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Mark LeVine and Mathias Mossberg, eds., *One Land, Two States: Israel and Palestine as Parallel States*, University of California Press, 2014, 273 pp., \$29.95 US (pbk), ISBN 9780520279131.

Surprising most political analysts, one of newly appointed Secretary of State John Kerry's first tasks in 2013 was to reinvigorate the stalled peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This was viewed as a futile waste of political capital early in his tenure, as it was generally accepted that this effort, like all attempts since the Oslo Accords in 1993, would not be successful. "I think we have some period of time—in one to one-and-a-half to two years—or it's over," Secretary Kerry said of the peace process at the time.¹ This was before an increasing escalation of tensions in both Gaza and the West Bank, along with global focus shifting from Israel/Palestine to the many other pressing regional issues, such as Syria, ISIS, Yemen, and Iran. Today, the idea of a feasible peace process as a vehicle for a stable two-state solution as envisioned by all existing Western-supported agreements seems closer to its often predicted demise than ever before. It is then no surprise that academics, activists, and policymakers have started to loudly consider potential alternatives, such as a one-state solution, or, as outlined in the book *One Land, Two States: Israel and Palestine as Parallel States*, a "parallel states" solution. This book comes out of the "Parallel States Project" (PSP), an assembly of policymakers and academics exploring an unconventional alternative to the two-state paradigm, founded in 2008 at Lund University in Sweden.

One Land, Two States, edited by PSP project directors Mark LeVine, a Professor of History at University of California Irvine, and Mathias Mossberg, a retired Swedish ambassador with experience working in the peace process, is a book with a goal that has eluded politicians and diplomats for decades: to propose an effective solution for Israeli-Palestinian coexistence. The crux of the argument presented by the writers is that in order to halt the land disputes, while adhering to the core identity of each side (which could not be the case in a traditional two-state or secular one-state solution, where all parties would have to make huge concessions), two parallel states, detached from territorial sovereignty, will exist with a mix of autonomous and interconnected institutions (generally those dealing with security, the law, and the economy) on the same land. While some components would have a level of precedence from some historical and modern power structures, notably the Ottoman Empire and the European Union, many of the ideas presented in the book are

¹ Ishaan Tharoor, "Beneath the conflict in Gaza lies the death of the two-state solution," *The Washington Post*, July 25, 2014, <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/07/25/beneath-the-conflict-in-gaza-lies-the-death-of-the-two-state-solution/>>, (accessed February 12, 2016).

theoretical, as no true parallel states model as described has ever existed. In the vision of the PSP, two separate but overlapping Israeli and Palestinian governments would rule over the strip of land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Inhabitants would choose their civic identity, and would adhere to the laws and other administrative policies of that authority. However, borders and other territorial boundaries would be removed, opening the door for solutions to issues that confound the peace process today, such as settlement expansion, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and the status of Jerusalem.

Each of the eleven chapters is presented as an individual essay that addresses one complicated piece of this gridlocked conflict: religion, judicial matters, security, economics, and sovereignty, with several of these themes expressed in separate chapters from both the Israeli or Palestinian perspective. The chapters work well together, but also function appropriately as individual articles that challenge modern notions of governance and state control. Contributors to this text include academics, editors, lawyers, negotiators, and writers who have studied the issue extensively and/or participated at some level in past negotiations, many of whom have roots in the region. Their collective insistence that “thinking outside the box” regarding a solution to the conflict provides the motivation behind each essay, which range from highly technical and detail oriented passages to those that focus more on broad themes and building a case for the PSP. In the preface, the editors preview what will be the ultimate message of this book, outside of any specific policy recommendations that the contributors ably describe: that a resolution to this conflict “will require a new political architecture and even a new system of thought and interaction” (x). The specifics of this particular plan, especially when considering its obstacles, become almost less important than the notion that the PSP goes outside conventional thinking about this conflict.

In his chapter, “One Land—Two States? An Introduction to the Parallel States Concept,” Mossberg recognizes the complexity of the issues that will be discussed in the book, ultimately concluding that a potential solution is “complicated, but hardly impossible to solve, considering historical precedents and similar situations in other parts of the world” (22). Determining how these models can be applied to a situation as entrenched, as vexing, and as polarizing as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a daunting task, but in 253 pages, the editors and contributors to this text make an effort to do exactly that, and perhaps just in time. A survey by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from December 2015 indicates that 65% of Palestinians believe the two-state solution is no longer practical, while 75% believe that the chances of seeing a Palestinian state within the next five years are “slim to non-existent.”² Meanwhile, a January 2016 poll found that 58% of Israelis agreed with Zionist Union leader Isaac Herzog’s recent assertion that he doesn’t “see the ability to apply...a two-state agreement.”³

What happened to lead both popular opinion and academic judgment to move past the promise of the two-state solution? The post-Oslo era has only more deeply divided Israelis and Palestinians, both geographically and politically, as settlement infrastructure grew, the separation wall was erected, the Gaza Strip became entirely isolated, and a second *Intifada* led to more severe movement restrictions for Palestinians and their goods. These factors pose the basis for the argument that some alternative of a two-state solution is not only preferred,

² “Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (58),” *Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research*, December 14, 2015, <<http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/poll%2058%20full%20English.pdf>>, (accessed February 12, 2016).

