (namely the Six Day War, Yom Kippur War, and 2005 disengagement from Gaza), have adjusted Israel's control over the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Golan Heights, and Sinai.[134] These territorial changes have fragmented Palestinian populations and produced a fractured political landscape in Gaza and the West Bank (the regions that collectively form the *de jure* State of Palestine). Presently, the Palestinian government is headed by Mahmoud Abbas, leader of the Fatah political party, who was appointed to guide the PA beginning in 2005 (and has steered a unified parliament since 2013).[135] Despite this nominal steadiness in governance, the state continues to suffer partisan divisions and instability. To a certain extent, this phenomenon can be traced to the origins of modern Palestinian politics.

The Palestinian people collectivized as a countervailing force to Jewish Zionism in the years following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. As noted in chapter one, territorial

divisions between Jews and Arabs were effectively zero-sum, and challenged early agreements between the British and King Hussein of Jordan to secure a sovereign Palestinian homeland. Following Israel's establishment in 1948 (referred to as the *nakba,* or "catastrophe," in Arabic) millions of Palestinian refugees fled the region and created a newborn diaspora.[136] In the decades succeeding the formation of Israel, the remaining Arab people were essentially politically and militarily reliant on third-party involvement from nearby Arab states.

After the Six Day War, in which Israel decisively defeated its neighbors and captured the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian domestic political groups emerged as independent, autonomous entities. The Palestinian Liberation Organization, for instance, which had formed in 1964, developed rapid prominence for its nationalistic messages and "guerilla raids against Israel from Jordanian territory."[137] In 1969, Yasser Arafat (a Fatah leader) came to head the organization, a position he held until his death in 2004.[138] Far before this time, though, Arafat helped organize many of the most critical Palestinian political efforts of the twentieth century. In the late 1980's, the PLO coordinated the first *intifada* (uprising) against Israeli occupation from its headquarters in Tunisia (after being exiled from Jordan and subsequently Lebanon).[139] This marked the first universal resistance effort in Palestine, and helped establish a national sense of unity and interdependence. Despite this success, support for the PLO wavered as peace efforts continually stalled (including at the 1993 Oslo Accords), and as Arafat staked controversial geopolitical positions, such as support for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.[140] That insecurity permitted the rise of competing political factions. Of greatest significance was the advent of Hamas, a party that continues to dominate electoral discourse alongside Fatah.

Hamas first emerged as a political player in the years following the first intifada. The group formed as an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in 1987 and developed widespread support for its Islamic principles and direct (frequently violent) approach to engagement with Israel.[141] Hamas served as a viable, much needed counterweight to the dominant Fatah rhetoric, and grew in popularity towards the end of the twentieth century, particularly in the Gaza Strip. By the time of the second Palestinian intifada (which spanned from 2000 to 2005), the group had become massively influential, and organized much of the uprising on the ground.[142] Consequently, when Arafat died in 2005 (with great mystery and conspiracy surrounding his passing),[143] it was widely expected that Fatah's political influence and stability would crumble and that Hamas would assume its place. In contrast, leadership of Fatah (and the PNA) was steadily passed to Mahmoud Abbas. This engendered a bilateral struggle for power and democratic control.

In 2006, Hamas surprised the world and triumphed in Palestine's parliamentary elections.[144] This victory was met with widespread international condemnation (as a result of Hamas's violent tactics), and resulted in the revocation of millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinian territories.[145] In order to mitigate this discontent, Hamas forged an agreement with Fatah in Mecca, and established a national unity government in mid-2007.[146] Three months later, however, the coalition fell apart, and Gaza was thrust into civil war. Soon after, Hamas militants seized control of the PA's Gazan headquarters, and declared full administrative authority in the territory. This created a simultaneous geographic and ideological divide between the Palestinian territories. The Gaza Strip was controlled by the more aggressive, confrontational Hamas government, while Abbas and Fatah managed the West Bank and served as Palestine's internationally recognized representatives.[147]

This history informs contemporary discord between Hamas, Fatah, and other partisan factions, as well as the political divisions seen along territorial lines. That dynamic has consistently been present for more than a decade. Nevertheless, a number of modern trends and incidents have directly affected Palestinian political currents and the prospects for regional peace. The first is the unification of Hamas and Fatah in early 2014, and the governing union between Gaza and the West Bank that the alliance has engendered.[148] Considering the fraught and occasionally violent history of the relationship, many experts question the sustainability of any political accord. Nonetheless, I argue that even a temporary diplomatic alliance between the groups is beneficial to prospects for peace. Both Hamas and Fatah will need to rally their bases in favor of a future security agreement, and will have to guarantee the allegiance of their respective territories for Israel to be willing to engage. As noted previously, I will discuss specific peace proposals in the coming chapters, but from a general perspective, I believe that the current partisan unity is a necessary precondition for progress.

Despite ongoing diplomatic complications, the coalition between Hamas and Fatah has remained (at least temporarily) intact. Intuitively, when considering the parties' tumultuous past, the continued solidarity is surprising. But after examining the political weaknesses of each party independently, the alliance is actually quite logical. Both factions are individually incapable of securing both popular support and geopolitical legitimacy. That limitation has necessitated partisan integration, and presents a tentatively optimistic outlook for the immediate future.

