

## Jerusalem Journal; Road to Power: Do Palestinians Ride Israel's Bus?

By [Thomas L. Friedman, Special To the New York Times](#)

Aug. 4, 1987

The image shows a scan of a newspaper page from August 4, 1987. The main article is titled "Road to Power: Do Palestinians Ride Israel's Bus?" by Thomas L. Friedman, a special contributor to the New York Times. The article is set within a "Jerusalem Journal" section. A photograph of Prof. Sari Nusseibeh is included, with a caption identifying him as the author of the book "The Road to Power" and a member of the PLO's executive committee. The article discusses the political and social tensions in the occupied West Bank, particularly regarding the role of the PLO and the impact of the Intifada. The page also features several advertisements: "PILDES PEOPLE" for eyewear, "THE UNITED WAY" with the slogan "Once a year we ask, because every day people need. WHERE THERE'S A NEED, THERE'S A WAY. THE UNITED WAY", "DALLEK" office furniture, and "BATTERY PARK" electronics. The "BATTERY PARK" ad lists various electronic items with prices, such as a \$199.00 television, a \$144.00 VHS camcorder, and a \$179.00 VHS camcorder.

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### Has Israel already become a Jewish-Arab state in everything but name?

The radical thesis that it has is being put forward by a leading Palestinian philosopher, Prof. Sari Nuseibeh of Bir Zeit University in the occupied West Bank, and the idea is being seriously discussed, with equal discomfort, by Israeli and Palestinian intellectuals.

"It all began with an Egged bus," said Mr. Nuseibeh, referring to the Israeli bus company. "After the 1967 war, Palestinians would not get near an Egged bus. It looked like a terrifying monster from outer space, transporting aliens from one foreign place to another. Some people said we should never ride the Israeli buses because it would be recognizing the occupation. But slowly, Palestinians started using the Egged buses; they figured out where they were going and where they were coming from."

"The Israeli system is the Egged bus," Professor Nuseibeh, 38 years old, said recently in an interview, a few days after publicly airing his ideas at an Israeli-Palestinian conference. "In 20 years we have moved from totally rejecting it, to a point of realizing that we can get on it and use it for our own purposes." *Move Toward Binational State*

This integration of Israelis with Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip has gone so far, Mr. Nuseibeh argues, that the Palestinians may soon conclude they will be much better off demanding equality and voting rights within the present Israeli-dominated structure, thus turning it into a truly binational state, than campaigning for the creation of separate Palestinian and Jewish entities, which he believes is unlikely.

The Palestinians, he argues, have wrongly been using the Algerian model of resistance, treating the Israelis as imperialists to be driven out. That, he says, contrasts with the South African model of resistance -treating the Israelis as a deeply rooted population with a monopoly over power and resources that could be gradually taken over from within.

But even if Palestinians do not choose this as a declared strategy, Mr. Nuseibeh says, it is probably going to evolve naturally, if the last 20 years are a guide.

Most of the attention until now, he argues, has focused on the integration of Israel with the West Bank and Gaza through Jewish settlement.

What is rarely examined, he added, is the degree to which the 1.5 million West Bank and Gaza Palestinians have gradually become integrated into the Israeli system that they verbally reject. In addition, there are 500,000 Israeli Arabs who have been citizens since 1948.

Every morning, Mr. Nuseibeh said, tens of thousands of the West Bank Palestinians drink their Israeli-produced milk and coffee, slip on their Israeli-made jeans, then board the trucks of Israeli contractors and spend their day working in Israeli towns, where they speak Hebrew.

Editors' Picks

Later, these same West Bank workers will pay their income taxes to the Israeli Government, perhaps bribe an Israeli official to obtain building permits, read their Israeli-censored Arabic newspapers, and maybe go abroad on Israeli travel documents. They will leave their children behind to use Israeli paint to spray a little anti-Israeli graffiti on the walls, or to apply to the Israeli police for a permit to demonstrate against Israeli policies. Before leaving for abroad, they may go to the Arab market in Jerusalem, where Palestinian merchants sell yarmulkes alongside "I Love Palestine" T-shirts sewn by an Israeli manufacturer.

"There are now two million Arabs and three million Jews living in Israel and the occupied territories," Mr. Nuseibeh said. "Because the Arabs have a higher birth rate, everyone is focusing on that point in the year 2020 or 2040 when the number of Arabs and Jews living here will be equal. But even without equality in numbers, the two societies are becoming so integrated that a binational state has already been created in daily life. The future is now." The only thing missing, he said, "is the consciousness, the self-awareness of what we have been doing."

"While our Palestinian bodies are now immersed in the Israeli system, our heads are still above water," he said. "Our bodies integrate with it while our consciousness rejects it. This is natural, because the more we sink into the Israeli system the more we want to assert our own distinctive Palestinian national identity." Consciousness and Reality

But when consciousness and reality are so far apart, Mr. Nuseibeh said, sooner or later reality will be made to fit the consciousness, or the consciousness will be adjusted to fit reality. Either Palestinians will stop paying taxes, voting in Jerusalem elections, building Israeli settlements and riding Egged buses, or, more likely, their national strategy will be reshaped to fit the reality of integration. That would mean demanding equal rights as citizens of the same land.

"At some point," said Mr. Nuseibeh, "Palestinians are going to realize that they have been had. We are going to wake up one morning and find ourselves in bed with the Israeli system, and when we do we are going to demand a marriage certificate. That is when the real problem is going to start."

It already has. Last month Hanna Siniora, the editor of Al-Fajr, declared that in the next elections he will run for the Jerusalem City Council and demand an equal share of resources for the Arab population of Jerusalem. Because Jerusalem has been united through annexation, Palestinians there - unlike those in the occupied West Bank - can vote and run for office. While some Palestinian radicals burned Mr. Siniora's cars, the vast

majority of Palestinians quietly accepted his proposal, some enthusiastically. Israeli Rightists React

On the Israeli side, right-wing nationalists in Parliament immediately demanded that a law be passed barring Mr. Siniora from running, while others, seeing the threat of binationalism, called for the expulsion of all West Bank Palestinians.

"The fact is, the longer we wait to create a two-state solution, with separate Palestinian and Israeli entities, the more jarring and violent it is going to be for both sides when the reality of binationalism hits," Mr. Nuseibeh said. "I think the Palestinian national movement should consider adopting an explicit binational strategy as the most effective means of convincing the Israeli public to accept a two-state solution now."

It would be a tragedy, Mr. Nuseibeh added, if Palestinians and Israelis have to become fully attached as Siamese twins in order to discover that they would have been much better off as separate siblings.

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