**Jewish Tribalism Beats Beinart’s Bi-Nationalism**

**By Yishai Fleisher**

The good news is that even Peter Beinart understands that the Two-State solution is dead. The Progressive public intellectual recently penned a New York Times article where he admitted that the Left’s old dream of creating a Palestine in the historic Israeli heartland is never going to happen.

The land in question - Judea or the "West Bank" - is the ancient cradle of Jewish civilization. In modern times, the Jews lost this land to the Arab onslaught during the 1948 War of Independence, but liberated it from Jordanian occupation in 1967 and began to resettle. Now, 50 years later, over half a million Jews live here under Israeli protection, and it seems that the realization that Israel is going to be sovereign in Judea and Samaria / West Bank is finally trickling down.

**A New York State of Mind**

Still, Beinart has a new-old way to create a Palestine here. He proposes that Israel simply grant citizenship and equality to all Arabs living in Judea, including a right-of-return for Palestinian Arabs, and create a bi-national state called “Israel-Palestine” which would, soon enough, be voted out of being a Jewish state. Welcome to Beinartistan.

Many commentators have shredded Beinart’s arguments. But notwithstanding the critique, the basic question that Beinart is highlighting is worthy of an answer: If there is not going to be an independent Palestine in the land of Israel, and if, indeed, the Jewish state plans on being the only sovereign between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, then what will be the fate of the millions of the "West Bank" Arabs?

**The Size of New Jersey, But Ain’t New Jersey**

To answer the question, let’s zoom out. The Islamic Middle East and North Africa is a large region: six million square miles - twice the size of the continental United States. It is inhabited by 570 million Muslims (406 million Arabs, 82 million Turks, and 82 million Iranians) in over 20 states.

Within this region, there are a few tiny islands of independent non-Arab entities. One example is the Autonomous Kurdish Region in northern Iraq with a population of 5 million. The Kurds, while mostly Muslim, live in constant tensions with their neighbors who would love to swallow up their land.

Similarly, there is another small non-Arab group living in a regional enclave: the Jews. About 7 million Jews populate an independent ethnic-national state called Israel. This Jewish state is located in the heart of the Arab world and is the size of New Jersey - only 1/6 of 1% of the Muslim landmass.

**An Ethnic Enclave in a Hostile Surrounding**

American Progressives cast Israel as a powerful Western giant, accusing it of denying rights to Palestinians. But that image is warped. The truth is that Israel is a tiny country tasked with defending a persecuted minority. Jews have no rights in the neighboring Arab states and, in fact, have been ethnically cleansed from them. After Israel declared independence in 1948, 99% of Middle Eastern Jews, 850,000 people, were [purged](https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Issues/Pages/Jewish-refugees-expelled-from-Arab-lands-and-from-Iran-29-November-2016.aspx) from the Arab countries.

Like the hostile Arab countries, the Palestinian movement, in its various iterations, has always been a machine for ethnically cleansing Jews. In 1929 they ethnically cleansed the Jews of Hebron and in 1948 from the Old City of Jerusalem and Gush Etzion. In 2000 they evicted the Jews from the Tomb of Joseph in Shechem/Nablus and destroyed it. By law, no Jews are allowed to own property within the PA and an Arab selling land to a Jew will face capital punishment. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority incites to liberate 'all of Palestine' and pays terrorists who have murdered Jews [$400 million](https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/abbas-we-wont-stop-payments-to-maryrs-and-prisoners-563250) in annual rewards.

Beinart’s idea of a bi-national Israel-Palestine, whose democratically-elected Arab leaders would certainly work to undermine Jewish defenses from within, would defeat the whole purpose of the independent Jewish state.

So if not Palestine, what will be the future of the 2 million yet-to-be-absorbed Palestinians living in the ethnic-national enclave of the Jews?

**Liberty Vs. Democracy**

First, it might be useful to separate the concept of ‘liberty’ from ‘democracy’. Liberty is civil rights and freedoms, while democracy is a form of electing leadership. In the West, the two usually go together, which is why they are often conflated. But even in America, liberty and civil rights can exist even for those without voting rights. American Green Card holders, about 13 million people, have civil rights, but not voting rights - yet no one claims they live under apartheid. Two-million Puerto Ricans are American citizens, but since they live in a US territory and not a state, they are ineligible to vote for the president of the United States and have one non-voting member in the House of Representatives - but yet again, no one calls this apartheid.