Hamas, for example, suffers from a lack of international recognition and diplomatic inclusion. The United States, European Union, and Israel all officially consider the group to be a "terrorist organization," undermining the party's capacity to serve as a suitable global ambassador for the Palestinian cause.[149] Even within the Arab world, Hamas is widely

controversial. Egypt, for example, classifies its military arm, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, as a "terrorist group," and has continually restricted access between Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula.[150] When considering Egypt's complicated history with the Muslim Brotherhood (from which Hamas originated), this tension is not surprising. Importantly, though, Hamas also lacks solid ties to Iran, Syria, and other major players in the Arab and Islamic world.[151]

These issues notwithstanding, Hamas enjoys significant domestic popularity, particularly within Gaza, and is often internally viewed as a more legitimate voice for the Palestinian people than Fatah.[152] Recent polling confirms this (particularly following the 2014 Gaza War), and further explains Fatah's present commitment to the alliance. Indeed, Abbas's political grip over Palestinian politics has slipped considerably in the last year, and his approval rating currently stands at a meager thirty-five percent.[153] This, of course, severely threatens his reelection potential. If elections were held today, Abbas would lose by a considerable margin to both Marwan Barghouti (a Fatah politician that opposes security negotiations and has called for a new intifada) and Ismail Haniyeh (the former Hamas prime minister who vehemently opposes diplomatic cooperation with Israel).[154] Fortunately for Abbas, Palestinian elections have been suspended indefinitely, and his coalition is likely to endure into the near future. Nonetheless, these figures illustrate political discontent within Palestine regarding the status quo and the fragility of Abbas's pursuit of peace.[155]

Despite the advantages of fusing international legitimacy (Fatah) with domestic popularity (Hamas), there are numerous reasons I question the longevity of the current diplomatic accord. In conjunction with the groups' violent past, there remain significant ideological divides between their respective leaders. Hamas, for example, has historically denied Israel's right to exist, a concession Fatah has long recognized as a necessary precondition to

negotiations. Somewhat optimistically, the group has recently wavered on this point. In a 2014 interview, "Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal skirted" the question, and simply asserted that he would evaluate Israel's existential legitimacy after Palestinians secure greater autonomy.[156] Yet this topic is emblematic of wider strategic divergences. Hamas is more prone to violent engagement with Israel, including the extensive use of rocket fire in Gaza.[157] Abbas, meanwhile, has publicly decried this tactic as inflammatory and counterproductive.[158] No matter the morality or pragmatic sensibility of Hamas's strategic choices, these disparities may eventually undermine political cohesion. This is particularly true if the groups are unable to secure meaningful concessions from Israel, as local populations will quickly demand accountability and administrative changes.

Additionally, Hamas and Fatah have demonstrated an inability to maturely share power and present a unified political front. This problem is especially salient within Gaza. In February 2015, many months after the announcement of a parliamentary union, the groups continued to squabble over administrative positions within the new government. Hamas demanded recognition and pay for all of its former employees, a request Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah denied, while Fatah accused its counterpart of undermining security and infrastructural projects in the strip.[159] As of April, some of this turbulence has subsided, but there continue to be ongoing disputes regarding the fair division of power and resources. Neither faction is especially practiced at ceding political control to other forces (given the long stretch of independent dominance in the West Bank and Gaza). That inexperience may ultimately threaten the viability of the reunification.

Given these concerns, it is unsurprising that support for the Hamas-Fatah union has dwindled in the last several months (dissatisfaction currently sits at sixty-seven percent).[160] In

part, this is explained by the failure of the coalition government to win a security agreement with Israel. If anything, the Palestinian people have been subjected to increased Israeli aggression and a decline in governmental autonomy. Of course, the blame for this outcome does not rest squarely with Abbas's government (though ironically, the Hamas-Fatah accord has alienated Israel's right, even though it is a necessary precondition for peace), but it will likely raise tension between parties as Palestinian civilians lose patience. This problem is being compounded by other political and monetary challenges that threaten the stability of the alliance and prospects for a negotiated peace.

First, Palestine holds extensive debt, which, by definition, undermines financial flexibility and diplomatic strength for Ramallah. In 2014, the group announced that it has accrued 4.8 billion dollars in liabilities, and holds an annual budget deficit of 1.5 billion dollars.[161] The government also owes nearly five hundred million dollars in utility payments to Israel, which has resulted in intermittent power outages throughout the West Bank.[162] This issue has been exacerbated by other fiscal problems. In early 2015, for example, a New York City federal court held the former PA and PLO responsible for terrorist activity at the turn of the century, and demanded compensatory damages of over six hundred million dollars for the victims.[163] Lawyers for the Palestinian state have dismissed the veracity and legitimacy of the ruling, but in the short term it has raised financial concerns and has added fuel to the provocative rhetoric of rightist Israeli politicians. In the past, Palestine has reached compensation settlements in these types of trials, and it is likely that at least a portion of the verdict will be have to be paid (particularly if the United States government puts pressure on Ramallah).[164] That will place an additional financial strain on the Palestinian government as it works to balance its budget.

The Abbas administration has also struggled to achieve financial stability in the face of continuous, widespread corruption. For context, a study conducted by the European Union found that more than two billion dollars in aid money was misdirected between 2008 and 2012.[165] Both Israeli and Palestinian prosecutors have tackled this issue in recent years, but incidences of graft and financial negligence remain rampant, costing the Palestinian people desperately needed funding for education, healthcare, and development. Moreover, such behavior disincentives new rounds of aid and undermines Palestine's perceived ability to establish a stable, functioning state.

