

## One state, one vote

[By Gideon Levy, columnist, Haaretz, July 8, 2018](#) (subscriber only)

*After decades of government by a single regime that brought great accomplishments and led to a dead end, the only way to achieve change is by first taking down the scaffolding on which the structure was built*

The Zionist left is in its death throes. Perhaps the silver-haired general can save it, perhaps he should attack the Haredim more vigorously, perhaps ingratiate himself more with the Mizrahim, lean further to the right — or maybe to the left. Perhaps he should call for a military operation in the Gaza Strip, maybe do a few more appearances in the open-air markets. Perhaps he should choose Tzipi Livni, perhaps change the law to benefit Avi Gabbay, perhaps Tamar Zandberg. Perhaps he should battle Yair Lapid — or join forces with him. Trifles, all of it. Of course there's no point talking about an opposition, nor an election victory. Behind the supposedly heated discussions hides the great deception of Israeli politics: There is no real opposition. There's ideological totalitarianism.

Israel is a one-idea society, and always has been. Like Iran, North Korea or the Soviet Union, without the terror regimes and the blood. With the appearance of debate, but the kind whose boundaries are determined in advance and which revolves solely around 50 shades of the ruling ideology. With the appearance of freedom and democracy, but with absolute delegitimization — and lately, even criminalization — of different thought. The noise of a lively, contentious society, but solely over the shade that will rule it, not the color. The color will remain the same, that much is clear. It's called Zionism, and it is a devastating ideology.

It isn't that the Zionist left has suddenly lost its way. It is the founding father of the ruling path and it cannot offer a different path. And so it can only jerk about. On a good day it might return to power, on a bad day lose it, and in either case Israel will be ruled the same way, barring cosmetic changes. More humanitarian aid or slightly less, more antidemocratic legislation or slightly less. There's no point complaining that everyone is beating down the doors of the latest great hope, like former chief of staff Benny Gantz. They're all exactly the same.

It's considered subversive to even say that Zionism is an ideology that could be replaced, so deep is the totalitarianism. Like worshipping the Kim dynasty, Zionism is the only permitted option. It's hard to come up with another ideology that is defined as having no legitimate alternative, apart from those of totalitarian regimes. It's also hard to think of a free regime with an ideology that anyone who does not cling to it is considered a traitor. Communism was that way. No one even whispered that there might be an alternative. In Israel, forced-labor camps and reeducation are superfluous. Try defining yourselves as non-Zionists and you'll understand.

But the truth is that after decades of government by a single regime that brought great accomplishments and led to a dead end, the only way to achieve change is by first taking down the scaffolding on which the structure was built. This scaffolding is damaged, it always was, and now we must allow the discussion to turn to its dismantling. An established country like Israel

can return to its foundations and admit to its birth defects: Zionism was and is an ultranationalist movement, tainted by racism, cruel, discriminatory, oppressive and disinheritting. Most important: replaceable.

A moment before the usual wail goes up about the destruction of the State of Israel, something that should be obvious must be said: It's possible to have a just, thriving state that is not Zionist. Moreover, it is not possible to have a just state that continues to cling to Zionism. Everything derives from this, and it cannot be prettied up: If Zionist, then it is clear that its land belongs only to Jews, that immigration is permitted only to Jews, entry is permitted only to Zionists. The non-Jews of this land have no rights, the asylum seekers shall be expelled, the occupation is not occupation and all is permitted because it is the realization of a divine promise. One cannot be a Zionist without believing in all of this. These are the cornerstones of Zionism, free of hypocrisy.

As long as it is not legitimate to dream of one person, one vote, as in a genuine democracy, we will have one state, one vote. As long as it is not legitimate to reconsider, it will be a state that is neither just nor free.