Chapter 12:

Epilogue: A ‘demos’ for israel/palestine?
Towards ‘gradual binationalism’

Having discussed the ethnocratic forces and processes present in
Israel/Palestine, Can we imagine a path forward in which national and ethnic
communities in this troubled land enjoy greater legitimacy, security, peace and
equality? As a way of concluding the book, and drawing on its main theoretical
arguments, this final chapter will reintroduce the concept of the ‘demos’ (a
legitimate, inclusive and stable political community) as a key factor in the
drawing a new political geography of peaceful coexistence. The main contention is
that a theory and praxis of the demos are necessary to transform ethnocracy to
democracy, and begin healing the deep injuries marring ethnic relations in
Israel/Palestine. This and other observations about the desired transformation
outlined in this chapter, follow the insights offered by the critical analysis of
ethnocracy presented throughout the book.

This epilogue will start with a short overview of the book, and then outline six
possible scenarios for the creation of a ‘demos’ (or ‘demoses’) in Israel/Palestine. It
will conclude by elaborating on the preferred option, labeled here ‘gradual
binationalism’, and on the nature of a transformed Israeli regime, characterized
as moving from a centralized settling ethnocracy to a multicultural decentralized
democracy.

The Book: Overview

The book consisted of four major parts. The first developed the concept of
ethnocracy. It showed that, theoretically, ethnocratic and settler regimes
establish themselves with the main project of ethnicizing contested territories
and loci of power. These regime emerge through a time-space interlocking of
three major forces – colonialism, ethno-nationalism and capitalism, typically
device powerful mechanisms of state control over territory and oppression of
minorities. This is augmented by their construction of the (mixed) state
territory as ‘their’ exclusive ethnic homeland, and by constructing a typical
ethno-class hierarchy dominated by a powerful ‘charter’ group and including
also upwardly mobile immigrants, indigenous and ‘alien’ groups – all occupying the contested space.

The prominence of the ‘ethnos’ over the ‘demos’ in the making of such societies, and the expansionist nature of the ethnic logic, with its associated structural segregation and inequality, stand as barriers to the institution of full democratic regime. While several ethnocracies claim to be democratic, the critical analysis offered above distinguished between regime features and structure, and demonstrated the confinement of democratic practices to the relatively superficial level of regime features. Given the above, ethnocratic regimes are often characterized by chronic instability, marked by institutional instability, intense (and often violent) inter-group conflict and repeated economic crises.

The book’s second part moved to analyze Israel/Palestine, focusing on the Zionist project and the transformation and policies of the Jewish state. The analysis treated the entire Eretz Yisraeil/ Palestine as one analytical unit subject to the powers of one regime. It began by tracing the manner in which Zionist and Palestinian nationalism became deeply territorialized, although Jewish and Palestinian diasporas remain critical to the conflict. Several chapters then analyzed the ways in which Israel’s Judaization (and de-Arabization) project, first inside ‘Israel Proper’ and later in the Occupied Territories, has profoundly affected the relations between Jews and Palestinians, as well as between various Jewish and Palestinian-Arab ethno-classes, setting in motion a process termed here -- creeping apartheid. This part also explored in some depth the spatial and cultural infrastructure of the Israeli ethnocratic regime, by examining the land system, and tracing the construction of the Zionist homeland discourse in popular music.

The book’s third part used more focused lenses to analyze the processes of ‘entrapment’ and ‘identity development’ among peripheral ethno-classes, often as a reaction to the practices of the ethnocratic regime. First, it accounted for the emergence of ‘fractured regionalism’ among Israel’s Palestinian citizens, and examined the plight of the southern Bedouin community. In the Bedouin’s case, an ‘urban ethnocracy’ has developed around the city of Beersheva, with widespread informality and ‘illegality’ undermining previous forms of coexistence. A couple of chapters traced the mobilization of Mizrahim in peripheral development towns, and unraveled a collective identity ‘trapped’ between Ashkenazi dominance and cultural and economic marginality. This section emphasized that ‘entrapment’ is never static, rather it leads to the formation of a ‘third space’ on the margins of Jewish-Zionist society.

The book’s fourth part turns the analytical lens towards the future, with Chapter 11 focusing on the planning of another urban ethnocracy – the Jerusalem/al-Quds region – and developing the concept of a binational, multi-communal city, as an exemplar for the entire Israel/Palestine. The present chapter completes this part, by discussing the future political geography of the land, and by advocating a scenario defined as ‘gradual binationalism’.
Scenarios for the Future Political-Geography of Israel/Palestine

Many conclusions can be drawn from the analyses presented in the book. On a theoretical level, these may deal with the role of space, planning, history, violence, and public policies in shaping ethnocratic societies. On a more local scale, they may address territory, culture, resources, and ethnic relations in Israel/Palestine. While these topics will no doubt form the focus of many future research projects and scholarly debates, this concluding chapter takes a different, more speculative direction. It will build on the structural analysis of the previous chapters by 'stripping' the main political ideologies to their core political and territorial claims and by sketching their likely consequences. It will thus assist the reader to imagine the various possibilities emerging out of 55 years of Israeli ethnocratic rule, and the prospects for transformation and reform. ¹

Given the political geographical emphasis of this book, it appears appropriate to present, in this concluding chapter, a short discussion on the various configurations of creating a future 'demos' (or 'demoses') for Israel/Palestine. As discussed in Chapter 2 and 5 above, the 'demos' represents an important logic of communal and political organization. 'Democracy' ('the rule of the demos') therefore depends on the existence of a 'demos' – a relatively stable and inclusive group of equal citizens, residing in a given territory over which equal law and political procedure prevail.