The second major development in Palestinian politics has been a heightened level of engagement with the international community and, to a certain extent, increased confrontation with Israel. In 2012, Palestine was accepted as a non-voting observer member of the United Nations, which was a symbolic demonstration of widespread global recognition.[166] More significantly, in April of 2015, Palestine was also inaugurated as a participating member of the International Criminal Court, despite strong American and Israeli objections.[167] This will officially enable the Palestinian government to file legal grievances against Israel's occupation and wartime tactics. So far, Abbas's government has shown restraint, and has not yet sued the Israeli military or political establishment. It is likely, however, that several lawsuits will be submitted in the near future, particularly regarding Israel's bombing of civilian targets during the Gaza War. Clearly, Palestine's application to the ICC is an attempt to increase global recognition and support, and to seek justice against Israeli hostility. This strategy may empower the Palestinian base and make it a more commanding negotiating partner against Israel, but it may also serve to intensify enmity between the two states. Furthermore, it could provoke an Israeli countersuit on the basis of Hamas tactics employed during the Gaza war, including the alleged use of schools and hospitals as military installations. That type of legal showdown would pose a

massive distraction to peace efforts and would surely undercut the goodwill between Israeli and Palestinian leaders necessary for negotiations to progress.

In addition to the formal accession of Palestine to the UN and ICC, the Palestinian freedom movement has recently employed unofficial, grassroots strategies to coerce Israeli moderation. Most notable has been the emergence of the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions campaign (BDS), which is particularly popular among Palestine's youth, international activists, students, and the broader Palestinian diaspora. As the name suggests, the movement calls on the international community to encourage policy change by making occupation a costly endeavor for Israeli businesses. As an entirely democratic, populist social movement, BDS has enabled many activists to sidestep the political establishment within Palestine, and has collectivized global Palestinian allies to an unprecedented degree. As with the coercive strategies employed by Hamas and Fatah, these efforts could force Israel to the bargaining table by inducing painful economic costs. But direct confrontation is equally capable of alienating the Israeli right and undermining trust between the two nations. As anecdotal proof, in January of 2015, Israel withheld more than a hundred million dollars in Palestinian tax revenue (ostensibly) as retribution for intensified global outreach.[168] Though costly, this is only a moderate instance of potential antagonism. For that reason, I argue in favor of restraint, and recommend a tempered, indirect Palestinian approach to Israeli engagement.

To summarize, the current political context within Palestine suggests the existence of a narrow window for achieving peace with Israel. Despite the ongoing turbulence between Hamas and Fatah, and the fragility of Abbas's leadership, the recent partisan alliance has created a unified governing force more capable of negotiating on behalf of the entire Palestinian population. In fact, Hamas has directly indicated that it will abide by future agreements between

Fatah and Israel that carve out sufficient autonomy for Palestine.[169] As mentioned, the current harmony is unlikely to persist infinitely, and may even disappear after the next round of elections. Given that, it is crucial that Palestinian leaders (and their Israeli counterparts) strike a deal immediately. In the final portion of this paper, I will evaluate multiple specific peace proposals and will comment on the likelihood of each finding success soon.

Comparative Possibilities for Peace:

The majority of this paper has been devoted to establishing basic contextual premises regarding the politics and social dynamics within Israel and Palestine. Sections one and two form the basis for my argument that large-scale negotiations will be unachievable following the manifestation of demographic changes in the next twenty years. In sections three and four, I make the case that peace is theoretically possible in the short term, but only given political cohesion within Israeli and Palestinian factions and the willingness of both parties to accept extensive political costs. Given this background, I will dedicate the remainder of this paper to evaluating the viability of specific peace proposals. In particular, I will examine the likelihood of a one-state, two-state, multi-state, or confederation solution being implemented in the near future.

The One-State Solution:

Appeals for a one-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis have gained momentum in recent years. The BDS movement, for instance, which formed in 2005, has called for an end to the "apartheid state," and demanded a resolution similar to that of South Africa at the end of the twentieth century.[170] Despite its modern popularity, the one-state proposal actually predates Israel's initial formation. In the late 1920's, a small contingent of Zionist politicians, Judah Magnes, Martin Buber, and Brit Shalom, suggested a "bi-national state in Palestine."[171] Ultimately, both Jews and Arabs rejected their advocacy. Nonetheless, beginning in 1969, the PLO reworked the proposal and made it a core organizational principle (though negotiations for a two-state agreement continued).[172]

As discussed, calls for a single, inclusive nation have intensified in the past decade. To a large degree, I find this transition linked to the failure of both states to negotiate a sustainable

peace agreement. Additionally, the prospects of a two-state (or alternative) solution materializing seem increasingly dim. The number of Israeli settlers in Palestinian territory has doubled in a generation, Israel has constructed a barrier near Jerusalem that intrudes into "Palestinian land," and Prime Minister Netanyahu has inspired little optimism in his willingness to seriously engage with Ramallah.[173]

These concerns make the one-state solution tempting, but I find such efforts to be misguided. That position is mainly a reflection of the structural inability of a singular government to provide both factions with full autonomy. As I describe in chapter two, many members of the Israeli right, including the present government, view the state as a means of guaranteeing the existential safety of the Jewish people. I do not believe that these groups are willing to sacrifice Israel's Jewish identity or cede partial administrative control to Arab rivals. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine Prime Minister Netanyahu, yet alone his more radical peers, voluntarily sharing missile technology or military strategies with Palestinian leaders. This does not even consider the practical implications of a full Palestinian "right of return," or the financial burden of necessary future investments in Gaza and the West Bank.