³ Jeremy Saltan, “Panels: 58% (50% of ZU voters) agree w/ Herzog on ‘no ability for 2 states,’” *Knesset Channel*, January 29, 2016, <<http://knessetjeremy.com/2016/01/29/panels-58-50-of-zu-voters-agree-when-herzog-on-no-ability-for-2-states/>>, (accessed February 12, 2016).

but necessary, considering the territorial, civic, and security entanglements that already exist between Israeli and Palestinian governance, including sharing a currency. Complete territorial and administrative detachment is nearly impossible given the current governance structure in both territories. In one of the final chapters, Hiba Hussein, chair of the legal committee of the Final-Status Negotiations in the peace process, acknowledges that the PSP is fundamentally “the current de facto situation today. Hence, in some ways the Parallel States solution would only envision formalizing the status quo.” However, from the PSP perspective, this model solves a number of issues currently deadlocking the two-state peace talks, as Hussein continues: “under a Parallel States structure, the occupation would end, the right of return of refugees would be dealt with, Jerusalem would remain open, and the borders of the two states would be clearly identified and delineated” (235). Further, the book emphasizes that even if the PSP is not a perfect solution, at least it stimulates the conversation in a new direction, and unlike the two-state model, “the issue of land and security would...shrink to more manageable dimensions, to the point where it can be more effectively dealt with” (240) and solutions to less polarizing issues can start to be addressed.

Some manifestation of a one-state solution is not a new idea. The idea of one state for Jews and Palestinians existed even before Israel was established, and the idea persisted in various circles until the two-state solution was engrained in the Oslo Accords.⁴ Palestinian writers, academics, and politicians have long argued for one secular, democratic state, including the renowned Palestinian intellectual Edward Said, who wrote that “the problem is that Palestinian self-determination in a separate state is unworkable, just as unworkable as the principle of separation between a demographically mixed, irreversibly connected Arab population without sovereignty and a Jewish population with it.”⁵ Over a decade after Said’s death, the entrenchment of the occupation has only deepened, and the inability to meaningfully wrestle with questions about settlements, refugees, and Jerusalem has made two states an increasingly remote proposition. However, fears of becoming a Jewish minority in a predominantly Arab state causes many Israelis to resist this idea and to advocate for two states, or in the case of some like Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett, annexation of Palestinian land. A two-state solution is still the official position of the Palestinian Authority and its president, Mahmoud Abbas, in his eleventh year of a four year term, who has pushed for symbolic victories such as declarations of statehood at the UN, but produced no tangible progress towards self-determination. However, a model like that presented in *One Land, Two States* demands that traditional attachments to control of territory as the basis for sovereignty be challenged. Do parallel states bridge the gap between the benefits and obstacles of the one- or two-state resolutions?

Perhaps the greatest contribution of this book is its role in shifting the discourse regarding current political conventions. As we see parts of the world transition to those that are bound more by ideology and intangible community characteristics than geographical ties, it may become necessary for political thinking to uncouple attachments to previously unchallenged expectations. To attend to situations as complex as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, innovative and hopeful thinking about conventional concepts will be necessary, and this book invites conversation about the types of topics that must be considered.

⁴ See Raef Zreik, “A One-state Solution? From a ‘struggle unto death’ to ‘master-slave’ dialectics,” *Social Identities* 17 (2011): 793-810.

⁵ Edward Said, “The One-State Solution,” *New York Times*, January 10, 1999, <<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/10/magazine/the-one-state-solution.html?pagewanted=all>>, (accessed February 12, 2016).

At its core, and despite much of the technical subject matter, this book presents a call for optimism from the very first page of the preface, where the editors appeal for “the still-novel idea of states responding primarily to their citizens, and only secondarily to their territory” (ix). The separate-but-together model would instill a “mutual human shield,” as described by Israeli professors Nimrod Hurvitz and Dror Zeevi in their chapter about security, a hopeful belief that sharing and protecting the same land would, over time, lead to an integration of the populations that would decrease the incentive for violence or chaos (91). Certainly, the proposals suggested by the contributors would require an as yet unseen level of confidence on the part of the Israelis and the Palestinians, not just with each other, but also with the international community. Multinational institutions are called on in many chapters of this book to provide judicial, economic, and security services for at least several years after a parallel state initiative would be implemented.

