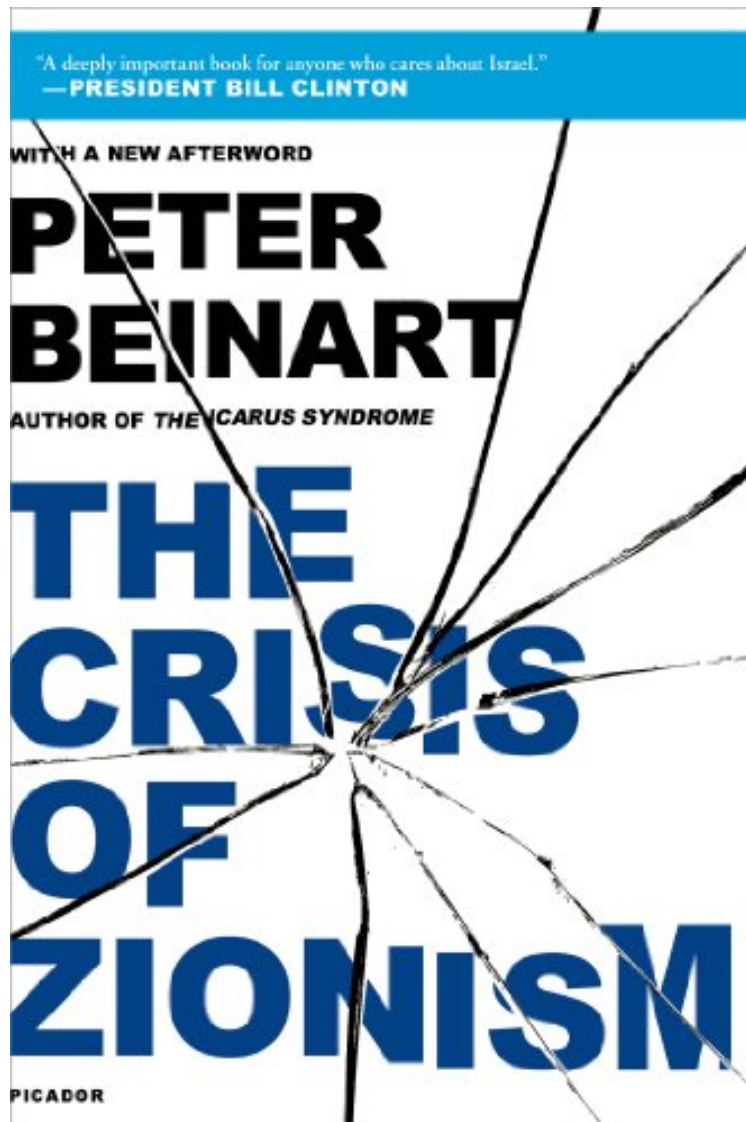


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The Crisis of Zionism

Peter Beinart

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Peter Beinart : The Crisis of Zionism before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Crisis of Zionism:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. There are betterBy Benjamin ROne of the first books I read about Zionism and the Israel/Palestinian conflict, The Crisis of Zionism was recommended to me by a professor at the University of Miami. At the time I enjoyed it a lot. However, I now think that its argument is basically a simplified (one might say, simplistic) version of Gershom Gorenberg's The Unmaking of Israel, a far more sophisticated polemic

and progressive guide to Israel's complicated political history. Whereas Beinart draws a black-and-white distinction between the "bad," illiberal Israel of the post-1967 settlement in Gaza and the West Bank and the "good" Green Line pre-1967 Israel, a liberal democratic paradise, Gorenberg shows how the seeds of '67 were sown by short-sighted political decisions made by politicians during and immediately after Israel's founding. He is also very clear that the process of settlement has been aided and abetted by both major secular parties that have held power since 1967, Labor and Likud. Finally, Gorenberg is not blind to the gross mistreatment of Arab Israeli *citizens* as well as Arabs in the occupied zones. That said, both Beinart and Gorenberg believe the greatest threat to Israel comes from the radical religious right and its settlement movement, and both recommend addressing the Arab grievances from 1967 by creating a Palestinian state while eliding the 1948 grievances, including, most crucially, the right of return for Palestinian refugees. One may argue about whether this is a good trade from the Palestinian point of view (for an example of an Israeli Jewish intellectual advocating a "consociational democratic," or binational, solution, see Yehouda Shenhar's "Beyond the Two State Solution: a Jewish Political Essay.")