Despite the recent powerful processes of globalization, economic liberalization and growing migration, it appears that in the foreseeable future, the modern state will continue to form the main allocator of power and resources, especially in the non-western world. Hence, the concept of the demos appears as important as ever, especially as many of these states are grappling with processes of democratization. In many respects, the demos are competing organisation principles to the 'ethnos', from whom ethnocratic regimes draw their main political and moral authority.

The creation of a demos forms a necessary step to transform regime and society from ethnocracy to democracy. The political geography of a democratic state depends on the demarcation of clear boundaries for the political territory in question, where the 'law of the land' can be applied equally to all members. As shown by numerous studies and theories, the creation of a relatively stable community of equal residents-citizens is also a necessary condition for the establishment of civil society, which operates in the space between state, capital and household, and creates webs of organizations, institutions, parties and networks, as a foundation for democratic rule.

The above assertions require two important qualifications. First, the political geography of the demos is a necessary, but by no means sufficient, foundation for democracy, which requires an additional set of legal, political and material conditions. Second, I do not wish to advocate fixity with territorial political communities. Obviously, in today's 'network society', and
within the context of a globalizing economic and political world, the state is no longer a tight political container or a supreme controller of resources. Yet, it is still a main shaper of most people’s lives, and a major determinant of the distribution of resources and power. The logic of the state system, and the promise of democratic governance, is thus still a major mobilizing force in today’s politics, especially as regards marginalized minorities.

Moving to Israel/Palestine, the book has shown how powerful ethnocratic processes have undermined the making of a demos. These have included, first and foremost, the rupturing of Israel’s borders through long-term occupation and settlement of the Occupied Territories and through the empowerment of Jewish diasporas in key policy arenas. The inferior citizenship of Palestinian Arabs in Israel, and the lack of legal and cultural foundation for an inclusive polity, have also worked to diminish the perception and empowerment of an Israeli (as distinct from Jewish) and Palestinian demos. Israel/Palestine also has a painful legacy of ethnic cleansing, violence, terror, Arab rejectionism, as well as ethno-class stratification, and ethnic political polarization – all working against the reinforcement of a demos as a foundation for an inclusive and active civil society.

It may be appropriate at this point, to ask: who should be the members of the Israeli and Palestinian demoses? Who are the main claim-makers for political power in Israel/Palestine? On a basic level, it is possible to list six major ethno-political groups, marked by their different histories and geographies, which possess the main claims to political power in Israel/palestine, as follows:

- Jewish citizen-residents of Israel
- Palestinian Arab citizen-residents of Israel
- Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories
- Palestinian residents in the Occupied Territories
- Jewish diasporas; and
- Palestinian diasporas.

On this basis, Figure 12.1 depicts the various political geographical configurations advocated at present as possible futures for Jews and Palestinians by these groups. These are articulated here as six scenarios, as outlined below.

REPRESSIVE CONSOLIDATION
In the near future, this is the most likely scenario. It assumes that present orientations and processes will persist, due to the dominance of nationalist politics in Israel and in the United States. Palestinian weakness, both locally and internationally, will remain a main factor in the lack of movement
Figure 12.1. A Demos for Israel/Palestine? A Six Scenarios
towards structural change. On the other hand, Israel will avoid annexing the Occupied Territories (except the de-facto annexation of remaining Jewish settlements). This will enable the state to deal with the Palestinians (often militarily) as a ‘neighboring’ nation, thereby by-passing the need to share power and resources. This scenario may include several future Israeli ‘disengagements’, as occurred in Gaza, in order to improve Israel’s ability to control Palestinian population concentrations. The Palestinian Authority may turn into a ‘provisional’ state, but would exercise only limited autonomy in fragmented parts of the territories; over which Israel would retain control. The territory of Israel/Palestine would remain open to Jewish immigration and settlement, but largely closed to Arabs, who will remain confined in their traditional, residential enclaves, with the aid of military power, planning law and the new ‘separation barrier’. This combination of policies and regulation is likely to hasten the process of ‘quiet transfer’ whereby Palestinians residing in isolated pockets, where it is impossible to conduct normal life, move to larger Palestinian towns and cities. In other words, the situation will result in neither two independent states, nor one, in Israel/Palestine. As shown in the book, such dynamics create an unsustainable process of ‘creeping apartheid’, and a further retreat from democracy, accompanied by persistent ethnic conflict, deepening economic crisis, and internal fragmentation.

TWO ETHNIC STATES

This scenario entails the re-partitioning of Israel/Palestine and Jerusalem, most likely along the Green Line, and the creation of ‘two states for two peoples’ – a Palestinian-Arab state and an Israeli-Jewish state. Jewish and Palestinian diasporas will have free access (only) to their respective states, meaning that returning Palestinian refugees would settle only in the Palestinian state. It is the most common prescription for the settlement of the conflict, among both peoples and in international circles.

