



Paradigm lost: from two-state solution to one-state reality

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BOOK REVIEW

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This concise and powerfully argued volume by a leading scholar of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is notable both as a diagnostic tool for understanding the contemporary political reality of Arab and Jewish inequality under Israeli sovereignty, and as a plea for thinking outside the reigning paradigm of partition that has governed assumptions of any joint political future. Ian Lustick, a political scientist who revisits his long-time support for a two-state solution to the conflict, argues that “a Palestinian state could have been established and could have coexisted peacefully alongside Israel, but the opportunity to establish it was historically perishable and is no longer available” (3).

To make his case, Lustick first examines what he calls a “flaw in the Iron Wall,” looking at Zionist ideology and its “refusal to deal directly and honestly with the Arab problem” (13). While the revisionist leader Ze’ev Jabotinsky did have a clear understanding of Arab opposition to Zionist settlement and colonization of Palestine, the necessary pivot towards negotiation and compromise that would follow military conquest did not come to pass. Lustick suggests this was due to a flaw in Jewish and Israeli responses to victory, whereby the desire for peace was reduced and “Israeli governments escalated their demands for territory, security guarantees, and eventually recognition for the legitimacy of Zionism” (23). The book then pivots to look at the dual impact of the changing collective memory of the Holocaust on Israeli society and domestic lobbying on behalf of Israel in the US, both of which Lustick argues contributed to the curtailment of a possible negotiated compromise with the Palestinians.

In his penultimate chapter, Lustick offers an analytically compelling discussion of the concept of paradigms, which govern collective understanding of political problems and shape the wider discourse on permissible questions and alternative futures. Drawing on the work of historians of science to consider “the pathology and promise of paradigm collapse” (88), the author traces the paradigm of the two-state solution from its origins during the British Mandate era to the peace process of the late 20th century. Its decline was accompanied by a raft of warnings from scholars and practitioners, notably those who traced the expansion of Israeli settlements in the post-1967 era. But the foreclosing of contiguous territorial entities and mounting demographic realities yielded a collapse, which was difficult to recognize and “wrenching, even traumatic” (112) for political activists to contemplate. We now find ourselves in a moment of Israeli territorial consolidation and fundamental inequality, with Lustick invoking Antonio Gramsci’s description of an interregnum during which “a great variety of morbid symptoms appear” (119).

Given that the failure of partition has not been replaced with a viable alternative, Lustick’s concluding chapter instead focuses on the reality of the one state that exists, and the troubling consequences of conflict management and de facto annexation. But what would it mean for a political imaginary that moves in a more generative direction? *Paradigm Lost* forces us to consider the hold of paradigmatic thinking

about territorial partition yet it also makes clear that envisioning a more equitable future still requires new models to take its place.

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