

The Danger of Israel Becoming a Bi-national State

By Sever Plocker

- A year from now Israel will celebrate its 75th year of independence and sovereignty. In our figurative greeting cards, we should all wish Israel to upkeep its principle of utmost importance as a country - democracy. Democracy is crucial for the government's health. Its value is revealed only when it's missing, when it's partial, when it's not functioning. Lacking democracy is similar to lacking good health, we notice when it's not there anymore, and when we do, it's hard to breath, grow, think, know, and love. At the end of the day, non-democratic regimes always collapse, and democracy always perseveres because only a democracy is able to adjust to the changes of time, to reinvent itself. Israel has not just survived 74 years, it survived them well and with honor. It survived despite the challenging circumstances and the hostile surroundings, despite - not because of - the wide array of opinions of its society.
- Diversity of opinions and discourse are the bread and butter of democracy - not its weakness. The power of democracy lies in its ability to settle disputes, move on, and prosper. Some say that democracies struggle to let go of old habits, because changes call for discussions, agreements, compromises, and considerations. Democracies move slow, if at all. This is in contrast to authoritative regimes - often dictatorial - in which every decision lies in the hands of a leader with a cult of personality. However, history has shown us which system holds out in the long run. Even though tyrannical regimes seem strong and quick on their feet, they are essentially rotting from the inside and stuck in place. Authoritative leaders have no tendency of deviating from the path they paved for themselves, even if it leads to a dead end, even if it means driving off a cliff. Dictators stick to their first draft, usually peer-reviewed by several trusted charlatans.
- They live in fear that every small deviation from that draft would undermine their almighty omnipotent status. The thing of upmost importance for dictators is not to appear weak, not to appear as lenient to outside commentators. And if the people no longer buy the unwavering "wisdom" of the leader, they will be forced to do so - which is not sustainable. There are endless examples: the 20th and 21st centuries are rich with leaders that insisted on driving their nations off a cliff. Democracies, however, are under public and electoral pressure, which forces governments to reroute when reality hits. Change is what saves democracies, protects them - it's also what destroys dictatorships over time.
- There is no such thing as a perfect democracy, and no one is more familiar with this struggle than Israel. In its infancy, Israel trifled with authoritarian governing, and deprived its Arab citizens of basic democratic rights. Most of these non-democratic tendencies were erased over time. As of today, Israel is a flourishing democracy, hence also a thriving economy and society. The reality, however, is that the security constraint that forces Israel to continue occupying parts of the West Bank clashes with the ideals of most democracies, and it's very difficult to come to terms with. But, it is not enough to regard Israel a dictatorship or an authoritative regime.

- The real problem will surface years down the road, when the binational state will inevitably be established, uniting Israel and the West Bank. As the solution of two states for two nations dwindles away, this dangerous idea grows closer and closer to becoming reality. That binational state will be a defective crossbred creature with no chance of survival. A common analysis of the consequences of one-state solution would tell us that bi-nationality in Israel would put an end to this country as the Jewish and democratic state. And Israel's democracy is the foundation for our independence. We must use all our resources and collective efforts to prevent the dangers of a binational state from happening before its too late. So, as we celebrate this Independence Day, we must remember that had it not been for democracy, the Jewish state would not have stood the chance at survival.