Given this dynamic, I believe that a one-state agreement would be equivalently unsatisfactory to Palestinian activists. Neither Netanyahu nor any potential successor would possess the necessary political capital to fully integrate Arab voters. By definition, that would require a continued restriction on Palestinian voting rights and managerial sovereignty. Consequently, as has been the case with many past security propositions (some of which have offered significant territorial concessions), this type of resolution would be flatly rejected in the occupied territories. Moreover, considering the unlikelihood of popular, controversial political

groups like Hamas being recognized in Jerusalem, I strongly question the viability of a genuine bi-national state.

One potential solution to this issue is a power-sharing agreement between Jews and Palestinians. The Lebanese model of consociationalism is reasonably analogous in its division of Maronite Christian and Sunni Muslim sects.[174] Both groups are guaranteed predetermined legislative representation, which ostensibly ensures that neither party is ever politically threatened. Hypothetically, this may seem to be a feasible solution to prolonged ethnic clash. In reality, though, Lebanon has undergone generations of perpetual instability and political unrest, in large part due to its power-sharing system. To begin with, this type of governing model consolidates power among influential members of each sectarian group, which undermines progress and political reform. Moreover, parties continually must struggle to maintain social hegemony and relevance, which has resulted in intermittent periods of legislative chaos and even war.[175] Within the context of Israel, the same previous concerns over the integration of contentious Palestinian blocs, and the palatability of forfeiting absolute Jewish control, are present. Ultimately, though consociationalism has not resulted in sustained harmony in the Lebanese government, this case study may enable Israel to understand the advantages of power-sharing (it is likely logistically preferable to an immediate, unconditional democratic system), as well as its intrinsic limitations.

As detailed in the conclusion of sections one and two, debates over the potential implementation of a one-state solution may be little more than an academic exercise. If Israeli and Palestinian leaders are unable to cultivate sufficient political cohesion, no peace deal will be realized within the next several years. At that point, the manifestation of demographic changes will make any agreement infeasible, and Israel will forcibly transition into a *de facto* bi-national

state. The management of swelling population numbers will require new political responsibility and unity in Jerusalem, and will prompt fresh questions regarding the final status of Gaza, the West Bank, and Palestinian voters in general. This has the potential to solidify Israel as an absolute apartheid state, which, in the long term, is an entirely unsustainable exercise. But it holds equal potential to force political collaboration between Jews and Palestinians, and could engender a new era of peace and partisan accord. Clearly, the risks of an unguided ethnic merger are immense. Thus, I argue in support of more concrete, predictable security arrangements.

The Two-State Solution:

For decades, the two-state solution has commanded the most attention of any Israeli-Palestinian security proposal in the global diplomatic community. It seems natural that two ethnic factions, each with a constituent determination to secure absolute political sovereignty, should be granted distinct governments on separated territories. In reality, though, the implementation of a land division agreement between Israel and Palestine has been nightmarishly complex. To begin with, the Israeli right will never allow for Palestinians to have unrestricted military independence. More importantly, there are substantial pragmatic barriers to a comprehensive agreement, many of which are becoming increasingly unresolvable as time elapses.

One of the closest historical efforts to securing a complete, bilateral peace agreement took place at the beginning of the new millennium. After the collapse of the second Camp David Accords, President Clinton held a press conference in which he elucidated his vision of successful negotiating parameters.[176] Specifically, the plan called for Israel to withdraw from 94-96% of the West Bank, and to offer land swaps in exchange for retained territory (in a way that maximally consolidated Jewish settlers and offered contiguity to the Palestinian state).[177]

Second, Clinton suggested the allowance of temporary Israeli security forces in the Jordan Valley and a few military bases throughout the West Bank.[178] Third, Israel would accept the Palestinian "right of return" in principle, but would not be obligated to unconditionally assume unlimited Arab immigrants.[179] Finally, Clinton advised that international monitors be stationed in Jerusalem to guarantee each faction access to religious sites. He did not specifically explicate strategies to divide the city, but again emphasized the needed for territorial contiguity.[180] These recommendations brought unprecedented specificity to the dialogue over a two-state split. Nonetheless, for reasons that will be described below, the Clinton parameters were eventually rejected on both sides. Importantly, many present-day experts believe that future two-state arrangements are likely to be characteristically similar to President Clinton's proposal. Thus, the failure of his plan is illustrative of the broader obstacles to securing a two-state agreement, particularly concerning the numerous logistical obstructions to a clean territorial division.

