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Let us begin with some comments on the term "Diaspora." It derives from the Greek διασπορα, meaning "to scatter," as with seed. This has profound, even painfully deep, significance. What can it mean to speak of scattering people about, as a farmer does with seed? There are several meanings. The first is the destruction of community; the second is changing conditions of fruitfulness; a third is the implication of agency.

The heart of the traditional society was the community. To be separated from one's community was painful, even fatal. Were an entire people to be scattered about -- the community shattered -- the pain would be magnified beyond limit. This is not merely a feature of traditional societies, merely an item of ethnographic or antiquarian interest. The most advanced thinking of our age, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 indicates that "Everyone has the right to return to his country" (Art. 13, Para. 2). This was affirmed in the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, which states that "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country" (Art. 12, Para. 4).

These rights should not be understood to apply only to persons. They may well have implications for the community itself. For instance, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted Resolution 2672-C on December 8, 1970 that stated in part that the U.N. "recognizes that the people of Palestine are entitled to equal rights and self-determination." Let us stress the reference to the "people of Palestine," that is the community. This Resolution can be understood to clarify the status -- and affirm the existence -- of that particular community, within the terms of the United Nations Charter of 1946 (Art. 2, Para. 1).

Thus the term "Diaspora" has a negative sense in which the total community is shattered, perhaps to the point of its obliteration, its negation.

A key characteristic of the traditional community was its continuity. To be a community meant that things were common, not just to members of this generation but to members of different generations. When a people had been scattered like seed, the possibilities of societal reproduction no longer existed in the homeland. Such a scattered people could be fruitful -- could find their continuity -- only on alien land. The term "Diaspora" thus has a positive sense in which the dispersed people alone has potential.

Finally, the scattering like seed of a community implicates an agent, the one who "sows." Let me give several examples. When the Israelites were scattered in 586 B.C., this was due to the deliberate actions of the Chaldean ruler of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar II. When the Jews were again scattered in 70 A.D., this was due to the orders of the Roman Emperor Vespasian and his son Titus. When the Jews were once again scattered in 132 A.D., this was because of the
decisions of the Roman Emperor Hadrian. In each case there is an agent of the Jewish Diaspora. Thus the term "Diaspora" never refers to something which simply befalls a people; there is always an agent of that scattering.

If one would like to characterize an event whereby a community is not shattered, whereby the community itself rather than the dispersed people alone retains potential, and whereby no agency is manifested -- then one should employ another term.

We will keep in mind the complexity of this significance, as we discuss the Palestinian Diaspora. Because it was (and is) indeed the shattering of community, whereby the conditions of societal reproduction were alienated, and due to a quite self-conscious agency. And it happened, and is happening, within our own era.

1. The Size and Nature of the Diaspora

The Palestinian Diaspora has occurred in several stages, including particularly the periods during and immediately following the 1948 War and the 1967 War. Let us first make an estimate of the magnitude of this Diaspora.

The UN Relief and Works Agency estimated that more than 700,000 Palestinians were displaced as a result of the 1948 War (Gabbay, 1959: 175). This constituted approximately sixty percent of the more than 1.3 million Palestinian Christians and Muslims. The same Agency estimated that some 400,000 Palestinians were displaced as a result of the 1967 War (Al-Abid, 1969: 95-96), about half of them displaced for the second time. This 400,000 amounted to about one-third of the more than 1.1 million Palestinians who had resided within the regions of Gaza and the West Bank before the June 1967 War. To put the same facts another way, about three-quarters of all Palestinians in the world had become displaced, by the cumulative effects of Zionist policies, between 1948 and 1968.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that some 100,000 Syrian civilians were displaced from the Golan Heights after the 1967 War. This constituted over ninety percent of the population of that territory, which was in effect annexed by Israel (Neff, 1984: 295).

The magnitude of this Diaspora, in comparison to the size of the Palestinian people, is truly staggering. And even moreso, when we remind ourselves that this Diaspora did not occur millennia ago; it has happened in the Twentieth Century, within the lifetimes of many of us. The Palestinian community was shattered, hundreds of villages were eliminated, those Palestinians who had remained within Israel proper were subjected to military occupation until 1965, and those Palestinians who have remained in the Occupied Territories have been kept under military occupation from 1967 until today.

