**Confederation is a Disaster**

**Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, February 8, 2019**

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In recent years we have witnessed the publication of various ideas for settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which are not based on a two-state solution: federation and confederation. Their raise is driven by two main working assumptions: One, the relative mix of populations between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea undermines the feasibility of a two-state solution. In this view, the two-state solution has finally been terminated due to the Israeli settlement enterprise in the West Bank and because Israel can not evacuate the 30,000 families living in the isolated settlements and absorb them in Israel. The two-state solution can not lead to the end of the conflict because of the affinity of each of the two sides to the entire territory, and because of the need and the right of each side to move and settle in its entirety.

In previous articles I published here, the first assumption was refuted by a systematic presentation of the spatial-physical feasibility of the two-state solution, in a scenario of a 4% territorial exchange. A scenario of such an agreement would allow 80% of the Israelis living beyond the Green Line to remain under Israeli sovereignty, with reasonable and tolerable damage in three aspects: the contiguity and fabric of life of Palestinian communities that will lose some of their land, the fabric of life of Israeli settlements whose land will be transferred to Palestine in exchange, and the fabric of life of the settlers who will not be included in the exchange of territories, and will have to be re-absorbed in Israel.

Dealing with the evacuation and the absorption of 30,000 families requires national preparations, as determined in 2010 by the state's commission of inquiry into the disengagement, headed by Justice Eliahu Mazza:

"The most important lesson of the commission of inquiry is to instruct the Prime Minister to plan today a comprehensive national plan for a possible evacuation of 100,000 people from the West Bank in order to reduce personal, collective and national trauma, save costs and absorb people in the responsible and proper manner, as this country absorbed a million immigrants in the 1990s".

In this context, Israel must practically prepare itself for two challenges: jobs and housing. In such a scenario, during the evacuation phase, Israel must produce about 20,000 new jobs over five years (it should be remembered that 60% of the Israeli workforce in Judea and Samaria works within Israel). This is a marginal challenge, because today Israel produces more than 80,000 new jobs each year.

Four in-depth studies conducted in recent years to locate housing potential in Israel have found that there is an available potential for the realization of 100,000 new housing units within three years in areas relevant to evacuated Israelis.

It should be emphasized that there is currently no political feasibility for implementing such a scenario of agreement, both because of the Palestinian political split and because of the principled position of the Israeli Government, as described by John Kerry, the former US Secretary of State, in November 2017 in Dubai: "Most members of the Cabinet of the current Israeli government have declared that they would never be in favor of a Palestinian state". However, the political impossibility of a two-state solution does not make the ideas of federation or confederation viable. Implementing these solutions will be like attempting to extinguish a fire with a gasoline barrel.

Because none of the conceptual thinkers of the Federation and the Confederacy have bothered to publish a detailed plan that can be tested by scientific standards - only general principles have been published so far - the differences between the various ideas raised can not be addressed.

In every possibility of federation and confederation, we will have to deal with it on many levels: security, political, historical, religious, social, and so on. Due to the limited space, I will focus on the socio-economic level, in order to examine whether it is possible to avoid a full political division between the two societies, and a border between them in the form of a physical barrier.

First, we will use the socio-economic index of localities in Israel, published recently by the Central Bureau of Statistics, assuming that the border between the two political entities will pass along the 1967 lines, with the exception of the Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. In regards to the "Jewish state," we receive the grim picture that we are witnessing today. In the lower third (clusters 1-3), 9% of the 170 Jewish localities, where 16% of Jewish citizens live, are located. In contrast, 82% of 85 of the Arab authorities are in this third, with no less than 89% of the Arab citizens. In other words, the country is economically polarized by national affiliation.

In the "Arab state" the picture is opposite in terms of numbers, but similar in terms of polarization and gaps in favor of the Jews. The entire Arab population in the West Bank and Gaza (5 million), living in close to 1,000 localities, corresponds to the data at the bottom of cluster 1, where only 120,000 Jews are classified (in Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit), which constitute only 29% of the Jewish population in Judea and Samaria.