One of the largest stumbling blocks to a negotiated settlement, on both philosophical and practical grounds, has been the refusal of Israel to acknowledge the Palestinian "right of return." This problem originated with the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, in which more than 600,000 Palestinians were evicted from their homes (or chose to leave voluntarily).[181] Today, according to the UNRWA, more than three million Palestinian refugees live outside of the occupied territories, approximately one third of which reside in refugee camps.[182] For many activists, the "right of return" is a critical element of historical validation for generations of exile and desolation. Moreover, there is strong (albeit controversial) legal backing for many Palestinian claims. UN Resolutions 194, 242, and Security Council Resolution 338 all call for a "just settlement" to the refugee crisis.[183] Israel, of course, alleges that this simply requires a case-by-case evaluation of immigration applications (which are routinely denied).[184] Further, many

Zionists believe that the acknowledgement of a principled right to return could introduce grounds for future claims to large scale Arab resettlement, even after a two-state agreement has been implemented. This controversy remains unresolved, and could undermine the viability of new rounds of talks (indeed, this issue was a reason for Palestine's partial rejection of the Clinton parameters).[185] Nonetheless, I believe that if Israel acknowledges the depths of the refugee tragedy, even without accepting culpability or pragmatic obligations, Palestinians might be willing to move past the issue in favor of comprehensive security reform.

The second obstacle to a two-state solution is the proliferation of Jewish settlements throughout the occupied territories. For context, between 1972 and 2007 the number of settlers in the West Bank rose from one thousand to nearly three hundred thousand.[186] In less than a decade since, this figure has doubled.[187] Since before Netanyahu's first prime ministerial term, the Israeli government has offered financial incentives to drive Jewish settlers to the West Bank, East Jerusalem (and previously Gaza), including reduced mortgages and tax rates, spacious living conditions, and quality educational systems.[188] Prime Ministers Sharon and Netanyahu have specifically championed the settlement issue, not only as a tool to alleviate the pressure of internal population growth, but also to undercut stability in Palestine and the general potential for a Palestinian state. The growth of Jewish communities near East Jerusalem, particularly the E1 region of the West Bank, has been an especially large contributor to the latter objective. A 2010 Harvard study expounds on this point, explaining,"Current plans for building in the E1 area would extend settlements in those areas in east-west directions so as to divide the West Bank into three distinct north-south sections, thereby denying contiguity to a new state."[189] This does not even consider the logistical challenge of establishing an uninterrupted bridge between the West Bank and Gaza. Thus, the implications of settlements are not only a disruption in normal life for

Palestinian residents and commuters, but also a decline in geographic unity for any future formulation of the State of Palestine. As with many of the demographic and political phenomena discussed in this paper, the failure to immediately engage with this problem will exacerbate it tremendously as more residential units are constructed.

In my view, despite the strategic motivations that underlie settlement growth (which has persisted nearly unremittingly for decades), the failure of Israel to allow for the formation of a contiguous Palestinian homeland has been utterly myopic. This is both a factor of the harms of inaction (as outlined in chapters one and two), but is also a reflection of the optical costs to Israel for its continuous violation of international law. Indeed, the construction of residential units in Palestine, particularly on unlawfully confiscated land, are a direct violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Fourth Hague Convention, UN Charter, and multiple resolutions issued by the UN Security Council.[190] The settlement policy has therefore been responsible for a decline in Israel's legitimacy in the international community, and has provoked condemnation from the United Nations, European Union, and nearly every global democratic state.[191] That consequence may eventually cause Israel to rethink its policy of expansionism, or at least agree to negotiate some of its geographic holdings. But there are two reasons I suspect that Israeli policymakers (who are unilaterally and exclusively capable of dismantling the occupation) will be unable to resolve the settlement crisis, even if they want to. First, in contrast to the political climate of the late 1990's, the majority of Israelis do not support the principle of "land for peace." Recent polling suggests that the vast majority of Israel's electorate would oppose the evacuation of settlements, as well as many other land swap proposals.[192] Moreover, countless Jewish settlers have expressed an unwillingness to relocate, and stress the cultural and governmental significance of an Israeli presence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This, I believe, will preclude Netanyahu (or any

successor) from accepting the political costs of territorial concessions to Palestine, a requisite for any security deal. This is particularly true in the status quo, as Netanyahu must appeal to his rightist base (which largely supports the settlements) in order to outmuscle left-wing opposition. Thus, there is presently insufficient political capital for the Israeli government to slow, yet alone reverse, ongoing construction projects.

Second, on a practical level, Israel will be unable to forcibly remove Jewish settlers from residential units like it did in the Gaza Strip. During the 2005 disengagement process, Sharon controversially mobilized the IDF to extract all remaining Jewish-Israeli inhabitants (who stayed in violation of domestic law).[193] This, of course, stirred tremendous internal controversy, but also necessitated the disbursement of compensation agreements with relocated settlers. Nearly all of the eight thousand former Gaza residents were granted new homes, including payouts of approximately "$250,000 per capita."[194] The comparative situation in the West Bank is far more extreme. Even a modest evacuation plan would require the withdrawal of at least eighty thousand settlers.[195] Not only would this demand suitable new housing within Israel, which simply does not exist, but similar compensatory disbursements would also be compulsory. In total, that would cost the Israeli government more than thirty billion dollars, the equivalent of "thirty percent of [the state's] budget for a given year."[196] Obviously, that figure is neither politically palatable nor logistically feasible.