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By CustomerGreat read from a very smart writer.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent review of the critical issues concerning the Jewish community ...
By emanuel shahafExcellent review of the critical issues concerning the Jewish community in the US and Israel. A good read, easy to understand and very worrying.

"A deeply important book for anyone who cares about Israel." President Bill Clinton "A probing, courageous, and timely book... Beinart offers a forceful exposition of American apprehensions about Israel's path.... Marks a significant evolution in the debate over Israel." Jacob Heilbrunn, *The Atlantic* In Israel, the deepening occupation of the West Bank is putting Israeli democracy at risk. And in the United States, the refusal of major Jewish organizations to defend democracy in the Jewish state is alienating many young liberal Jews from Zionism itself. In *The Crisis of Zionism*, Peter Beinart lays out in chilling detail the looming danger to Israeli democracy and the American Jewish establishment's refusal to confront it. And he renders a fascinating, groundbreaking portrait of the two leaders at the center of the crisis: Barack Obama and Benjamin Netanyahu. Beinart offers provocative proposals for how the relationship between American Jews and Israel must change, and an eloquent and moving appeal for American Jews to defend the dream of a democratic Jewish state before it is too late.

A brave book. Paul Krugman, *The New York Times* Passionately argued. David Remnick, *The New Yorker* An excellent, loving, and wise book about Israel... Eminently reasonable. Joe Klein, *Time* A sharp and ambitious polemic. Bernard Avishai, *The Nation* An important new book that rejects the manipulation of Jewish victimhood in the name of Israel's domination of the Palestinians.... Important and timely for the future of Israel. Roger Cohen, *The New York Times* Mr. Beinart has a book.... called *The Crisis of Zionism*. Chapter five, on 'The Jewish President,' fully justifies the cover price. Bret Stephens, *The Wall Street Journal* A terrifyingly frank account of our current state of affairs. Andrew Sullivan Mr. Beinart thinks America's Jews must redeem both themselves and Israel by rededicating themselves to Israel's ethical character.... The sentiment is noble, and the message deserves to be heard. *The Economist* An impressive achievement. Alan Wolfe, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* [A] probing, courageous and timely book... [It] marks a significant evolution in the debate over Israel. *The National Interest* A passionately argued work that will evoke intense debate. *Booklist* An elegant, deeply honest look at the failure of Jewish liberalism in forging Israel as a democratic state Straight talk by a clear-thinking intellectual with his heart in the right place. Kirkus

sPeter Beinart has written a deeply important book for anyone who cares about Israel, its security, its democracy, and its prospects for a just and lasting peace. Beinart explains the roots of the current political and religious debates within Israel, raises the tough questions that can't be avoided, and offers a new way forward to achieve Zionism's founding ideals, both in Israel and among the diaspora Jews in the United States and elsewhere. President Bill Clinton Peter Beinart has written the outstanding Zionist statement for the twenty-first century. *The Crisis of Zionism* is a courageously scathing critique of the sorry state of Zionism today and a clarion call to reaffirm the linkage of liberal values, Jewish commitment, and democratic practice that made the creation of the state of Israel possible and is the key to its moral and physical survival. Naomi Chazan, former deputy speaker of the Knesset and president of the New Israel Fund Progress in the United States has most often occurred when patriotic Americans have insisted on facing our failures head on and holding us to our founding ideals. In that spirit, Peter Beinart has written a brave and important book about Zionism today. Anyone who loves Israel and wishes to see it survive must read this book. Anne-Marie Slaughter, Bert G. Kerstetter '66 University Professor of Politics and International Affairs, and former dean, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University *The Crisis of Zionism* is a must read for everyone who cares about the future of Israel. Peter Beinart makes a strong case for a vision of Zionism that encompasses ending the occupation of the West Bank and deepening Jewish education in America. Even if you disagree with him, you should still read this book. Edgar M. Bronfman, president of The Samuel Bronfman Foundation If you are concerned about Israel's future, you should read this book. It will inform, provoke, and challenge you, as the author, with clarity and grace, lays out the looming dangers to Israeli democracy and appeals for a Jewish

state that is both democratic and just to all, including its Arab minority. Lee H. Hamilton, former Congressman and Vice-Chair of the 9/11 Commission