Next, these displacements were the direct result of Zionist policies. What were the Zionist policies in 1948? Yigael Yadin had proposed the expulsion of Palestinians and the destruction of their villages in the Haganah's notorious "Plan Dalet," presented already by March 1948 (Morris, 1987: 62-63). This Plan was implemented by early April 1948, that is to say before the British Mandate had ended (May 15, 1948). Furthermore, the Israeli Cabinet of David Ben-Gurion had
agreed on June 16, 1948 to prevent the return to their homes of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians who had by then been displaced by the war (Morris, 1987: 141). That policy of blocking return was implemented from that point on.

Once the policy of force and expulsion is recognized, subsequent stages of the Diaspora become variations on a common theme. Given not only state power, but the military largesse and patronage of the European powers and then the United States, subsequent displacement of the Palestinians can be straight-forwardly understood.

Thus Israeli policy in 1967 was similar: drive the Palestinian civilians out of the West Bank, in particular, and then block their return after the June 1967 War had ended (cf. Neff, 1984: 293).

We see the agency in the Palestinian Diaspora: it was the colonial movement known as Zionism. The displacement of the Palestinian people was not a process of voluntary migration, such as that of the Europeans to the United States during the Nineteenth Century. It was neither the push-migration where an Italian (say) chose to migrate to New York because of a dearth of economic opportunity in his village, nor was it the pull-migration where a Pole (say) chose to migrate to Chicago because his uncle was already there and sent him letters describing the streets paved with gold.

2. A Brief Historiography of the Diaspora

Given the magnitude of the Palestinian Diaspora, as well as its political significance, it is little wonder that it has been the object of a vast number of studies. Many of these are ethnographic in nature, providing accounts of the displacement from various perspectives. A rather early example of such an account is Joseph Schechtman's Arab Refugee Problem (1952), which held that it was the Arab propaganda apparatus which had enticed the Palestinians to leave their homes in 1948, and that the data on the magnitude of the displacement was severely inflated as well. Today such an account would be called "Revisionist." That kind of account has been severely criticized -- one might even say debunked -- by later accounts such as Nafez Nazzal's Palestinian Exodus from Galilee (1978). But these ethnographic accounts shed little historical light on the background of the Diaspora.

Most of the properly historical accounts trace this background to the Mandatory period, that is to say the time after July 24, 1922 when the British received the League of Nations Mandate to rule Palestine. Let me mention several prominent examples of such accounts. One is that of the Israeli, Benny Morris, who wrote The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem (1987). Another is that of Bassam Bishuti, a Palestinian who wrote The Role of Zionist Terror in the Creation of Israel (1969).

Morris argues for his part as follows, and I quote: "The British Mandate of 1920 - 1948 can be seen as a nursery in which these two societies [i.e. the Zionist and the Palestinian] competed and raced to achieve self-government. The Yishuv [that is to say the Zionist community] won the race outright" (1987: 16). As a result, of course, between December 1947 and September 1949, some 600,000 to 760,000 Palestinians became refugees. Thus, for Morris, the Mandatory period is the "nursery" of the Palestinian Diaspora. But let us be very clear about the logic of this
argument. Simply winning a "race to achieve self-government" does not entail displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians.

Bishuti, in turn, argues as follows. "When Palestine was turned over to Britain as a Mandate, the Jews were 11 percent of the population owning only 2 percent of the land. These figures betrayed a grave problem. How could the Zionists control a land when the Jews in the land were such a small minority and when they owned only a small fraction of its territory? Clearly, something had to be done. First, swell the Jewish population in Palestine by immigration into the land, and second, obtain control over more areas of the land. This was the Zionist program and it constituted, in fact, the causes of the terror I am discussing" (1969: 14-15), that is, the terroristic attacks which drove the Palestinians out of their homes in 1948. Thus Bishuti, too, traces the background of the Diaspora to the Mandatory period (cf. also Bishuti, 1969: 40).

We must reconsider Bishuti's question: How did the Zionists come to control this land of Palestine and expel the indigenous people -- the Palestinians -- when they were such a minority and when they owned only a small fraction of its territory? We will find that the answer lies in the Ottoman period, that is the period before the British received the League of Nations Mandate.

3. Pre-Mandatory Policies on Nationalities.
It was widespread policy at the turn of the century to protect national and religious minorities.

Within the Ottoman Empire itself, the Millet system had for centuries provided not only for the security of the various national and religious minorities within the Dar es Salaam, but also for a measure of political and cultural autonomy as well. The most important Millets were those of the Jewish, and the Greek and Armenian Christian communities. Each Millet was headed by its own religious leader. Non-Muslim persons were linked to the Sultanate through the Millet, which was responsible for taxes, education, and legal issues within the community.