This scenario does present a reasonable possibility for the creation of legitimate Israeli and Palestinian demoses, although it leaves several key issues unresolved. These include the evacuation of (most) Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories; the viability of a fragmented and weak Palestinian state, likely to remain largely dependent on Israel; and the status, rights, and capabilities of Palestinian citizens in the (self-declared) Jewish state. These are not mere technical details, but major stumbling blocks, which may cause ongoing instability and undermine the establishment of stable and legitimate political communities. Further problems may result from the likely ethnocratic nature of both states, which may see the persistence of anti-Jewish or anti-Arab policies and rhetoric, and lead to a precarious and conflict-riddled type of Israeli-Palestinian coexistence.

GREATER ISRAEL
This scenario resembles the existing situation, where Israel controls most of historic Palestine, between Jordan and Sea. The main difference is that unlike the post-Oslo situation, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza will neither enjoy a status of ‘state in the making’ nor ‘provisional’ statehood. This agenda is held by Israel’s ruling Likud Party, which passed a resolution in its 2002 conference that “there shall be no second state in Eretz-Israel.” Under this scenario, the land will be open to Jewish immigration and settlement, but closed to Arabs, who will remain in this scenario constrained in their residential enclaves, exercising only municipal and cultural autonomy.

This scenario will see the abandonment of the Oslo framework and the disbandment of the Palestinian Authority. As the platform of most rightist Zionist parties suggests, Palestinians will hold Jordanian citizenship and participate in Jordanian electoral politics. It may also lead to the implementation of the goal of population transfer, prevalent among Jewish rightwing parties, that is, the encouragement or coercion of Arabs to leave Israel/Palestine and settle in other countries. In whichever version, the ‘greater Israel’ agenda, which has dominated Israeli politics since the 1970s, will continue to transform the state into an apartheid society, with a near-certainty of escalating ethno-national conflict and economic decline. No legitimate demos or stable regime can eventuate under this scenario.

GREATER PALESTINE

This scenario entails the regaining of Palestinian (and/or Islamic) control over historic Palestine, with free return of refugees to the West Bank and Gaza as well as Israel Proper. Jews would be allowed to stay as a minority, exercising cultural autonomy, but free Jewish immigration to the land will cease. This was the consensus Palestinian vision during the rise of their national movement, but following the acceptance of a two-state solution by the PLO in 1988, it has now remained the platform of most ‘rejectionist’ Palestinian organizations, including the increasingly popular Hamas and Islamic Jihad. It has also gained popularity during the al-Aqsa Intifada in the Gaza Strip and among the Palestinian diasporas. Radical versions of this scenario, mainly held by Islamic organizations, call for the transfer of most, or some, Jews from the land, where their existence is perceived as illegal and illegitimate.

A sub-version of this scenario is the PLO’s historic demand for ‘a secular and democratic state’ over historic Palestine, which is still held by several nationalist Palestinian organizations, such as the Democratic and Popular Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine, and among the Sons of the Village in Israel. Despite the democratic potential of a secular state, the material expression of this scenario, in terms of ethno-national relations, may not be substantially different from the vision of ‘Arab-Islamic Palestine’. The mass return of Palestinian refugees (and, perhaps, the on-going presence of Jews in West Bank settlements) are sure to sharpen ethnic conflict. The demographic advantage of Palestinians in a one-state situation, coupled with a lack of
constitutional guarantee of Jewish self-determination and other key collective rights, would make the chance of creating a legitimate demos, and hence democratic rule, improbable.

ONE BINATIONAL (AND MULTICULTURAL) STATE

This scenario calls for establishing a consociational state over the entire historic Palestine, with political parity between Jews and Palestinians. Each nation will exercise full self-determination and autonomy in most aspects of communal life. Within Jewish and Palestinian nations, the existence of ethnic and religious minorities will be respected and protected. Following the settlement of the Palestinian refugees, future immigration of Jews and Palestinians would be determined jointly and evenly between the two national communities. Most resources, including land, will be distributed according to the principles of proportionality and need, while respecting the validity of current property arrangements. The state will be decentralized both geographically (into administrative regions) and ethnically. Freedom of movement, residence, and employment will be protected. Local authorities (Arab or Jewish) will have the autonomy to shape the public space. Jerusalem-al-Quds will be an open, joint, and shared capital.

This scenario has its roots in the Jewish thinkers of the 1920s, and later among both Jewish and Palestinian groups. Lately, it has received renewed attention among Palestinians, mainly in Israel and the diaspora. It possesses a good potential to create a legitimate demos in Israel/Palestine, although, in the short term, it appears highly unlikely that any major Jewish body would accept this scenario, which amounts to a major loss of power -- the end to Jewish sovereignty and a sharp decline in Jewish control over territory and resources. Because a democratic binational state can only be established by mutual agreement, the sweeping Jewish opposition renders this option, at this point in time, highly unlikely.