That’s because apartheid is not the absence of “one-man-one-vote”, rather, it is a system of oppression, racism, and segregation. While Israel is indeed the ethnic-national state of the Jews, it has no system of apartheid - as has been testified to by black South Africans who have visited such as [Kenneth Meshoe](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/i-know-what-apartheid-was-and-israel-is-not-apartheid-says-s-african-parliament-member-413101), a member of the South African parliament, who was born under apartheid.

Secondly, as described above, Israel is the ethnic-national state of the Jews, a haven for the Jewish minority in the region. While Israel affords liberties to ethnic minorities living in its borders, that is ancillary to its core mission.

Thirdly, the conversation about the Palestinians largely revolves around their rights, but very little around their obligations. For Israel to absorb the Palestinians, who have been part of an anti-Israel axis for the last 100 years, they must renounce Jihadism and accept the laws and obligations of the Jewish State.

Finally, it is important to note that not one of the Arab countries that surround Israel runs a real democracy. Western-style voting is just not in the DNA of the region.

**Three Plans Better Than a Bi-National State**

Clearly, new and creative answers are needed. So here are three plans which would achieve maximum Arab liberty in a Jewish Israel:

The first comes from the prominent Palestinian intellectual and former President of Al-Quds University in Jerusalem, Sari Nusseibeh. In his Obama-era [book](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0674048733/ref%3Dcm_sw_r_tw_dp_x_T6FdFb4RNKN67) "What is a Palestinian State Worth?" he reveals a truth often [heard](https://www.israelhayom.com/2020/07/14/report-pa-arrests-palestinians-for-backing-israeli-sovereignty-bid/) on the Palestinian street: many Arabs want Israeli residency as opposed to full voting citizenship, and much prefer life in a Jewish Israel to a Palestine that is Jihadist and corrupt.

This residency regime, Nusseibeh writes "deserves serious consideration" because it would:

"maintain Jewish ownership of the state while guaranteeing Palestinians their human rights and all services a state normally provides for its citizens, including their collective cultural rights… The Arabs absorbed into Israel by such annexation of the currently occupied territories would not acquire votes in the Knesset, and thus would not threaten to transform the state from within. Simply put, in this scenario the Jews could run the country while the Arabs could, at last, enjoy living in it."

A second vision that is gaining traction on the ground is called the "Palestinian city-states" or "Emirates Plan", authored by Prof. Mordechai Kedar of Bar-Ilan University. Kedar argues that the most stable Arab entity in the Middle East is the United Arab Emirates, which is based on a consolidated group - tribes on tribal land. Since the Palestinian Arabs are not a cohesive nation but are comprised of separate locality-based clans, Kedar proposes Palestinian self-rule in non-contiguous "emirates" which are the seven major Arab cities. The Arabs in these clan-based cities would maintain their own courts, culture, and local municipal control.

Yet a third option is known as “Jordan is Palestine” - referring to the fact that Jordan’s population is majority Palestinian. Proposed by former members of Knesset Aryeh Eldad and Benny Alon, the plan calls to give Arabs living in the “West Bank” Israeli residency with civil rights, but would also reinstate their Jordanian citizenship illegally taken away from them by King Hussein of Jordan in 1988. These Arabs would live in Judea but would exercise their right to vote in their Arab state next door, Jordan. Historically speaking, the Kingdom of Jordan was originally carved out of 77% of the Jewish land to create a Hashemite Palestinian state by the British - it is the original Two-State solution.

**Never Beinartistan**

Israel’s mandate is to defend the Jewish people and allow them to thrive on the soil walked on by their biblical ancestors. However, loyal non-Jewish residents of Israel can benefit from the social and cultural liberties, upward mobility, and opportunity which the Jewish state uniquely provides in the region.

And while the three plans may be less than ideal from a Western-perspective, they are far better than the debunked idea of erecting a Hamas-Palestine in the heart of the Jewish ancestral homeland - and far more realistic than tearing down the defensive walls of the world’s only Jewish state to create a bi-national Beinartistan.