Potential critics of this text and of the PSP idea in general will likely argue that the positions espoused within this book are not pragmatic and will be nearly impossible to implement. Indeed, the contributors to this volume frequently ask the reader to rethink the very definition of long-held concepts and assumptions that prohibit genuine consideration of a parallel states resolution. One such issue is posed early in the book when discussing sovereignty; Jens Bartelson, a professor from Lund University, questions whether sovereignty is necessarily indivisible. As he writes, “the assumptions once seen as constitutive of the modern political order have today become increasingly problematic” (36). Only by accepting the premise of shared sovereignty can the ideas for parallel states as described in this book be seriously considered, let alone realized. Israeli writer Eyal Megged echoes this idea, while recognizing how extraordinary it sounds, when he calls for “sovereignty based on the citizen, not on the territory: the meaning of this transformation is as profound as it is still difficult for me to comprehend” (248).

While the book aims to present a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict outside of the two-state paradigm due to the assumption that it is no longer feasible, in many ways the “parallel states” model would require a level of cooperation and trust by both parties that make the two-state model seem simple by comparison. For example, Peter Wallensteen, director of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, suggests that “two separate legal systems would need to exist side by side within the same territory” (60), a proposition that in and of itself seems difficult; later he proposes that “a number of issues...could be handled directly by the International Criminal Court...outside of the two court systems of the two states” (62). Considering the current Israeli resistance to existing investigations by the United Nations and the ICC, it seems implausible that the Israeli state would ever acquiesce to allowing the ICC to function as an official arbiter outside of the Israeli legal system. Furthermore, in a chapter devoted to discussing security from the Israeli perspective, Hurvitz and Zeevi maintain that in order to allay Israeli security concerns in the parallel states model, they “must know that if a crisis unfolds, they possess the military means and legal option to detach themselves from the power-sharing agreement” (73). Thus, while the proponents of the parallel states model advocate for a vast bureaucratic system that would require interwoven dual layers for security, legal matters, and other concerns, a likely precondition for such an agreement is the ability to disassociate from such an agreement in a perceived time of emergency. This leads to a host of questions about the utility of implementing parallel states if they would only work in times of political calm and with a seamless equilibrium of cooperation and autonomy.

It seems difficult to reconcile some of the stated claims with the reality that a parallel states solution could provide. Is it possible for “the Israeli state to be both Jewish and

democratic” (25) while attending to the Palestinian interests of wanting to “consolidate the Palestinians’ demographic presence on their national soil” and “ensuring that the Palestinians remain a coherent national collective” (96-97), all on the same geographic territory? Both the Israeli and Palestinian narratives offered in the book discuss existential fears and threats that each side needs addressed, but some of these core motives seem inherently at odds with each other. This book does its best work when ideas are presented as conceptual rather than prescriptive, and when particularly challenging barriers are acknowledged as such. In some sections, too many assumptions are made about the practicality of certain propositions, and the lack of engagement in this direction emphasizes the complications of the PSP. Further, there is not enough discussion about the transition between shifting actions from those benefitting the decades old two-state ambition, where Palestinians have sought to establish statehood and self-determination, to one where Palestinians instead fight for equal rights in a greater population.⁶ Considering the disparities in quality of life between the minority Palestinian population in Israel today and their Jewish counterparts, this struggle for equality in a potential shared space seems likely to be a difficult social obstacle to overcome.

To truly “imagine a different future,” as Megged discusses in the last chapter of the book, the reader must accept three premises: 1) the two-state solution is logistically impossible and should be removed as a policy option; 2) the Israelis and Palestinians can uncouple their definitions of state sovereignty from territorial control; and 3) the Israeli and Palestinian governance structures can attain a level of trust with each other, as well as the international community, that can foster a balance of cooperation and distinction between the two parties. There is no doubt that each contributor to this collection believes to some degree that these three premises are possible (although many of the authors do express doubts), and they apply their diverse experiences and perspectives to complex social and political issues with great consideration. However, there is nothing in recent history to lead us to believe that there is any room for outside-the-box-thinking on either the Palestinian or Israeli side. Thus, as the editors concede, this book is more likely a tool for novel conversation rather than a blueprint for action. In a situation as unyielding as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this may be the best any optimist can contribute to the status quo. It seems likely that the generation that grew up in the post-Oslo era will move past the idea of two states as defined by their parents. For this audience, *One Land, Two States* will serve as an intellectual exercise that can stimulate ideas for what comes next.

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⁶ Leila Farsakh, “The One-state Solution and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Palestinian Challenges and Prospects,” *Middle East Journal* 65 (2011): 55-71.

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