‘GRADUAL BINATIONALISM’

This scenario envisages a phased resolution of the conflict, beginning with a two-state like arrangement, but simultaneously moving to create binational frameworks to manage the joint and small Israeli/Palestinian territory. For a set period (perhaps for a generation; that is, 25-35 years), immigration will be mainly restricted to a ‘mother’ state ; that is, Palestinians would have free access to Palestine and Jews to Israel (with some exceptions regarding Palestinian refugees, as detailed below). In parallel to the establishment of two-states, arrangements enabling increasing Israeli-Palestinian integration will be put in train in many spheres of state governance. These will gradually increase the accessibility of the two political spaces to one another, and establish joint processes, agreements and institutions for managing the economy, employment, trade, environment and security. It is envisaged that
after such a period, with cessation of violence between the two peoples, and the new consciousness of coexistence, the most logical and efficient next move, for both states, would be the establishment of a confederation, or highly decentralized federation. This would preserve their national self-determination, while improving the management, security, openness and prosperity of their joint land.4

In such a scenario, the joint metropolitan region of Jerusalem/al-Quds will have a pivotal role in establishing a groundbreaking example for binational management of space, first on an urban level, and later on regional and statewide scales. In addition, such a gradual framework will give legitimacy to multicultural arrangements vis-à-vis minorities inside Israel and Palestine, most notably autonomy of the Arab and ultra-orthodox groups in Israel, and special arrangements with the Christians, Bedouins, Armenians, and other minorities in Palestine.

These are the six of the most prevalent options for the future political geography of Israel/Palestine. Several other scenarios no doubt exist, but probably not with the same level of acceptability to large constituencies. The main point here is not to recite a well-known list of political agendas, but rather to open up the question of the deliberate redesign of the demos, as an intellectual a political path to transform ethnocracy to democracy. In that vein we can ask: which configuration is best suited for the creation of an inclusive and stable political communities? Which will create the best conditions of reconciliation and development for Jews and Palestinians?

It is clear that the first, third, and fourth options (namely, ‘repressive consolidation’, ‘greater Israel’, and ‘greater Palestine’) harbor severe difficulties. The latter two would be driven by goals of ethnicization (either Judaization or Arabization), and hence are likely to exacerbate the conflict. Option two (‘two ethnic states’) is held internationally as the best scenario for peace, and indeed has potential for enhancing reconciliation. Yet, it is likely to create two ethnocracies between Jordan and Sea. This is no doubt preferable to the existing situation of one-sided occupation, oppression, and reciprocal violence, but is not considered the best platform to achieve a stable demos. This scenario would especially be difficult to implement inside Israel, with an increasingly assertive Arab minority and deepening conflict between secular and orthodox Jews on the meaning and geography of the ‘Jewish’ state. A stark illustration of this difficulty (and by no means the only one) was the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by an Orthodox Jew, opposing both Rabin’s willingness to retreat from Eretz Yisrael territories, and forming political partnership with Israel’s Palestinian citizens.

We are then left with the fifth and sixth options, both accepting, at a deep level, the binational structure of the land, and attempting to reconfigure political frameworks to reflect and to legitimize this structural reality. As already noted, the fifth option (‘one binational state’) also appears problematic, as the immediate creation of a binational state may be fraught with severe conflicts, due to the disruptions associated with rapid redistribution of major
resources (especially land, housing, and employment), and due to the fierce opposition likely to arise from most Jews. It should be remembered that the collective Jewish psyche is still driven by the memory of genocide, dislocation and fear, and that communal security and self-determination of the Jewish nation is a goal that will not be relinquished by the vast majority of Jews. Hence, the theoretical democratic design of a joint state may result not in the creation of a legitimate ‘demos’ but in additional rounds of communal violence.

Therefore, the most promising and politically sustainable scenario, based on the analyses presented in this book, is option six, namely ‘gradual binationalism’. It is based on long-term creation of new frameworks and consciousness of coexistence, premised on the legitimacy of both Jewish and Palestinian bond to their common, relished, homeland. It is also premised, on dealing with the denied root causes of the conflict, such as the return of Palestinian refugees, and Jewish right for self-determination; and on the creation of new spaces for shared management of Israel/Palestine, with a potential to gradually blunt Jewish-Palestinian dichotomies.

This scenario challenges the very logic of the ethnocratic state, by first and foremost – granting equal status to the Palestinian and Jewish-Israeli nations. As explained below, it also attempts to create a long-term framework of an open homeland to both people, which is diametrically opposed to the ethnocratic endeavor to impose an endless set of ethnic boundaries, barriers and obstacles for the development and mobility of weakened groups. It also endeavors to envisage a new Israeli ‘demos’, which would empower a range of ethnicities and individuals in a new democratic and multicultural Israeli polity.

The first stage under this scenario is the ending of Israeli occupation, the evacuation of most Jewish settlement in the Occupied Territories, and the creation of two sovereign political entities – Israel and Palestine, based on the Green Line. One of the most urgent tasks of the two states will be to settle the complex refugee question, especially concerning issues of property and citizenship, while not undermining the self-determination and security of the two nations. This requires open negotiation between conflicting rights and conflicting decisions of international bodies. Under the ‘gradual binationalism’ scenario, the arrangement will be based on acknowledgement of Israeli’s historic responsibility for the plight of the refugees, as well as Arab and Israeli responsibility for mutual violence and terror. This will be accompanied by statements of public apology and recognition of the right of the two nations to rightfully exist securely in Israel/Palestine.

