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## Hussein, C. The Re-Emergence of the Single State Solution in Palestine/Israel. London and New York: Routledge, 2015.

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**Hussein, C. *The Re-Emergence of the Single State Solution in Palestine/Israel*. London and New York: Routledge, 2015.**

In *The Re-Emergence of the Single State Solution in Palestine/Israel*, against a backdrop that normalizes the establishment of two states—one Israeli and one Palestinian—to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Cherine Hussein examines the nature of the “single-state alternative,” which proposes the establishment of a single, binational Israeli–Palestinian state in which civil liberties would be granted to all citizens. Hussein characterizes the single-state alternative as a movement of resistance and investigates its potential to counter the hegemonic force posed by Zionism. According to Hussein, the single state movement strives both to reunite the Palestinian national collective and to bring about a solution to the conflict built upon a vision of coexistence, democracy, and the sharing of the land among all of its inhabitants (pp.1-2). In her examination of this movement, Hussein seeks “to[de-colonialize] the . . . politics of resistance on the ground in Critical IR<sup>1</sup> today” and “to illustrate and [analyze] the counterhegemonic potential of the present single-state movement in Palestine/Israel” (p. 20). Hussein’s text comprises five chapters, an introduction, and conclusion.

In building her thesis, Hussein claims that the single-state movement—as opposed to the two-state solution proposed by the Oslo Accords<sup>2</sup>—endeavors to critically and publically evaluate Zionist discourse. The movement, she says, seeks to link the Zionism with colonialism, occupation, separation, and apartheid (p.87). The assertion is that any two-state solution in which one of the states is Israel will only perpetuate the hegemonic role Israel is seen to play in the region. As such, the single-state movement represents itself as a resistance movement against the “common sense” of the two-state solution. Hussein maps the participating groups of the single-state movement. She demonstrates the movement has neither centralized leadership nor any structure or body. Most notably, she says, often, the intellectuals who are engaging in single-state initiatives do not consciously consider themselves part of a movement at all. Therefore, the movement is less organized, if not scattered.

Building a theoretical framework of her thesis, she attempts to re-employ and resurrect the philosophy of twentieth-century Italian politician Antonio Gramsci’s, who originally proposed the revolutionary notion that the resistance of the Palestinian national collective represented a “project of counter-hegemony” against Zionism. Hussein revives Gramsci’s argument by mobilizing Gramscian images and by examining Gramsci’s influence on theorist and scholar Edward Said (a twentieth-century Palestinian American literary theorist and public intellectual). Exploring the Gramscian influence on Said, Hussein demonstrates that “Said’s engagement with the central role of the intellectual in instigating social change stems from the writings of Gramsci” (p. 27). From Said’s use of the Gramscian perspective, one presumes that Said wanted to reinvigorate, in the minds of the people, the power of intellectual efforts and activism in order to mount a struggle against oppression and aggression. By deploying this Saidian rereading of Gramsci, Hussein aims “to trace the (re-)emerging collective of one-state . . . intellectuals and their ongoing attempts to trigger an ‘intellectual-moral reformation’ within their own communities” (p. 20) against the backdrop of global support for a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, as proposed by the Oslo Accords.

Hussein next explores the context, persons, processes, and aftermath of the Oslo Accords. She examines the pre-Oslo circumstances that paved the way for the birth of Oslo, which foreshadowed the expansion of Zionism. The dominant rhetorical and elaborative tone of the Oslo Accords—namely that partition is the only viable solution—subsequently became

“common sense” discourse in Palestine, Israel, and other places, disguising the oppressive realities on the ground. The Oslo Accords, Hussein asserts, in their presentation of a two-state solution as the “natural solution,” contained reasoning and discourse that implicitly favored the state of Israel, leaving any hypothetical Palestinian state at the mercy of Israel’s hegemonic presence. In essence, she says, the Oslo Accords represented a “celebration of the Zionist idea of partition,” which revolved around the reselling of the idea of “territories for peace.” It is in response to this that Hussein suggests, employing Gramsci, that “the single state counterhegemonic movement eventually emerged, against the principle of separation embraced within the peace process since Oslo, and its situated common sense notions” (p. 71). Countering the dominant discourse, however, requires persistent and strong interlinked efforts and resistance, both within Palestine and Israel and within the international arena.