Second, we will address the data of the two economies (in 2016). GDP per capita in Israel is 38,000 dollar, while in the territories it is close to only 3,000 dollar. Per capita consumption in Israel is about 32,000 NIS, and in the territories, less than 4,000 NIS.In Israel there is almost no unemployment, only 4%, while unemployment in the territories is approaching 30%. The average daily wage in Israel is 470 NIS, whereas in the territories it is only 110 NIS.

Third, we shall examine the national infrastructures: Located in the "Jewish State", are all the air and sea ports (excluding Gaza's fishing port), all the power stations, all the desalination facilities and the national carrier, all the railway tracks, all the highways (except roads 60, 443), all nuclear reactors, all major industrial zones and all international trade centers. In other words, proponents of the ideas of the Federation and the Confederation see in their vision an Arab society of millions of poor people who enjoy freedom of movement throughout the country, albeit gradually, and live in peace and with no friction with a Jewish society that is ten times richer.

The impact of such a reality on the technology and industrialization of the Israeli economy will be devastating". The Israeli Police has no chance of dealing with the expected number of property and drug offenses, even if it triples its manpower, and we will see the construction of ghettos that are fenced and guarded by private security companies. Confrontations between extremist gangs on both sides will become common, with the addition of modesty patrols, "guardians of racial purity," and so on, which will deteriorate the situation into civil war. "An Arab state", established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with a capital in East Jerusalem, or part of a confederation with Jordan, with Arab and international support, would have a higher chance of building its economy and maintaining a stable state alongside Israel than a country whose Arab residents would serve as labor force for the "Jewish state".

And if that is not enough, the ways of absorbing the refugees, offered by the advocates of the Federation or the Confederation, are highly problematic. Some consider them to be absorbed in the Arab state alone, but some believe that it is right to absorb a number of refugees in Israel parallel to the number of Israelis who choose to live in the Arab state. In this spirit, and in today's data, if all Jews in Judea and Samaria choose to live in the Arab state, Israel will be required to absorb some 400,000 refugees in its territory. In other words, those who are deterred from absorbing 100,000 Israelis who are connected to their fabric of life in Israel will be forced to absorb four times more Palestinian refugees from Lebanon and Syria. If, as expected, most of the Jews (especially the ultra-Orthodox and the secular, who constitute 70% of the Jewish population in the territories) prefer to move to the Jewish state, implementing the ideas of a federation or confederation will be the climax of Israeli foolishness, because of the loss of the central benefit that might have been derived from the idea of ​​a confederation - refraining from evacuating a significant number of settlers.

A leadership that lacks the national responsibility necessary to resettle less than 1.5% of the Jewish population in the Land of Israel - including the use of force if necessary - thereby ensuring the future of the State of Israel as a democracy with a Jewish majority within secure borders, in the family of nations, will not be able to cope with the far greater challenges involved in realizing the idea of ​​federation or confederation, that will eventually lead to an Arab state.

The realization of the two-state solution, which must include some confederation elements, for example in the historic basin of Jerusalem, will not be easy, and will require the commitment of both sides, as well as the Arab world and the international community. But there is no viable alternative to the conclusion reached by the partition committee in 1947, the only thing that needs to be updated is the population data: "The basic assumption behind the partition proposal is that the claims on Palestine, both of the Arabs and of the Jews, are both valid and can not be reconciled. Of all the proposals that have been proposed, the partition is the most practical one ... and it will allow some of the national demands and aspirations of both sides to be provided ... there are now about 650,000 Jews in Palestine (currently 6.5 million), and 1.2 million Arabs (currently, some 7 million) different from each other in their way of life and in their political interests. Only through partition can these two opposing national aspirations come into real expression and allow both peoples to take their place as independent nations in the international community and the United Nations".