Moreover, British colonial policy sought to protect the political and cultural rights of national and religious minorities within the various multinational colonies, as evidenced by the protection of the Quebecois in the Quebec Resolutions of 1864 (Art. 45) and the protection of the Boers in the South Africa Act of 1909. There are two provisos to this British policy: protection was extended largely if not solely to Europeans, and the policy came to be largely supplanted between the two world wars.

In late 1917, the Bolsheviks publicized the secret treaties that the Allies had struck. This revealed the Allies' duplicity in making mutually impossible promises to the Arabs, the Jews, and themselves. Moreover, the Bolsheviks renounced any territorial ambitions and made their own proposals to guarantee the rights of national minorities. This forced the Allies to state explicitly their policies -- as expressed, for example, in President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points which were enunciated on January 8, 1918. These points were elaborated upon during 1918 by Wilson, into the Four Principles (February 11), the Four Ends (July 4), and the Five Particulars (September 27).

The Third and Fourth of Wilson's Four Principals dealt with the necessity of protecting the rights
of minorities within the framework of the multinational state: for instance, the rights of Slovaks within Czechoslovakia. It should be stressed that these Wilsonian Points had an important impact not only on the Versailles settlement which created the successor states in Europe, but on the orientation of the League of Nations as well. However, it must also be stressed that the United States never joined the League of Nations, and these Wilsonian Points extended to few people other than Europeans.

4. The Zionist Vigilante Bands.
All was not well in the Ottoman Empire. During the Eighteenth Century, that Empire -- incorporating Palestine -- was subjected to a protracted process of penetration from Western Europe. The Empire's weakly articulated Asiatic mode of production and exhausted natural resources were less and less able to cope with Europe's burgeoning capitalism and colonialism, with the latter's ever-enlarging trove of resources. By the middle of the Nineteenth Century, a belated series of reforms, called the Tanzimat, was creating conditions within Palestine which would permit Zionist colonization. A market in land was created, as was an absentee landlord class. This began to dissolve the Sultan's monopoly of landownership throughout the Empire.

Politically, a number of secret societies had sprung up during the autocratic reign of Abdul Hamid Sultan (1875-1909). Among these was the Committee of Union and Progress, including among its members Djemal Pasha, Enver Pasha, Halil Bey, and Mehmed Talaat. By 1908, these men -- who would be known to history as the "Young Turks" -- made a coup which led to the abdication of the Sultan the next year, in favor of his brother Mehmed Sultan. The decline of Ottoman fortunes continued. Italy captured the Ottoman territory of today's Libya in 1911. The Ottomans were defeated in the First Balkan War of 1912, losing most of the Empire's European territory (Fromkin, 1989: 40-50).

The major Zionist political parties of this period were HaPoel Hatzair (the Young Worker Party), a predecessor to Mapai (the Labor Party) and theorized by A.D. Gordon, and Poalei Zion (the Workers of Zion Party), founded in 1905 and theorized by the Marxist-Zionist Ber Borochov. Poalei Zion had a socialistic left-wing, led by Itzhak Ben-Zvi, a nationalistic right-wing, led by Ben-Gurion, and a romantic/populist tendency, led by Israel Shochat. As the right wing came to be dominant, the party went on to become Achdut HaAvoda (the United Labor Party) in 1920.

The stage was set by the disorder in Istanbul for the Zionists to take an aggressive role against the Palestinians. While the British Foreign Office might have thought the Committee of Union and Progress was a Jewish front (Fromkin, 1989: 41-42), the Zionists knew better; they knew the Committee was a thoroughly Turkish nationalist organization which would oppose Zionist objectives in Palestine. But the metropolitan disorganization gave the Zionists some room to manoeuvre.

As Ben-Gurion's right wing of Poalei Zion became increasingly dominant, the leaders of the other factions, Shochat and Ben-Zvi, both former members of Jewish self-defense groups in Tsarist Russia, formed Bar-Giora in 1907 and Hashomer (the Watchman) in 1909 (Shafir, 1989: 135-145). Under the pretext of self-defense, these armed gangs demonstrated the courage of the
Zionist settlers, in contrast to their perception of the "cowardice" of the other Jews in Palestine (cf. Laqueur, 1972: 209-222). Most importantly, however, "the main object of the [gangs'] activity was the dynamic of conquest," according to Shochat. All was underway before the Third Aliya, before the British Mandate. These vigilante bands also gave the lesser factions greater leverage within Poalei Zion.

