

Boyarin Inspired Tools for Building the Roadmap to Peace

Jonathan Boyarin's experiences as an anthropologist yield personal ideas and suggestions on the functions and composition of communities. These characterizations, Boyarin suggests, are useful in mediation between communities. Thus, applying his personal views to current world issues may prove to be beneficial. For instance, inclusion of Boyarin's ideology in peace efforts for the Middle East, namely the Roadmap to Peace, will aid in communication, mediation, and overall appeasement of both the Israeli and Palestinian parties. Since Boyarin's essay, "Waiting for a Jew," focuses on the mediation of communities based on his life experiences as a Jew, utilizing his theories may further the success of the Roadmap to Peace. The dispute over which the Israelis and Palestinians have conflicts (the right of both the Israelis and Palestinians to a state of their own; including the area of Jerusalem) greatly mirrors the type of situation that is discussed by Boyarin during his time in France because of the ethnic tensions and underlying disdain for a party. Because there are great tensions between both the Israelis and the Palestinians, and being that Boyarin is well versed in mediation between communities, applying Boyarin's mentality as tools will aid in easing tensions. Boyarin's experience in France, as well as others, has provided the anthropologist with knowledge necessary to mediate between strained communities.

Peace in the Middle East has long been desired, and long fought over as well. The feuding Israelis and Palestinians have each laid claim to what is considered the most religiously significant city in the world. However, over four thousand years neither group has been able to settle on any agreement to commonly share nor surrender land. Yet, Boyarin describes an experience in Paris when he was able to find a commonality with another Yiddish speaking man in Paris, a city affected greatly by Nazi occupation during World War II. Because of this Boyarin states, "Speaking Yiddish to people with whom I have no other common language confirms its legitimacy and reinforces the sense of a distinctive Jewish identity that is shared between generations," (p. 158). If any such commonality

were to be found, for instance the common ground of Jerusalem as a foundation of religion, then a mutual identity can be created from this shared attribute. Once this common base is established for the foundation of an agreement, other similarities can be founded and maintained. The Roadmap does, however, align for permanent institution-building for Palestinians, yet only states, "International efforts to facilitate reform and stabilize Palestinian institutions and the Palestinian economy, in preparation for final status agreement [will be upon resolution]" (p. 5). This suggestion may strongly advocate integration of Palestinian lifestyle, yet it does not aid in creating a commonality.

Though discovering and maintaining commonalities is invaluable in creating a new state, the fact that neither Israelis nor Palestinians seem willing to sacrifice any facet of their identity defies any suggestion that may be put forth by the Quartet. In creating a communal state that is mutually shared by Israelis and Palestinians both factions have to have the inclination to sacrifice portions of their identity in order to create an ultimate identity in which both sides are considered and appeased. Boyarin illustrates this point by saying, "By contrast, it is impossible for any Jew raised in the middle of secular society...to join a traditionalist community without giving up major parts of his or her identity," (p. 157). In sacrificing parts of one's own identity (clearly an expendable aspect of their identity) both parties must compromise and agree upon what is to be eliminated and added to their identity and life. This process, in addition to equivocation, produces a communal sense of identification. The Roadmap does call for the "Arab state acceptance of full normal relations with Israeli and security for all the states of the region in the context of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace" (p. 5). Evidently, the Roadmap has considered equivocation and acceptance of each state by each faction. Further sacrifice and compromise will aid in maintaining and propagating this identity.

Finally, one must consider the fact that in creating and adjusting to a new identity that, in fact, they are acculturating the society that they are attempting to adopt, not

assimilating. In terms of Israelis and Palestinians, acculturation may require each party to accept, even adopt, Hebrew and Arabic in education, politics, and many other public concerns. Though this task of language acculturation may seem difficult and far fetched it is quite possible, as Canada has been able to educate youths, advertise, and publicize in both English and French. After learning that a Jewish Studies position was to be established at Columbia (Boyarin's alma mater) he realized that such a position could only be founded by a Jewish individual or organization and states, "[the positions] represent the growing acculturation of Jews into American academic life," (p. 151). Thus, it is evident that Boyarin believes that acculturation is possible in societies where language was once a barrier, but has become a means for each faction to interact with one another.

The Roadmap to Peace, though written with good intentions and in the best interest of both Israelis and Palestinians, lacks aspects of mutuality, equivocation, and acculturation. The plan immediately sets forth an assortment of rules to be complied with. Despite the fact that neither of the parties (Israelis and Palestinians) were part of the decision making process for the Roadmap, they were not even consulted as to who would be part of the Quartet that ultimately designed the rules they are to conform to. Thus, any decision made by the Quartet is subject to bias since the members were not agreed upon by either party. In addition to lack of Israeli and Palestinian input on the Quartet's Roadmap to Peace, both parties are subject to demanding time restrictions that seem difficult to meet. If true acculturation is to occur, it will develop and occur at a pace and evolution that is determined by the peoples of both parties, as a whole. This is why Boyarin states (in terms of his shul), "Likewise, if the shul survives, it will be because of its very marginality, because of the many individuals who have recognized the creative possibilities of a situation that demands that they create a new unity, while allowing each of them to retain their otherness" (p. 164).

With the inclusion of a set plan, a Roadmap to that plan, and effort by both parties to complete their stated role, the Roadmap to Peace seems to be a promising document in

creating a lasting peace in the Middle East. However, promise is not an indicator of success. The success of the Roadmap depends upon forces that are not controlled by a Quartet of document producers with high spirits. Rather, success will be measured by progress made willingly by both parties. This will require parallelism in actions as well as an equal amount of effort put forth by each group. Yet, as stated earlier, this success is not in the hands of those creating documents to present to peoples of completely different convictions. It now lies in the hands of those that are individuals among the parties that are willing and eager to start of trend of lasting peace and progress in a world of violence and turmoil.