Under this scenario the Palestinian right/claim of return will be acknowledged by Israel as manifestation of the collective and unbroken bond of the Palestinians to all parts of historic Palestine. However, the individual implementation of Palestinian return into Israel-Proper will be constrained – by agreement – by two major factors: (a) recognition of the full set of internationally recognized decisions (including UNGA 181, 194 and UNSC
which recognize right of Jewish self-determination (based on the arrival of most Jews in Palestine/Israel as refugees or coerced migrants during the 20th Century), with its territorial manifestations, including Israeli control of immigration within its sovereign boundaries; (b) the likely problematic consequences of large-scale Palestinian immigration into Israel-Proper, namely the danger of chronic and violent instability, born of ethnic conflicts over history, property, resources and political rights.

Given these constraints, it is envisaged that under this scenario of reconciliation, a system of gradual refugee return would be initiated, based primarily on criteria of individual needs. Under such a setting, it is likely that several hundreds of thousand refugees -- chiefly stateless communities from Lebanon -- would gradually be allowed to settle in Israel. The majority of refugees, however, would either resettle in the Palestinian State or remain in their current locations, gaining full compensation for their lost property and sufferings. The right of Jewish settlers to remain in a Palestinian state as citizens without collective territorial claims will also be recognized. It is further envisaged that the majority of Jewish settlements and their elaborate infrastructure would be used for the settlement and development of Palestinian refugees, thereby providing (indirect) Israeli assistance for resolving the refugee question. In order to stabilize the population, the two states would also declare a particular period – possibly a decade – after which the Palestinian and Jewish right of automatic immigration into their homeland state (the Right of Return and Law of Return, respectively) would cease to exist.

Under ‘gradual binationalism’ the Jerusalem/al-Quds ‘Capital Region’ would form a model for creating binational (and bi-state) frameworks, to manage the multiplicity of joint civil and urban affairs with which the two intertwined states would have to deal. It is envisaged that in a later ‘phase’, perhaps after 2-3 decades, as security mobility and accessibility improve, both states would become increasingly open to one another, for employment, investment, tourism, marriage, leisure, study, and even residence. As noted earlier, the arrangements between the two states would then move towards a confederation – two sovereign entities jointly managing many areas of life, ensuring freedom of movement, as well as the self-determination of each national community. It is also envisaged that at that time, with the increasing impact of globalization and inter-state cooperation in the Middle-East, the emotional power attached to ethno-national sovereignty would subside, enabling the new confederal arrangements to be accepted by most Jews and Palestinians.

One of the main features of the binational framework is the legitimacy, and hence security, it would endow to the existence of a Jewish-Hebrew nation in the Middle East. Given the tragic history of Jews, and the persisting rejection of Israel and Jewish nationalism in parts of the Middle East, this would be a major step towards allaying the existential fears of many Jews, thereby quelling most Jewish aggression. We should not lose sight that one of
the most profound long-term issues related to the Zionist-Palestinian conflict is the acceptance and legitimacy of Jews in the Middle East, as a legitimate national and political collectivity. This legitimacy will also allow Jewish public discourse to move away from its recent preoccupation with ‘demographic danger’ or ‘the need for separation’ (manifest in the brutal and internationally condemned ‘separation barrier’ constructed in the West Bank). Notably, Jewish voices – many from the Zionist left -- have often used the ‘demographic danger’ and ‘the need for separation’ as possible reasons for retreating from some Palestinian territory in order to improve security and advance towards peace. But ironically, the steps taken by Israel have fed the conflict with new waves of anxiety, following ever-harsher security measures imposed on Palestinian movement and political freedom, in the name of security and peace. This has had the effect of destroying trust, thereby making Jews even less secure.

The ‘gradual binational’ framework would address this concern by granting historical and moral recognition to Jewish nationalism by its most belligerent nemesis – the Palestinian national movement. This will open the way for broader and deeper acceptance and legitimacy in the Middle East, provided of course, Israel ends the occupation of Palestinian territories, the massive use of violence, and assists in settling the refugee problem. This will also depend on Palestinian society finding ways to restrain most of its anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish public rhetoric, and especially suppress Palestinian terror against Jewish civilians.

It is recognized, of course, that the gradual binationalism approach is, at present, a distant, almost utopian, scenario, likely to be constantly undermined by state aggression and ethnic violence. Movement towards such a scenario will probably be slow, and require deep transformation in a multitude of societal spheres, including education, mass culture, land policies, the impact of militarist and religious elements on politics, and patterns of economic development and resource distribution. It will also require the leadership among Jews and Palestinians to firmly adopt a strategy of peace, as well as direct intervention of international bodies and military forces (ending Israel’s exceptionalism in defying the legitimate decisions of the international community on Palestine, while assuring its security in the Middle-East).

Yet, despite its remoteness at present, the articulation of such a normative scenario is vital for the construction of resistance against the current oppressive order, and for the formation of new social, economic, cultural and political agendas. For the short term, it is expected that the ‘repressive consolidation’ approach will dominate the political geography of Israel/Palestine, exacerbating the process of ‘creeping apartheid’ and ethnic conflict. It is also expected that these conflicts would be tempered by several short-term measures, such as security barriers and tightening surveillance, or, at times, with selective easing of the grip over Palestinians, or even the declaration of a provisional Palestinian state. Yet, none of these measures can
get to the root of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict, and thereby address the conditions for long-term coexistence, as does the gradual binationalism approach.