To summarize, in many ways, the strategies of Netanyahu and Sharon to permanently disrupt Palestinian territorial contiguity were successful. The Jerusalem barricade, security infiltration into the West Bank, and construction of tactical settlement sites may all render territorial swaps a nonstarter. This means that even if Israel ultimately reverses course and seeks to seriously negotiate with Palestine, it will likely be unable to offer sufficient territorial

concessions to the new Palestinian state. Moreover, the Israeli government is neither politically nor pragmatically equipped to forcibly extract existing settler communities. This massively compromises the potential for a mutually acceptable two-state solution.

These first two obstacles to peace are extremely problematic, but can partly be managed with increased flexibility from Israel, should political currents permit. Thus, I argue, the largest hurdle to a two-state solution is the structural inability of Palestine to guarantee domestic stability and regional order after an agreement is signed. To be sure, the emergence of an immediately autonomous Palestinian state, even with considerable international oversight, carries significant strategic risks for Israel. In Jerusalem, the entire point of entering into negotiations is to guarantee the country's long-term existential safety and to remove a major obstruction to universal international recognition. But if political factions within the new Palestinian state retroactively reject the legitimacy of an agreement, Israel will again be subjected to regional controversy and perhaps even violence. Considering the widespread proliferation of small arms in the Middle East, including crude rockets and anti-aircraft missiles, the Israeli government must be assured of Palestine's future stability before it can cede total administrative control. There are many reasons, however, to suspect that this type of guarantee will not exist.

First, the new Palestinian government could not certifiably guarantee partisan unity or permanent democratic functionality. As I describe in chapter four, the historical enmity between Hamas and Fatah has previously thrust Palestine into parliamentary chaos, violent clashes, and even civil war. Formerly, the impact of this kind of rivalry was absorbed directly by the Palestinian people, and has not had significant spillover into the security of Israel. However, once a bilateral peace deal is signed, the Israeli government will lose the ability to manage and

manipulate Palestinian disorder to its own advantage. Instead, political instability within Palestine could foment violence, lead to the outflanking of Hamas (or the prevailing administration) by more radical groups, and might provoke the absolute administrative disintegration of the Palestinian government. That will directly affect the security of the Israeli state, particularly if Israel is tangentially inculpated in the dysfunction. Thus, while there has traditionally been an incentive for Jerusalem to fuel instability and discord in the Palestinian government in order to maintain absolute managerial control, that strategy is now directly counter to the interests of both states. Israel should instead seek to foster unity and solidity in Ramallah, so as to ensure that a credible, popular negotiating partner exists.[197] In the immediate future, though, it is unlikely that Abbas (or any successor) could provide Jerusalem with the necessary assurances to be entrusted with an entirely autonomous state.

Second, Palestine lacks the resources to form an economically stable and inclusive nation. The moment Israel abandons its control over the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and allows for Gaza to become a more active participant in regional discourse, the Palestinian people will require billions of dollars in assistance to build vital infrastructure and foster economic development. Presently, nearly half of all Gazans live in poverty, and seventy-five percent are reliant on international food aid.[198] A similar, but less severe dynamic is present in the West Bank.[199] Once an agreement is signed, expectations of increased prosperity within the occupied territories will be replaced by a harsh, antithetical reality. Given the history of corruption and income stratification within the PA, the general difficulty of sparking economic growth from scratch, and the comparative prosperity of Israel, marginalized Palestinian constituents will inevitably grow frustrated with their leadership. Consequently, fiscal stagnation could engender

political radicalization, and perhaps a return to more extremist parties (in the eyes of Israel). Again, this risk undermines the viability of a two-state solution for Jerusalem.

These factors alone, in my view, are a sufficient rationale for dismissing the achievability of a two-state agreement. Importantly, though, there are dozens of other technical obstacles to neatly restructuring mandatory Palestine, including the allocation of water resources, the codification of airspace control, and the extent of Israel's sustained military presence in the West Bank.[200] Most important, though, is the foundational concern of establishing a mutually acceptable Palestinian negotiating representative. Historically, Israel has exclusively engaged with Fatah (and most recently President Abbas), and has actively excluded Hamas representatives from any deliberations. Jerusalem officially classifies the group as a terrorist organization, and has expressed ongoing exasperation at its refusal to quell rocket fire activity. Presently, however, the unity government between Hamas and Fatah makes this type of exclusion challenging, particularly if Israel demands that the group be shut out of future governance. At that point, Hamas may intentionally spoil negotiating efforts, undermining necessary political cohesion in Palestine and complicating efforts to simultaneously resolve the final statuses of Gaza and the West Bank.

In sum, I posit that a two-state solution is presently unachievable. In addition to the technical matters of settler relocation and refugee immigration rights, which will undermine the acceptability of an agreement in the occupied territories, a new Palestinian state is not guaranteed to be democratically or monetarily stable, a requisite for Israeli accession. Indeed, the present-day fragility of the Hamas-Fatah alliance is not suggestive of guaranteed future political cohesion. Thus, any two-state proposals, particularly those characteristically similar to the Clinton parameters, will be uniformly rejected by constituents in both Israel and Palestine. In the

last segment of this paper, therefore, I will turn my attention to alternative solutions in hopes of identifying a more palatable security plan.

