

OTHER NATIONS

The End of Israel?

"Israel: The Alternative" by Tony Judt and "An Alternative Future: An Exchange," in *The New York Review of Books* (Oct. 23 and Nov. 24, 2003), 1755 Broadway, 5th fl., New York, N.Y. 10019-3780.

"The very idea of a 'Jewish state'—a state in which Jews and the Jewish religion have exclusive privileges and from which non-Jewish citizens are forever excluded—is rooted in another time and place. Israel, in short, is an anachronism."

With that argument, Judt, who is director of the Remarque Institute at New York University, has touched off a furor. Israel is the product of what he regards as an antiquated 19th-century notion, the nation-state based on "ethnoreligious self-definition." And its existence as a nation-state is complicated by demographic realities. Within five to eight years, Arabs will outnumber Jews inside the borders of the "Greater Israel" formed by lands Israel has occupied since the 1967 war. That leaves Israel with three choices, Judt argues. It can pull back to the 1967 borders and retain its Jewish majority and its democratic character. It can expel the Arabs from the occupied territories, with dire consequences. Or it can retain the territories and surrender its Jewish character.

Judt thinks it's too late for Israel to pull back. "There are too many settlements, too many Jewish settlers [more than a quarter-million], and too many Palestinians, and they all live together, albeit separated by barbed wire and pass laws." The two-state so-

lution that has been the goal of all peace negotiations is therefore, in Judt's view, "probably already doomed."

The only palatable alternative he sees is "a single, integrated, binational state of Jews and Arabs," their security "guaranteed by international force." Judt concedes that this is "an unpromising mix of realism and utopia" but insists that it's the best course available.

His critics, however, call his argument fantasy or worse. If the nation-state is an "anachronism," retorts Michael Walzer of the Institute for Advanced Study, then why begin its abolition with Israel? Why not France, or Sweden, or Japan? And Walzer is not the only critic to point out that Judt's binational state wouldn't be binational for long. A Palestinian majority would make a Palestinian nation-state. The only question is how much blood would be shed in the process. Brown University's Omer Bartov notes that Hamas and Islamic Jihad would never share sovereignty with Jews.

Yes, says Walzer, the road to a two-state solution is difficult. But an Israeli pullback is possible, and polls show that majorities of both Palestinians and Israelis favor two states. It's their current leaders who stand in the way. Over the longer term, it ought to be obvious that "two anachronistic states are better than one."

King Coup

"African Military Coups d'État, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution" by Patrick J. McGowan, in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (Sept. 2003), Cambridge Univ. Press, 100 Brook Hill Dr., West Nyack, N.Y. 10994-2133.

Military coups seem pretty much a thing of the past in most of the world. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia, only a few coups have succeeded (notably, in Haiti and Pakistan) since the mid-1980s. But sub-Saharan Africa is another story altogether: Between 1985 and 2001, it experienced 21

successful coups and 41 failed attempts, reports McGowan, a political scientist at Arizona State University.

Coups d'état began to become frequent and widespread in sub-Saharan Africa during the 1960s, he says. Between 1956 and 2001, the 48 independent African states experienced 80 coups, 108 failed attempts, and