To sum up, I argue that lasting Jewish-Palestinian reconciliation is impossible without a long-term vision that includes the creation of a legitimate, inclusive political community (a ‘demos’). This would entail the introduction of political arrangements, which would end Israeli occupation, enfranchise all permanent residents of Israel/Palestine, and ensure the security and legitimacy of both Palestinian and Jewish nations on that land. The most promising possibility of progressing towards such a future, I contend, lies in imagining, planning and implementing the vision of gradual binationalism, where two ‘demoses’ are initially created -- while in parallel, joint Israel-Palestinian institutions and frameworks would progress towards establishing a ‘thin’ confederation over the entire land.

Gradual Binationalism and the Israeli Demos

Beyond this broad Israeli-Palestinian framework, the normative ending of this book requires further comment on the nature of the Israeli demos. The geography, demography, and power arrangements of the demos, on which we focused above, are necessary but not sufficient conditions to create a democratic polity with sufficient legitimacy. Three additional factors—the place of the Palestinian minority, the impact of resource distribution, and the making of a multicultural polity—are all critical for the making of the Israeli demos.

Within two decades, the Palestinian-Arab national minority will approach a quarter of the Israeli citizenry, creating in effect a binational situation inside Israel Proper. This reality is not likely to quickly receive official recognition or political legitimacy among Jewish elites. Yet, within the framework of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, and as part of the legitimacy to the binational reality of Israel/Palestine, it is envisaged that the democratization of Israeli society should be significantly enhanced, especially as regards the rights and capabilities of Arab citizens. The new political framework, and improved security for both Jews and Palestinians would allow a variety of aspects to be reformed ‘from below’ and reshape the Israeli polity.

As discussed in several of the book’s chapters, the Arabs have been creating what can be described as a ‘fractured region’ within Israel. This process is likely to continue with piecemeal moves towards cultural autonomy and devolution of certain regime functions to the Arab communal, economic, and political leadership. These measures may resemble some of the arrangements enjoyed by the ultra-orthodox sector, which protects its cultural and material autonomy within Israel.

Under this scenario, and as depicted in Figure 12.2, it is likely that Israel will be reshaped as a multicultural (plural) state, with the Palestinian-Arabs
and ultra-orthodox sectors forming two important non-assimilating, autonomous communities of Israeli citizens. The recognition of these sectors, and the allocation of collective rights and capabilities, by their very nature, would devolve the highly centralized nature of the Israeli state. At the same time, however, they may be compatible with the desire of most non-orthodox Israeli Jews to maintain a Jewish-Hebrew public sphere in many of the state's arenas. Whichever arrangement is achieved, the existence of a prominent and autonomous Palestinian community in Israel, which should receive a constitutional status as a national minority, is sure to strengthen the binational framework for the entire Israel/Palestine, and the transformation of the Israeli state into a more devolved and democratic regime.

The Israeli Demos: a Question of Resources

The deep materiality of ethnic, social, and political relations should never be ignored. Discussions of rights, identities, cultures, and political configurations, must be constantly framed within the concrete reality in which they are enmeshed. Hence, the recreation of a legitimate Israeli demos profoundly depends on the nature of allocating scarce material resources between the state’s ethno-classes.

As we have seen in several of the book’s chapters, one of the main characteristics of the Israeli ethnocracy has been the uneven allocation of resources, most notably land, development, municipal areas, employment, services, facilities and hazards. This has created long-term patterns of conspicuous ethno-class stratification. It is clear that part of the ethnic divergence and polarization of Israeli society relates to this long-term stratification, and any future reform must seriously address these issues.

Moreover, the dominant processes at present lead in the opposite direction, with the gradual, but profound, liberalization of the Israeli economy. This process began in the mid 1980s and has accelerated during the last five years. The state has attempted to reduce its welfare ‘safety net’, by shrinking public allowances and expenses and by selling off government assets and companies. At the same time, it has increased the incentives for capital investment and reduced taxes. The state has also weakened organized labor, deregulated money markets, reduced tariffs, and allowed the mass importation of foreign labor.

The retreat of the state from the market, and the opening up of the economy, may have a positive potential for individual members of peripheral groups. On a structural level, however, it reinforces the gaps between ethno-classes, as a result of what was termed earlier in the book, ‘the ethnic logic of capital’. This is particularly true in times of economic crisis, as experienced in Israel since the year 2000.

While the liberalization of the Israeli economy may (or may not) improve several economic arenas, such as gross domestic product, inflation, and
Figure 12.2. The Multicultural (Federated) Israeli Demos: A conceptual Model
average income, repeated analyses show that this will have little effect on the critical gap between groups, and on the welfare of the lower socioeconomic rungs. In terms of the Israeli demos, it is clear that existing processes will further undermine the creation of a legitimate political community with a high degree of legitimacy. Therefore, it is imperative that the state remains a strong actor in the market that it regulates the distribution and use of public lands according to transparent and just criteria, that labor remains organized, and that public policies work to equalize the material existence of all Israelis.

