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The crooked timber of the one-state solution

The one-state solution is becoming popular among the Left and Right, however the need for a viable solution to the conflict requires the rejection of simplistic formulas and adherence to the idea of dividing the country

• By DAVID MERHAV

The supposed death of the two-state solution brought many Israeli leftists, most of them non- or anti-Zionists, to endorse the alternative one-state solution. While once only leftist fringes like the Matzpen group supported the idea of a single democratic and secular state in Israel/Palestine, today the situation is different. Thus, Avrum Burg, former speaker of the Knesset, is part of the Alternative to Partition initiative, which objects to the idea of two states; journalist Miron Rapoport is one of the leaders of the Two State, One Homeland initiative, which loosely advocates the two-state solution while carrying forward more binational ideas for Israel and Palestine; and Prof. Asad Ghanem together with Dan Bavli authored three years ago the book *Towards a Bi-National Homeland for Israelis and Palestinians: In Search of a Doable Solution – A United Democracy*.

Against the socialist and liberal proponents there are right-wing activists and politicians who share the vision of Greater Israel, to be materialized in one state. One of them was the late Uri Elitzur, former editor of the *Makor Rishon* daily and a leading voice among the settler population in the West Bank. Today is seems that there are many politicians, first and foremost Education Minister Naftali Bennett, who prefer to live in one state with big Arab minority rather than countenance the evacuation of most of the settlements.

The common denominator of these two groups, the Left and the Right supporters of the one state solution, is their rejection of Zionism as articulated by Theodor Herzl, Ze'ev Jabotinsky and David Ben-Gurion. It is not just the idea of having Jewish majority in Israel, a task undertaken by the early fathers of Zionism – it is also the idea of rejecting any democratic and viable future for the two nations.

The question facing us is not how many Jews and Arabs will live in the future state of Israel or Palestine, but how they would conduct their lives. The problem is not this or that future prime minister but how the new state will be organized politically. The Left believes in a democratic and secular system, to be managed by all of the state's citizens. However, this pure liberal thought ignores decades of mutual hatred, oppression, terrorism and bloodshed. How is it possible to expect the two peoples to democratically elect their leaderships without bloody civil war? Does anyone believe that the demand to materialize the Right of Return won't throw the two peoples into war?

The Right argues that handing the Palestinians blue passports will solve the problem. Others think that giving them cultural autonomy within the one state, with partial civil rights, constitutes the way forward. Like their leftist counterparts, they do not provide any feasible solution to the problem that decades of bloodbath and colonization make the situation terribly complicated. In contrary to BDS-style claim, Israel is not a Middle Eastern version of apartheid-era South Africa; the problems facing the Israelis and Palestinians are far more complex.

The need for a viable solution to the conflict requires the rejection of simplistic formulas, and adherence to the idea of dividing the country. Of course, there are plenty of problems to be addressed, e.g. the nature of the future state of Palestine, the lives of hundreds of thousands of settlers, the fate of the 1948 refugees, and so on. However, an important principle must be carried forward: no matter what, Israel should separate itself from the Palestinians for its own sake.

In a world of "alternative facts" and "fake news," there are "alternative" or "fake" solutions, but it seems that those who really want to advance a better future for the two nations must tell the public that there is only one genuine solution to decades of bloody conflict. Those who still wish to see a prosperous single state in Israel/Palestine, leaving behind the past, should be reminded of what Immanuel Kant said: "out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made."

The author, a graduate student in Tel Aviv University's History Department, is a former journalist and columnist for Makor Rishon.