All this was being theorized, as might be expected. The leading advocate of the transfer of Palestinians during this period was Israel Zangwill, who also coined the term the "melting-pot" in his 1908 book of the same title, to describe the possibilities of cultural assimilation in America. Meanwhile, Hashomer was finally absorbed into the Haganah (the Defense Force) after 1920, becoming an instrument of land appropriation up to the present time.

And in this unprincipled context, nothing succeeded like success. Ben-Gurion had stated in 1919 that "it is neither desirable nor conceivable to expropriate the country's present inhabitants [i.e. the Palestinians]. That is not the purpose of Zionism." In 1929 he repeated this pledge: "We do not have the right to dispossess a single Arab child, even if we should achieve everything we wish by such dispossession." As we will see, under the influence of intensifying Zionist militarism and terrorism, Ben-Gurion would change his tune dramatically by the late 1930's.

5. British Policy During the Mandate
If it was Zionist policy to appropriate land and intimidate the Palestinians by force -- before and during the Mandatory period -- what was the British policy with reference to Palestine?

British interests were geopolitical -- protecting the flank of the Suez Canal -- which London viewed as the vital lifeline of the British Empire. Djemal Pasha had shown the British in January 1915 that Palestine under hostile control could be the base of an attack on the Canal (Fromkin, 1989: 121). Those British interests were best served by a territory which was not ethnically so homogeneous that the threat of self-determination was genuine. Those interests were also best served by a territory which did not have so much ethnic conflict that a large British garrison was required. Divisa et impera.

Hence British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour's well-known letter of November 2, 1917 to Baron Edward Rothschild, incorporating the Balfour Declaration, indicated that the British favored the establishment of a Jewish "national home" in Palestine, explicitly alongside "existing non-Jewish communities." Whatever other objectives which may be imputed to the British in this Declaration (cf. Ingrams, 1973), it would guarantee an ethnically inhomogeneous Palestine. By the time this Declaration was published, General Edmund Allenby had begun the British campaign to capture Jerusalem. In fact, the British occupied Jerusalem on December 11, 1917.

On the other hand, ethnic conflict had erupted between Zionists and Palestinians during the period of British military occupation prior to the granting of the Mandate. When Haganah had formed in early 1920, it began training in Jerusalem. Violent ethnic clashes occurred there in April 1920. The Zionists called for increased Jewish immigration as the antidote.

Even more violent clashes, provoked by the British police, occurred in Jaffa in May 1921. The
authorities then began to realize that the ethnic conflict might get out of hand (Lesch, 1979: 201-207). Had the British taken seriously the kind of obligations which they would soon accept as an element of the League of Nations Mandate, and had the United States not passed the several Johnson Acts of the early 1920's, legislation which severely curtailed Jewish immigration to New York due to the spectre of Bolshevism, the interests of all sides in Palestine might have been accommodated. Of course, geopolitics continued to play a role: Jewish immigration to Palestine increased in the early 1930's as the economic and political situation in Europe deteriorated.

By 1933, the Palestinians had begun to confront both Zionists and British. A general strike was called during October of that year, and bloodshed ensued. Sporadic violence continued until the Palestinian General Strike began in April 1936. The Peel Commission which investigated the strike recognized that the interethnic tension was becoming uncontrollable, and in 1937 recommended partition (Lesch, 1979: 214-220). But partition would have involved population transfer on a large scale, which the British were unwilling to sanction (Morris, 1987: 25-28). Despite aggressive land appropriation policies, the Zionists owned less than six percent of the land in Palestine in 1938. The Jews were concentrated in Tel Aviv and other cities, and in settlements scattered about the countryside. Under these conditions, no one was able to draft a plausible partition plan. The Zionists pressed the British to enact a policy of transfer; the British resisted.

The British arrested dozens of Palestinian leaders in late 1937; this triggered the Great Palestinian Revolt. Guerilla war raged during 1938 and well into 1939. Meanwhile, the ugly head of Zionist terrorism reared itself still higher. Irgun began to bomb Palestinian civilian targets in 1938. Finally the official British White Paper on Palestine of 1939 called for an end to the Mandate within ten years, and the establishment of an independent state in Palestine. This would be neither a "Jewish state" nor an "Arab state," but a state wherein the "essential interests of each community are safeguarded."