The Israeli Demos: Several Forms of Israeliness?
The creation of an Israeli demos is further complicated by the multiplicity of groups whose cultures, ideology, and goals diverge greatly. Several of these are non-assimilating groups or have rigid ethnic, religious, or geographical boundaries. The multiplicity of cultures, ethnic groups, and sectors seriously impede the crystallization of an overarching 'Israeliness', and the construction of solidarity and tolerance. The development of a sense of 'Israeliness', as shown throughout the book, is particularly hampered by the Judaization project, which promotes 'Jewishness' in the public sphere, at the expense of peripheral minorities. The sense of Israeliness is also undermined by the growing disengagement of Israel's Palestinian citizens, by strengthening their aversion of state symbols, duties, and identity.

Given this setting, the Israeli demos can no longer be perceived – descriptively or normatively – as a 'melting pot', into which all immigrants and minorities could assimilate. This was the dominant approach among Jewish-Ashkenazi policy makers until the 1990s, causing much tension among ethnic and religious groups, who were expected to adopt Israeli-Ashkenazi culture. A similar approach attempted to turn the Palestinian citizens into 'Israeli Arabs', devoid of their history, nationality, and collective aspirations.

At the same token, the Israeli demos, and the promise of full and equal citizenship, cannot ignore the connections, which need to be fostered between groups. Citizenship cannot rest solely on legal equality and group identity. It has to rest on the making of a common political space, and a degree of mutual solidarity and trust. This stands in contrast to the conspicuous politics of identity recently advocated by several minority leaders, mainly between Arab and ultra-orthodox groups. Such an approach is often enhanced by a deliberate process of 'othering', whereby identity is shaped by emphasizing the tension with the 'other' groups. Given the very different, and often conflicting, definitions of the collective good by these groups, an over-emphasis on identity is likely to generate separatism and result in protracted conflicts and oppression of minorities.

Therefore, the Israeli demos – if it is to genuinely emerge – needs to balance ethnic identity and citizenship. The new 'Israeliness' must respect group identities, histories, and visions, but create institutions and processes that promote a degree of common citizenry, joint societal goals, ideologies, and
interests. It can possibly be promoted through introducing a new language of coexistence to the official public discourse, through revised education curriculum, more accessible forums of resource allocation and restructured sites of communal representation.

This transformation may be assisted by the devolution of the Israeli state in two main directions. First, geographically, the management of many aspects of life should be devolved to regions. This would encourage groups to cooperate and form regional (multi-ethnic) institutions, parties and interests, and come into closer contact, not as rivals, but rather as partners in common struggles. Israel should decentralize its highly centralized administrative, legal, economic and electoral structure, and promote the development of regional, cross-cultural, and multi-ethnic identities. Past experiences in deeply divided societies, such as Malaysia or Canada, show that geographic (non-ethnic) regionalism assists in the management of protracted conflicts.

Second, Israel should recognize several ‘founding communities’. As forming the cultural bases for this multicultural society. At present, there appear several obvious candidates –

(a) mainstream secular Jews (who hold a Hebrew culture),
(b) ultra-orthodox Jews (Jewish culture), and
(c) Palestinian citizens (Palestinian-Arab culture).

These groups are large, relatively stable and would serve as durable communal foundations. The state should be restructured to reflect the depth and aspirations of these founding cultures, which would be protected and resourced under a new constitution. This could be achieved by the sanctioning of communal (ethnic) education system, electronic and printed media, housing development, and local government areas. It is therefore possible to imagine a future Israel as having several autonomous communities in partnership, simultaneously promoting their respective Hebrew, Jewish, and Arab cultures, yet ‘held together’ by a common Israeli ‘layer’ of civil and political activity and identity.

The state’s recognition of these founding cultures, however, should not be premised on their incorporation as separatist, but as groups integrating into the Israeli polity. Israeli polity state should be designed as an expression of collective needs and identities within the realms of Israeli citizenship, resembling the ‘asymmetric federalism’ established in recent years in post-Franco Spain, in which autonomous ethnic communities, such as the Catalans, Galicians or Basques enter into specific ‘tailor-made’ constitutional arrangements with the central State. Under such settings, the fierce debate about the nature of the Jewish state would lose much of its venom, since the point of contention would focus less on the state’s formal definition, and more on the collective rights and capabilities it endows to each community. From the perspective of the scenario sketched here, the best option would be to define Israel as an Israeli, or to a lesser extent Hebrew (but not Jewish) state.
The Israeli definition would maintain a special link to Jewish and Hebrew history, through the special meaning attached to the word ‘Israel’. But such a state would also allow an ‘path of entry’ for non-Jewish minorities, currently denied under the state’s official Jewish definition. But even if the state continues to be defined as ‘Jewish’, the federal-type regime structure suggested here would allow each community to secure its own identity and culture, and possess formal impact on state decision-making. Crucially, the state would then cease to be a ‘Judaizing’ state, thereby losing many of its conflict-inducing ethnocratic characteristics.

Beyond the founding communities, whose autonomy and sustainability should be enhanced, the state should also enable the articulation and protection of other (sub)cultures and communal lifestyles. These will depend on the mobilization of sufficient demand, and will entail ‘softer’ forms of cultural autonomy, not constitutionally guaranteed, but enabling the initiation of education programs, media outlets, residential communities, and communal institutions. As illustrated in Figure 12.2, candidates for such collective arrangements are Russian, Mizrahi, religious (Jewish, Muslim), Druze, kibbutz, and gay communities, to name but a few.

