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M. A. MAISTAT

*Candidate of Sciences (political sciences),
Associate Professor at the Chair of political sciences,
Institute of history and politics,
Moscow State Pedagogical University,
Moscow, Russia*

PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTONOMY: SOVEREIGN STATE OR “GEO-EPHEMER”?

The article deals with the political status of the National Palestinian Autonomous Territories (the state of Palestine), which has received partial international recognition and continues to fight for its independence. The author considers features of Palestinian statehood in their relation to the concept of “geo-ephemer.”

Key words: *Palestine, National Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Fatah, Hamas, geo-ephemer.*

Currently, the process of intensive development of international relations and strengthening of international cooperation through the processes of globalization continues covering various spheres of life and various supranational bodies and organizations, when states become more and more interdependent and interconnected, limiting their sovereignty in integration communities (“desuverenization”). It runs in parallel with the trend of “sovereignization” in the form of national self-determination within states or in the disputed territories in the form of “self-proclaimed state entities,” making the political map of the world more complicated and less stable.

The fact of international recognition becomes important for the states striving to achieve a full-fledged status, which gives the state the opportunity to establish itself on the world stage and contributes to its further development (its absence indicates a certain “virtual” status). Therefore, the problem of universalization of approaches to the understanding of the essence and necessary features of statehood is quite acute for the international community.

By the beginning of the XXI century, such phenomena appeared on the political map of the world, among them are: the Islamic state (originally based in Iraq and the Levant countries (Afghanistan, Syria and Libya) – ISIL, which does not have official recognition, state institutions in the usual sense, official borders, but has a strong army and ideology. American Senator John McCain publicly called the Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR) “a virtual country” [9], and along

with it, the Donetsk People's Republic, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic remained at the "virtual" level.

Other state-like new formations received only partial recognition, among them: the Republic of South Ossetia, the Abkhazian People's Republic and Kosovo.

According to experts, unrecognized states form around them a kind of a zone of socio-economic and political instability that spreads its influence to neighboring countries and regions [7. P. 14].

Previously, there were also various pre-state political-territorial entities, as interstate associations and as some constituent parts of the states.

If in ancient times the state was understood as the highest form of human community (the works of Plato, Aristotle, etc.), then later it became a question of political association with the elevation of the sign of sovereignty (unlimited power) (J. Boden). The subsequent variety of approaches to the essence of the state focused on the presence of a number of features that together determine the status of the "state" (economic, social, political, ideological, legal, etc.): sovereignty, international recognition, legal self-sufficiency, the presence of territory and borders, a political apparatus with the possibility of monopoly law-making, the use of coercion and ensuring internal order and external security, official representation on this territory, the presence of state symbols, etc.

Other researchers went further in defining the essence of new political and cultural entities, using a predominantly socio-synergetic approach. Making a distinction between the usually synonymous terms "country" and "state," Professor V. N. Kalutskov proposed to understand "countries" as unrecognized and "semi-recognized" states as a cultural and geographical formations with no political status (e.g. Basque country in Spain), and "states" as entities recognized by the world community [7. P. 14].

Moreover, in the first case, we are talking about the existence of certain "geo-ephemera" (spatial ephemera), characterized by the presence of dynamic properties: "uncontrolled territory and borders, unsettled legal status and the significance of cultural grounds" and a fairly short life cycle in the issue of sustainability. They derive their origin from the situations of "global or regional socio-cultural upheavals, social and national revolutions, economic, political and military crises [7. P. 16]."

At the same time, Professor V. N. Kalutskov also identifies the following subtypes among "geo-ephemera": "geo-ephemera countries" as "unrecognized states" (in whole or in part) with an uncertain political status and in the process of formation, usually on the basis of breaking political, economic and socio-cultural ties with the former metropolis, as well as "geo-ephemera states" that have international recognition, but do not have full control over their entire territory due to unsettled relations with their former parts (for example, Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) [7. P. 17].

The Palestinian territory is interesting because it has historically been the home of three states: Jordan (formerly Transjordan), Israel and the State of Palestine, of which only the first two have received political status and full international recognition, and the latter continues to work hard to achieve this.

The “Arab Palestinian state” was formed and gradually institutionalized during the long seventy years of the ongoing Arab-Israeli confrontation. The recognition of the Palestinian national autonomy by the UN in 1988-1989 did not lead to the Palestinian Arabs gaining independence and achieving the goals that the Palestinian leadership, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), set for itself, since internal political differences were added to external opposition.