Subsequent chapters provide a preliminary picture of the present day re-emergence of the concept of a single-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Hussein describes the re-emergence of the single-state resistance movement in the context of the Oslo Accords as an alternative pathway toward a lasting, peaceful resolution of the conflict. The re-emergence of the single state movement, says Hussein, originated and developed in 2007 out of the London SOAS conference, organized in opposition to the 2007 Annapolis Conference (which advocated the two-state plan). One of the central inspirations for the resurgence of the single-state movement in its present form (p. 78), according to Hussein, was Said’s critique of the Oslo peace process; it was Said’s view that “the [Oslo] peace process has in fact put off the real reconciliation . . . . [It] set the stage for separation, but real peace can come only with a binational Israeli–Palestinian state” (p. 73). Said called upon intellectuals (both Israeli and Palestinian) to undertake political initiatives to promote the general principles of civil equality without racial/ethnic discrimination. Said also advocated for a more inclusive worldview and new, alternative pathways towards authentic self-determination for both the Israeli and Palestinian people, says Hussein.

In chapter four, Hussein outlines four intellectual and organizational groups and their conceptual articulations and interlinked strategies and practices of resistance that underlie the resurgence of the single-state resistance movement. These four blocs include “the Palestinian citizens of Israel; the Palestinian Diaspora, refugees, and the Palestinians under occupation; and anti-Zionist Jewish-Israelis” (p. 73). Hussein believes that the Palestinian Diaspora form a diverse intellectual bloc as compared to other homogenous blocs. How members of the Diaspora come and share together, Hussein says, has resulted in the formation of interlinked strategies and activities through which the single-state opinion emerged. The popularity of the single-state movement has been strengthened through a growing network of conferences, workshops, and talks in various cities. Joint action between Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians is perhaps, according to Hussein, one of the great influential voices against the common sense rhetoric of the two-state solution. Many alternative forums have been created on the internet—the most famous among them being Ali Abunimah’s *Electronic Intifada* (EI), which emerges as “a major forum for discussing the One State Solution” (p. 134). However, the momentum gathering in these forums have yet to galvanize into a global movement that could bring a substantial change to the present stalemate with respect to regional conflict resolution.

The last chapter is a follow up of the preceding two chapters; it explores the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement—intended to be a global call to action against the State of Israel for its occupation of Palestinian territory. Emerging in 2005 and “inspired by the struggle of South Africans against apartheid,” the global BDS movement calls for Israel to stop discriminating against Palestinians and to cease its occupation of

Palestinian territories. Supporters of BDS (including 170 civil society groups representing Palestine) assert that Israel should face sanctions “until it complies with international law and universal human rights” (pp. 144-45). The BDS maintains an apolitical approach, writes Hussein, in that it does not openly support a political solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Nevertheless, BDS has an impressive voice that has achieved significant victories, for it helped in shifting the conceptions and political position within diverse civil societies in Europe and North America. However, Hussein maintains that the reformulation of the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a South-African-style victory for the Palestinians has not yet been achieved. She predicts that the future overall success of the single-state movement in general and the BDS in particular will hinge on whether Palestinians garner global political support.

Hussein does mention that Israel enjoys overwhelming support, especially from the Jewish and Zionist Diaspora circles. This support poses a great challenge for the BDS to campaign for the Palestinian cause. For Zionists, says Hussein, a one-state solution is tantamount to relinquishing their homeland, their Jewish state. In this context, the one-state solution appears to threaten the demography of the state, and visions of a state becoming overpopulated by Palestinian Arabs, says Hussein, has Zionists standing firmly against any possibility of a shared, single state. Additionally, says Hussein, Israel often cites threats to its own security (i.e., from Hamas and other violent groups of Palestine) as a primary objection to the feasibility of the establishment of a single, peaceful state. However, Hussein asserts, given Israel’s highly advanced military and security technologies, the threat to Israel posed by certain Palestinian groups is likely overstated.

Overall, the book offers a fascinating account of the re-emergence of transformative activities within the politics of solidarity against the Zionist powers. The text reflects how intellectual and organizational non-violent activism, based on Gramscian-Saidian philosophy of praxis, can help build a global resistance. The book, rich in content, style, and methodology, demands wider readership from academics, analysts, and political scientists.

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<sup>1</sup> Critical International Relations.

<sup>2</sup> The Oslo Accords, the signing of which was said to mark the start of the “Oslo peace process,” beginning in the early 1990s, were a set of agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The explicit objective of the Accords was to fulfill the “right of the Palestinian people to self-determination” and to establish the PLO and Israel as partners in the negotiation of issues of land ownership and governance in the disputed region.