It should be stressed, however, that these arrangements, regarding both ‘founding’ and other cultures, must be premised on voluntary association. Members of all groups should maintain at all times an ‘exit’ option; that is, they should be able to exist as individual Israelis, enjoy full civil rights, without institutionally belonging to any specific sub-state cultural community. In terms of regime principles, the proposed scenario is close to the recent ideas of the philosopher Iris Mirian Young, who articulated a vision of ‘non-dominating self-determination’ as a fundamental collective right, and ‘differentiated solidarity’ as a normative vision of group co-existence within deeply divided political system.

Clearly, the above is but a rough and brief sketch, designed to provoke thought and promote debate. What is clear, however, is that without serious thinking of the possibilities of creating a legitimate and sustainable demos, the Israeli polity itself will be under severe stress, constantly struggling against disgruntled minorities. The current ‘repressive consolidation’ approach, which dominates Israeli policy-making, is amplifying the currently situation and grievances. It is never too early to start thinking about a moral, effective, and workable design for the troubled land of Israel/Palestine. As I have shown above, ‘gradual binationalism’, and a new perception of the Israeli demos, have the potential to establish legitimate political communities, which are the pre-requisite for the different, democratic, and peaceful future both Israelis and Palestinians deserve.

Finally, I chose to illustrate the new spirit required (and desired) for the critical transformation of Israel/Palestine, by drawing on emerging Palestinian and Israeli poetic voices. First, Shobhi al-Zobaidi, advances a new version of Palestinian love to the homeland, not solely based on ethnically ‘pure’ territory, history, earth and holiness, but rather on a humane and human
attachment to one’s living place, and the associated sentiments of closeness, sadness and belonging.

Love (Dance of Resistance)\(^7\)

Shobhi al-Zobaidi
Greetings... to love
To the homeland
To my beloved sun

... Tomorrow they’ll draw a melody
with notes embroidered upon the cheek
Like a beauty mark.
The melody will say
The homeland is a tear
Not a hill or a spring
The homeland is human

The homeland is human
With eyes gazing
At those that say
That the homeland is just
A handful of earth.

In a similar vein, the Israeli Mizrahi poet-singer, Etti Ankri, offers a critical interpretation of the Israeli homeland discourse. Ankri unpacks the 'holiness' of the land, the quest for total (male) control and conquest, and the unquenchable thirst for territorial expansion. She makes an exceptional break in the typically inward looking Israel-Jewish writing, by giving voice to the local Arab who reminds the settling Jew that the land remains just land, 'before and after' being sanctified by settlers and conquerors. By ‘un-personifying’ the land, Ankri ‘re-humanizes’ its inhabitants, and allows a new, equalizing perspective to paint the injuring encounter between Palestinian and Jew. Holding on to the land, we are reminded, involved human 'nourishment' (using the water metaphor) not brutal, hollow, force. Al-Zobaidi’s and Ankri’s lyrics open the door for new thinking, where Jews and Palestinians – members of two traumatized national communities -- can dialogue about their joint homeland, thereby beginning the complex, painful, but necessary task of recognition and coexistence.

Land Before, Land After (Etti Ankri, 1991)\(^8\)

She was wild, you came and touched
You sang to her songs at night
She was sand dunes, you wore khaki
And fertilized inaccessible sites

You grip to her desperately
But under your arm she slips
You planted in her hopes  
But didn’t give her water to sip

She doesn’t know about you and me  
Because you voice has been faint  
Land before, land after  
That you made her into a human saint

She was honey, you squeezed the milk  
You put guards on her walls  
Roads you paved through the desert  
Gathered into lines on her soul

Then you wanted another  
One that looks like a picture  
The one at home is already old  
A jaded, faded creature

She will stay here, when you are gone  
She is a whore with some fleshy past  
She lies prostrate under all powers  
If they continue to feed her with blood

Above her nations fall  
But she has no ears or lips  
She buries her own children  
When she has no water to sip

She doesn’t know about you and me  
Because you voice has been faint  
Land before, land after  
That you made her into a human saint

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1 Due to its speculative and normative style, the discussion is presented without the usual scientific apparatus. It draws on the sources outlined throughout the book.
2 In a similar vein, Likud member led a Knesset resolution in July 2003, following the launch of the international ‘roadmap’ peace initiative, claiming that “the territories liberated by Israel in 1967 do not constitute, and shall never constitute, occupied territories” (Haaretz 18 July, 2003).
3 Yet, it should also be noted, however, that Likud Leader, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, has repeatedly advocated the establishment of a Palestinian state west of the Jordan River. He has held this position against his party’s stance, including during the 2003 elections when he achieved a landslide victory. Notably, though, Sharon has remained vague on geographical extent of such a state, and continues to support Jewish settlement in most parts of the Occupied Territories.
4 The inclusion of Jordan in this confederational agreement is also a long-term possibility.
5 Here it may be possible to think of small modifications to the Green Line so as to incorporate some Jewish settlements into Israel Proper in exchange to land of equal size and quality.
6 This does not imply that the responsibility is equally shared. Israeli expansion and occupation has been the main source of the conflict, but Arab violence and aggression has also played a critical part.
7 The poem was performed by the East Jerusalem Sabreen band, and was translated by Fatteh Azzam  
8 Translation by Oren Yiftachel