Although in 2012 the “state of Palestine” received the status of a non – member observer in the UN, the question of the actual appearance of a new full-fledged state on the world map remained open and continued to be widely discussed in scientific and practical circles.

This is a “protracted” process of self-determination of the people claiming to be an original ethnic group – a national minority. In addition to the Palestinians, the Kurds, who are divided among the territories of several states (Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq), are fighting hard for the independence in the Middle East region [16. P. 3].

Official international sources contain two forms of realization of the right of peoples to self-determination: external (the right to freely choose their political status and place on the world stage in accordance with the principle of equality and the prohibition of foreign enslavement, exploitation and domination of peoples, taking into account the example of the liberation of peoples from colonial dependence) and internal (the right to realize their social, economic and cultural development without external interference) [5. P. 123-124].

According to Y. G. Barsegov, “besides secession, which is the extreme form of self – determination, minimal forms of self-determination up to a complete fusion in a foreign power are also possible, and any other form of regional or even non-territorial autonomy, including national-cultural autonomy are possible, provided of course that the obligatory main conditions of freedom and voluntariness of the will are observed [3. P. 8]”.

A widespread example of internal self-determination is the creation of autonomy-self-government, that is, “the right to independently decide matters of internal legislation and management [17. P. 28]”.

In addition to the territorial autonomies, there are also non-territorial autonomies where minorities live in different territories and it makes no sense to gather them together (corporate and cultural (national-cultural) autonomies that are associated with autonomous institutions personally) [4. P. 26-28].

Territorial autonomies may be of an administrative nature (the authorities themselves decide executive and administrative functions) or of political nature (the main one is the presence of representative (legislative) authorities) [8. P. 181].

The beginnings of "Palestinian statehood" can be traced back to the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964. The Palestinian National Council (PNC), a legislative (representative) body and Executive Committee (government) headed by Yasser Arafat, which represented the PLO in the international arena and coordinated the work of departments and budget issues, began to operate within the PLO.

The Declaration of independence of Palestine, drafted and adopted on 15 November 1988 at the 19th session of the NTC, became a prototype of the Basic law.

The subsequent signing of a number of agreements in the city of Oslo on 13 September 1993 led to the emergence of the National Palestinian Autonomous Territories (PNA) as a transitional form of official organization of Autonomous power, which, after 5 years, was supposed to expand its independence and achieve greater political independence.

The following public authorities were established: the Palestinian legislative council (Parliament), the post of the President of the PNA, the first elections were held on 20 January 1996, the Palestinian Council of Ministers (government) and the post of Prime Minister (introduced in 2003). Draft Constitution was developed on October 2, 1997 (second edition on May 29, 2002), according to which Palestine is a unitary state with Jerusalem as its capital [14].

The PNA budget is formed primarily through tax revenues and external financing.

The Palestinian Autonomous Territories include 16 provinces: 11 in the West Bank and 5 in the Gaza Strip.

At the same time, a significant part of the territory of the PNA is "controlled" by Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are separated from each other by Israeli territory, there is no own monetary unit, there is a great dependence on external financing and assistance from neighboring Israel, with which close economic relations have been established, there is no army (there are numerous police and paramilitary structures). The total number of Palestinians, including refugees, abroad is 9 million, of which only 3.7 million live in the Palestinian territories. The latest presidential elections were held on January 9, 2005, and the parliamentary elections were held on January 25, 2006, with a term of office of four years, which indicates the illegitimate action of the current authorities. There is no officially valid constitution.

In addition, there are internal political differences between the Central PNA party, the Movement for the national liberation of Palestine (Fatah), and its main opponent, the Islamic resistance movement (Hamas). So, in early January 2019, Maer Salah, one of the leaders of Hamas, said that no reconciliation with Fatah is possible "while Mahmoud Abbas is at the head of this movement, whose mandate expired in 2009 [1]".

All of the above indicates to the signs of "statehood", but with a certain degree of conditionality.

If we return to the typology of “geo-ephemera” by Professor V. N. Kalutskov, the state of Palestine, being in the process of its formation, is still at the stage of “geo-ephemera country” (at the stage of a venture) in its development, since it does not have the necessary political, social or independent economic resources, including financial means. Therefore, the Palestinians could consider a possibility of co-existence with Israel or Jordan (possibly, as an autonomous territory within a state).

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