Alternatives Solutions:

It is principally easy to understand the attractiveness of a multilateral security resolution to the ongoing Palestinian crisis. Multi-party land swaps or the absorption of the occupied territories into neighboring Arab states would mitigate the concerns of an unstable, inexperienced Palestinian government, the problem of territorial contiguity, and worries regarding the inclusion of Gaza in a two-state agreement. Moreover, from an Israeli perspective, this type of deal could simultaneously end the political costs of occupation while also creating renewed, widespread peace with the Arab world. A solution that included input from all neighboring countries (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt), and perhaps other powers in the Middle East, would grant Israel universally accepted boundaries and would remove a wedge between the state and absolute international legitimacy. Furthermore, a multilateral agreement would offer secondary regional benefits. Specifically, it would undermine active efforts by Arab states to exert influence into the conflict (namely Gulf nations and Iran) in a manner that polarizes the Middle East and incentivizes unnecessary hegemonic posturing.[201] Additionally, it would deny Islamic extremists a powerful recruitment tool in Iraq, Syria, North Africa, and elsewhere.[202]

Given these benefits, it makes sense to examine specific proposals for multinational regional engagement. The most popular alternative proposition is widely referred to as the "Jordanian Option." Under this framework, authority over the West Bank would be ceded to Jordan, creating a new, larger confederacy to Israel's east. This approach is motivated by two factors. First, a desire to guarantee governmental stability in the new Palestinian state, and

second, the perceived need to counter rising Hamas influence in the West Bank (a phenomenon opposed by King Abdullah's regime).[203] This proposal was extensively discussed during the late 1980's in secret meetings between King Hussein of Jordan and the Israeli foreign minister, but it was ultimately rejected by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.[204] Despite the recent resurgence in popularity for this option, there are several reasons I suggest that it should rejected on face.

First, on a purely practical level, this approach does not adequately address the final status of the Gaza Strip. By definition, a Jordan-West Bank confederacy would exclude Gaza, leaving the territory with a questionable final status and thus failing to resolve many of Israel's legitimacy problems. Moreover, as a result of the current parliamentary alliance between Hamas and Fatah, this type of abandonment would be both politically dangerous and pragmatically infeasible.

Second, and somewhat relatedly, the Palestinian base would likely reject the terms of the Jordanian Option. Given the widespread support for Hamas and a feeling of solidarity with occupied Gazans, it would be difficult for Abbas (or any leader) to justify excluding the territory from a peace deal. More importantly, though, the Jordanian solution would deprive Palestinians of sufficient governmental autonomy. Jordan's monarchic system necessarily establishes an unwanted political hierarchy that would subvert Palestine's leadership on contested matters. Significantly, this problem is unavoidable. If the Ramallah government were granted jurisdictional independence, Israel would raise the same stability concerns seen in the two-state option, and would likely oppose the union.

Finally, and perhaps most crucially, Jordan is probably unwilling to absorb the entirety of the West Bank or even accept partial administrative accountability for its inhabitants. The state is

already massively strained following the influx of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees into its borders, and simply does not have the resources or political energy to integrate Palestine as well.[205] A new confederacy with the West Bank would demand billions of dollars in infrastructural investments and other welfare expenditures, a liability King Abdullah will undoubtedly refuse.

This problem is emblematic of the larger context in the Middle East. Many of Israel's direct and peripheral neighbors, several of which would be necessary for a broader regional solution, are experiencing extensive domestic dysfunction that precludes involvement with land swap agreements. Egypt, for example, a critical partner for solving the status of Gaza, underwent a transformative revolution in 2011. Moreover, it is presently struggling with significant unrest in the northeast corner of the Sinai Peninsula, as well as ongoing political turbulence in Cairo.[206] Consequently, President el-Sisi does not presently have the executive flexibility to absorb the Gaza Strip or negotiate a multilateral land swap agreement.[207] This is particularly true given the current government's enmity with the Muslim Brotherhood, the precursor to the formation of Hamas.

The same political climate is present in Israel's other neighbors. The Syrian Civil War, notably, has generated millions of refugees and contributed to the regional empowerment of ISIS.[208] This crisis has preoccupied many regional powers, and will certainly supersede the ongoing needs of Palestinians. Moreover, Assad's government in Syria is clearly not positioned to negotiate a border agreement with Israel, an important component of a multinational peace plan.

Ultimately, as I document throughout this section, there is presently no viable solution to the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli crisis. Political reformation is unlikely to occur endogenously

within Israel due to each faction's need for total administrative control. Likewise, on a practical level, the two-state solution is not currently an acceptable answer to the political and security ambitions of each faction. Furthermore, neither Abbas nor Netanyahu possess the political capital or dominating popularity necessary to accept major concessions. Finally, as a result of growing regional instability, the opportunity for multilateral territorial restructuring seems to have passed, and no neighboring nation is positioned to help end the conflict. In the end, where does that leave the crisis? As I will detail in the succeeding conclusion, I argue that Israel is inevitably destined to become a *de facto* singular state. This, clearly, will pose new questions regarding the political and social future of the Palestinian people.