About the Author Peter Beinart is the author of *The Icarus Syndrome* and *The Good Fight*. A former editor of *The New Republic*, he is a senior political writer for *The Daily Beast* and the editor-in-chief of *Open Zion*, a blog about Israel and the Jewish future at thedailybeast.com. He is an associate professor of journalism and political science at the City University of New York and a senior fellow at The New America Foundation. He lives with his family in New York City.

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1 The Crisis in Israel

As a Zionist, I believe that after two millennia of homelessness, the Jewish people deserve a state dedicated to their protection in their historic land, something enjoyed by many peoples who have suffered far less. As a partisan of liberal democracy, I believe that to honor that history of suffering, a Jewish state must offer equal citizenship to all its inhabitants. In the spirit of Hillel, it must not do to others what Jews found hateful when done to them. Are these principles in tension? Absolutely. There will always be tension between Israel's responsibility to the Jewish people and its responsibility to all its people, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. But as the scholars Alexander Yakobson and Amnon Rubinstein have noted, Tension between values, in and of itself, is no indication that one of the competing values is illegitimate. If there is tension between Zionism and liberal democracy, there is also tension between economic development and environmental protection, or government spending and fiscal discipline, or civil liberties and national defense, or many other goals that governments rightly pursue. At the heart of the Zionist project is the struggle to reconcile these two valid but conflicting ideals. If Israel fails in that struggle, it will either cease being a Jewish state or cease being a democratic one. Today, it is failing, and American Jews are helping it fail.

Theodor Herzl would be distraught, but not surprised. The man who founded the Zionist movement did not merely want a Jewish state. He wanted a Jewish state that cherished liberal ideals. And he knew that to create such a state, Jews would have to wage a battle for its soul. In 1902, he wrote a novel called *Altneuland* (Old New Land) about a future Jewish country. Herzl's Jewish country is an impressive place. It guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of religion; rabbis enjoy no privileged voice in the state. The books hero, a presidential candidate named David Littwak, speaks Arabic, and one of his closest allies is an Arab engineer from Haifa. In their political party, Littwak tells a visitor, We do not ask to what race or religion a man belongs. If he is a man that is enough for us. But, Littwak admits, there are other views among us. Their foremost proponent is a Rabbi Geyer, who seeks to strip non-Jews of the vote. Herzl modeled Geyer on an anti-Semitic demagogue in his native Austria, thus raising the specter that once Jews enjoyed power they might persecute others in the same way gentiles had persecuted them. The novel ends with the campaign between Littwak's party and Geyer's. You must hold fast to the things that have made us great: To liberality, tolerance and love of mankind, one of Littwak's supporters tells a crowd. Only then is Zion truly Zion! In his final words, the outgoing president declares, Let the stranger be at home among us. After a fierce contest, Littwak's party wins, Geyer leaves the country, and in the novel's epilogue, Herzl implores readers to make his Zionist dream come true.