There seemed to be no way to resolve the conflicting interests here. British geo-political interests in the colonies were served by a measure of ethnic heterogeneity. Zionist interests would be served only by a large-scale transfer of the Palestinian population which would effect a radical ethnic homogenization. Perhaps because of their common European background, these two political centers tended to deny the legitimacy of Palestinian interests.

6. Post-Potsdam Policies of Partition and Transfer

All of this was to change after the Second World War. The Zionists were to gain support for their policy of transfer from a most unlikely source.

The Europeans had initially supported the protection of minorities within the framework of the multinational state because they supposed that modern capitalism would at best constitute a "melting-pot" and at least promote the mutual tolerance of differing ethnicities. By the 1940's, however, they were concluding that capitalism could also constitute the extermination camps of the racists and the radical nationalisms.
At the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, the Czech Eduard Beneš had proposed the principle of the multinational state as a means of protecting the rights of religious and national minorities. In that respect, Beneš was in tune with the times. By the early 1940's, however -- with his country dissolved within the Nazi Protektorat -- Beneš had changed his tune. In 1941, he argued that "the problem of national minorities will have to be considered far more systematically and radically than it was after the last war. I accept the principle of the transfer of populations" (Beneš, 1941). Beneš understood that the objective of transfer was to create "as homogeneous a country as possible from the standpoint of nationality" (Beneš, 1954: 206). He inquired in 1943 whether the Allies would agree to population transfer to solve the threat which national minorities posed to ethnic homogeneity, and he indicated that they would (Beneš, 1954: 195; see also his 1944: 26-35).

The Allies took up the question of population transfers at their last summit meeting, the Potsdam Conference in 1945. The Potsdam Agreement recognized that transfers would have to be undertaken. Furthermore, it stipulated that "any transfers that take place should be effected in an orderly and humane manner" (Art. 13). The Allies knew, as they called for humane and orderly transfers that the expulsions which were just then occurring in Eastern Europe were anything but humane or orderly.

Ben-Gurion was also seeking British support for a transfer policy towards the Palestinians, by the late Thirties. The Zionists were well aware of the problems which multinationality was posing in Eastern Europe -- in Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc. In public, Ben-Gurion suggested in 1938, for instance, that the proposed transfer of Palestinians would be voluntary, a result of "mutual understanding and Jewish-Arab agreement." In private, of course, he was more honest. To his son, Ben-Gurion wrote in 1937 "we must expel Arabs and take their places [...] and if we have to use force -- then we have force at our disposal" (Morris, 1987: 24-25). The Zionists prepared to expel the Palestinians and the British prepared to acquiesce.

7. Societal Reproduction under Alienated Conditions.
Once the Palestinians were displaced from their homes, from their land, the conditions of reproduction of their community had become completely transformed. There were two possibilities: to die out as a people, to become assimilated as individuals into the citizenry of Jordan or wherever, or to be fruitful as Palestinians in and from an alien soil. They moved in the latter direction.

If one were to present a political history of the Palestinians in Diaspora -- which we are only able to sketch here -- one would first observe the domination of the Palestinians who had survived within the "Green Line," within Israel proper, crushed under Israeli military occupation until the middle of the 1960's. Meanwhile it was the Palestinians of the Diaspora who were mobilizing themselves -- politically and culturally -- in forms such as the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Next, one would observe the second major stage of the Diaspora, after the June 1967 War. The Palestinians in the Diaspora continued to mobilize themselves, and this increasingly gave rise to the re-reflection of community from the Diaspora into the Palestinian survivors within Israel.
proper. This process culminated in the struggles on the West Bank in the early 1980's, and the consequent Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, to "decapitate the PLO." As we now know, that invasion was in the long run a military disaster for the IDF, a disaster which demonstrated that a mobilized population -- such as that in southern Lebanon -- could prevail against the high technology of Western militarism, prevail against the terrorism of even Menachim Begin and Ariel Sharon.

Finally, the military setback of the IDF in Lebanon -- combined with determination of the displaced (and twice-displaced) Palestinians to be moved no more -- culminated in the uprising known to the world as the Intifadah. This uprising began in December 1979 and continues until today. All of this has had the most profound effect on Palestinians around the world. Everywhere, including within Israel proper, Palestinians are more conscious of their national identity, their historic past and future, than at any previous time.

**Bibliography**


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