Conclusion:

Ultimately, each section of this paper aims to offer insight, sometimes on a granular level, into the demographic and political changes occurring within modern-day Israel and Palestine. In section one, I explain that the propagation of Arab communities within Israeli territory will soon strain the country's economy, cause increased levels of social and economic inequality, and prompt new questions regarding the state's Jewish and democratic character. In section two, I explain that the simultaneous growth of Israel's ultra-Orthodox sects will cause equivalent economic damage and a long-term political shift to the right. Combined, these phenomena form the basis for my thesis that peace will be an unattainable project within the next twenty years. Importantly, though, demography is not the only factor that compels immediacy in the formulation of a security resolution. The United States, which expunged an enormous amount of political energy and capital during the 2013-2014 negotiations, may soon shift its focus elsewhere. That will deny both Israel and Palestine a critical diplomatic intermediary, particularly as the European Union and Arab League, alternative mediators, struggle with significant internal problems. As the United States becomes more energy independent (reducing its strategic interests in the Middle East), alliances in the region shift (in the aftermath of the Arab spring, the growth of ISIS, and the increasing hegemony of Iran), and the US transfers focus to issues in Europe, East Asia, and elsewhere, the Israeli-Palestinian crisis will become a more irrelevant issue unworthy of substantial diplomatic attention. That will force the two factions to manage the crisis internally, which historically has only led to increased provocation and ideological separation.

In chapter three of the paper, I unpack the recent Israeli elections in order to examine the prevailing political climate in Jerusalem. This leads me to a number of conclusions. First, the

leftist polices of the Zionist Union, Joint Arab List, and, to a certain extent, some Haredi parties, no longer serve as a meaningful counterweight to Likud on matters of security. This is evidenced by Netanyahu's political weakness on economic issues, but his relatively unchallenged dominance in the realm of military strategy and diplomacy. From this context, I make two fundamental inferences. One: any future negotiating efforts will have to originate in the Israeli right, a stark contrast to the historical political patterns in Jerusalem. Two: ironically, in spite of Netanyahu's legislative control, I do not believe that he is capable of making the political sacrifices necessary for peace. Much of his popularity, I suggest, stems from a hawkish approach to Palestinian engagement, evidenced by the controversial tactics employed by his campaign this year. Thus, Netanyahu is stuck between two unfriendly realities. Israel's left wing rejects his governance on social and economic grounds, while the right backs him largely because of his combativeness and commitment to Israeli strength. Moreover, the general Israeli electorate is not presently demanding a comprehensive deal, putting the onus for action solely on Likud's shoulders. In the end, I conclude that Netanyahu (with great risk) could overcome these hurdles, but I am ultimately pessimistic at the likelihood of his government quickly negotiating an end to the occupation.

As I write in chapter four, even if Israeli political forces align properly, a mediated peace is reliant on the existence of coherent, stable Palestinian representation. The current partisan alliance between Hamas and Fatah is certainly a step in this direction, but there remain questions of the coalition's longevity in the face of significant ideological dissimilarity. Moreover, the present government has been hampered by a sizeable budget deficit, rampant corruption, and diminished constituent support. Each of these factors undermines the political cohesion necessary to adopt a comprehensive security resolution. Additionally, the future status of

Palestinian leadership remains uncertain, particularly given Abbas's climbing age and declining popularity. Though elections are presently suspended indefinitely, Abbas's legitimacy has eroded considerably in the wake of the Gaza War. Neither party is therefore capable of predicting who will serve as the major Palestinian advocate in the next five to tens years (either with or without a security deal). That uncertainty is of direct concern to the future stability of Palestine, and by extension, the existential safety of its Israeli neighbor.

Through these first four sections, I conclude that the realization of peace is conceivable, but presently unlikely. At the very least, though, the hypothetical possibility of bilateral political cohesion merits a closer examination at the practical viability of competing security proposals, as seen in chapter five. The conclusions of this section are not particularly optimistic. In the end, I find that a one-state solution will be structurally incapable of guaranteeing each party sufficient political influence, even with the implementation of a power-sharing agreement. More importantly, it is currently unthinkable that Netanyahu (or any successor) would be willing to make such radical concessions to Palestinian leadership. Likewise, a two-state solution seems doomed to fail on both philosophical and pragmatic grounds. Even if the Israeli government acknowledges the principled "right of return" for refugees, it is logistically incapable of ensuring Palestinian territorial contiguity, untangling the settlement crisis, or guaranteeing administrative stability in its new neighbor. That, in my view, will preemptively render any negotiations a functional nonstarter. Finally, in a similar vein, I find alternative security proposals to be equally inadequate. The current Palestinian government has become too robust to tolerate absorption into a mediating third-party. Moreover, as a result of widespread volatility in the modern Middle East, neither Egypt, Jordan, nor any alternative Arab state is capable of fully participating in resolution efforts.

Given these conditions, what is my ultimate conclusion? In the end, I argue that Israel and Palestine are moving in the direction of a *de facto* singular nation. Without a comprehensive agreement, growing Arab populations within Israel will challenge the state's Jewish character, while a globally engaged Palestinian government will become a more powerful adversary next door. In the intermediate term, before full integration occurs, the empowered Palestinian regime will challenge the occupational solidity of Israeli forces. This could spark a peace agreement, likely one-state in nature, that might prompt full democratic integration (based on a mutual need to manage population growth), but it could also provoke intensified aggression within Israel in a last attempt to maintain the state's Jewish identity. The latter outcome, I believe, is the most concerning, and may eventually thrust the country into absolute, violent unrest. Certainly, it is in the interest of all parties to avoid such a dangerous conclusion, but I am currently pessimistic at the probability of either government guiding their respective constituencies to a safe and predictable future.

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