As a vision of the Zionist future, *Altneuland* has its problems. While Herzl believed deeply in equality for individual Arabs, he could not imagine an Arab national movement demanding a state in Palestine of its own. (His rival, the cultural Zionist Ahad Haam, knew better, insisting that This land is also their national home and they have the right to develop their national potential to the best of their ability.) Still, for all its flaws, *Altneuland* shows that while Zionism was a nationalist movement, it was also, from the beginning, a liberal one. (Even those early Zionists who identified themselves as socialists mostly shared a liberal conception of freedom of conscience and equality under the law.) Zionism's founding fathersmen like Herzl, Moses Hess, and Leon Pinsker were children of the Enlightenment. Earlier in their lives, each had hoped that as the nations of Europe dedicated themselves to the rights of man they would eventually extend those rights to Jews. When anti-Semitism refused to climb into history's grave, and instead reincarnated itself in racial, pseudoscientific form, the Zionist intellectuals lost faith in Europe and decided that only in their own state could Jews live safe, full lives. But they did not lose faith in Enlightenment ideals; they transplanted them. We don't want a Boer state, wrote Herzl in his diary, expressing revulsion at racist Afrikaner nationalism. But a Venice. But Herzl knew that a tolerant, cosmopolitan republic like Venice was not preordained, that Jews were entirely capable of birthing a Boer state. This conflict, between the desire to build a Jewish state premised on liberal democratic principles and the temptation to flout those principles in the name of Jewish security and power, runs throughout the Zionist enterprise. It is the battle every Zionist generation wages against itself. In May 1948, in *The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel*, the state's founders promised complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex. Yet in the war that preceded and followed those majestic words, Zionist forces committed abuses so terrible that David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, declared himself shocked by the deeds that have reached my ears. In the town of Jish, in the Galilee, Israeli soldiers pillaged Arab houses, and when the residents protested, took them to a remote location and shot them dead. During the war, roughly 700,000 Arabs left Palestine, and irrespective of whether most left their homes voluntarily or were forced out, Israel refused to let them return. In the struggle to build a Jewish state in the face of implacable foes, the liberal ideals outlined by Israel's founders were brutally flouted. But the fact that those liberal ideals existed at all created space for democratic struggle. When the war of independence ended, Israel gave citizenship to the Arabs still living within its territory, which was more than the refugees gained in most of the Arab countries to which they fled. The

rights of Israeli Arabs were curtailed, to be sure: in Israel's first decades, most lived under martial law. But Arab and Jewish Israelis joined together to protest this blatant discrimination, and in 1966 martial law was lifted. Massive inequities remained, but it was possible to believe that, slowly and fitfully, the gap between Zionism and liberalism was narrowing, that Israel was moving in the direction of Herzl's dream. Then, in 1967, the Six-Day War turned history's trajectory upside down. With its Arab neighbors poised to attack, Israel struck first, fought brilliantly, conquered the West Bank of the Jordan River, among other territories, and began to settle the land (a process made easier by the Arab world's apparent refusal to offer peace, even if Israel gave the new territories back). For a country built by pioneers, this was natural. Settling land especially rich with biblical meaning as the West Bank was in the Zionist DNA. The problem was that this time, liberal ideals did not tether the Zionist project. A year after it eliminated its most flagrant discrimination against its own Arab citizens, Israel made itself master of millions of Palestinian Arabs who enjoyed no citizenship at all. Suddenly, Rabbi Geyer had a kingdom of his own.***It is as if Altneuland's election had ended with each party governing part of the land. In David Littwaks Israel, the Israel born in 1948, liberal Zionism, to some extent, exists. Israel's Arab citizens enjoy individual rights like freedom of speech, assembly, and worship. They sit in Israel's parliament, the Knesset, and on its Supreme Court. Arab Israelis also enjoy the kind of group rights for which many ethnic and religious minorities yearn. They maintain their own religious courts and their own, state-funded, Arabic-language schools and media. Indeed, Arabic is one of Israel's official languages. Arab citizens have also made dramatic educational and economic gains under Israeli rule. The political scientists Ilan Peleg and Dov Waxman note that in 1948 the illiteracy rate among Israeli Arabs was 80 percent. By 1988, it was 15 percent. In a nation that has lived since its creation with the ever-present threat of war a strain that would have turned countries less nourished by liberal ideals into police states these are impressive accomplishments. The very anti-Zionist critics who attack Israel most ferociously often rely on the work of Israeli historians, Israeli journalists, Israeli human rights activists, and Israeli lawyers. Yet they rarely acknowledge that the ability of Israelis, including Arab Israelis, to damn their government in the harshest of terms and rarely see the inside of a prison cell says something admirable about the Zionist project. It is far from clear that, under similar circumstances, any of the democracies that criticize Israel's human rights record would have done better. Arab Israelis, after all, share an ethnicity with the states and organizations against which Israel has repeatedly gone to war. And so though not most Arab Israelis sympathize with those adversaries. Certainly, no American familiar with the way the United States government treated German Americans during World War I, Japanese Americans during World War II, or even Muslim Americans during the war on terror during wars that, unlike Israel's, mostly took place thousands of miles from America's shores has any cause for sanctimony. Still, as important as it is to honor Israel's accomplishments, it is even ...