

A One-State Mideast Solution? It Won't Work.

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In the two decades since President Bill Clinton watched Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat sign the Oslo Accords on the White House lawn, widespread agreement has emerged about the shape of a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The broad consensus is that Israel should agree to a Palestinian state on lands Israel seized in the 1967 Six Day War and that Palestinians not only acknowledge Israel's legitimacy, but agree to a secure Israel with defensible borders—and terminate all other claims against the Jewish state.

In his final months in office, Clinton tacitly put the prestige of the United States behind such a blueprint. In a June 2002 speech, President George W. Bush did so formally, outlining his road map for peace, which called for a two-state solution. This followed on the heels of a March 2002 Arab League meeting in Beirut where Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdullah announced the Arab Peace Initiative, which also endorsed a two-state solution. And in 2009 at Bar-Ilan University, Benjamin Netanyahu became the first conservative prime minister of Israel to declare support for a two-state solution.

Sharp disagreement persists about the contours of a resolution, including differences over borders, security arrangements, Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, and the status of Jerusalem. That's why many are skeptical that Secretary of State John Kerry will succeed in his quest for a lasting agreement that brings the conflict to an end.

Nevertheless, according to a December 2013 [joint Israeli-Palestinian poll](#), 63 percent of Israelis and 53 percent of Palestinians support the idea of two separate nations, co-existing side by side.

But nothing is ever easy in the Middle East, not even reconciling the results of public opinion polling. A recent survey by Zogby Research Services revealed that only about one-third of Israelis and Palestinians currently see a two-nation solution as feasible.

A new book by Caroline Glick, a veteran Middle East observer, fleshes out the basis of such skepticism. Glick maintains that the establishment of a Palestinian state existing side by side with Israel is “among the most irrational, unsuccessful policies the United States has ever adopted.” In “The Israeli Solution: A One-State Plan for Peace in the Middle East,” the prolific and pungent Jerusalem Post columnist declares that the two state-solution has “no basis in reality” and “no chance of ever succeeding.”

An American-born Israeli who participated as an Israel Defense Forces officer in negotiations with the Palestinians in the mid-1990s and who was an embedded journalist with American troops during the 2003 Iraq invasion, Glick is a hard-headed and intrepid analyst of the region. For more than a decade she has exposed the sentimentality, sanctimoniousness, and wishful thinking exhibited by would-be peacemakers in Israel and the United States.

Her book puts forward a peace plan of her own. Glick's one-state solution assumes that Israel's disengagement from Gaza is permanent while envisaging "the application of Israeli law—and through it Israeli sovereignty—over the West Bank of the Jordan River." She argues that this is "a viable, realistic option" that is "fair, liberal, and democratic" and would "significantly strengthen Israel's strategic, diplomatic, democratic, demographic, and legal positions."

In my view, her proposal is not only unrealistic, but it would weaken Israel and pose a grave threat to Israel's liberal, democratic, and Jewish character. By inadvertently illuminating the disadvantages of a one-state solution, Glick confirms the wisdom—despite its defects—of a two-state solution.

Glick is right about many matters, particularly the flawed understanding that impairs analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by American and European diplomats—and not a few Israeli politicians, pundits, and professors.

For example:

--Much support for the two-state solution is fueled by the mistaken assumption that the absence of a Palestinian state is the root cause of the Arab world's and Iran's hostility toward Israel and of instability throughout the region.

--Many two-state solution proponents, including President Obama, wrongly regard Israeli settlements as the major obstacle to peace while downplaying Palestinian terrorism and the culture that fosters it and overlooking Palestinian Authority corruption and authoritarianism.

--Because the land promised to the Jewish people under the auspices of the League of Nations by the post-World War I British Mandate for Palestine included the West Bank, and because no nation, including Jordan (which controlled the territories between 1949 and 1967) has a superior legal claim, Israel has a respectable case under international law to exercise sovereignty over the West Bank or, to use the Biblical names Glick prefers, Judea and Samaria.

--Israel's 1967 seizure of the West Bank was followed by decades of Palestinian gains in economics, civil rights, literacy, higher education, and health while the Arab citizens of Israel, because they possess the same civil and political rights as Jewish Israelis, enjoy greater freedom than any other Arabs in the Middle East.

A one-state solution, however, does not follow from these hard truths.

Glick's argument contains three key elements: Israel has a right to exercise sovereignty of the West Bank; holding the West Bank is critical for Israel's national security; and the approximately 2.2 million West Bank Palestinians will benefit from Israeli rule. The argument doesn't withstand close scrutiny.

First, even if it were possible to establish Israel's claim to title over Judea and Samaria on the basis of international law and the Jewish people's historic attachment to the heartland of the first Jewish commonwealth thousands of years ago, it would not make it prudent to act on the claim.

Second, Glick contends Israel must hold on to the West Bank to maintain defensible borders. But she ignores the legion of high-ranking IDF officers and civilian experts who believe Israel's security needs could be met by the combination of a demilitarized Palestinian state, Israeli control of the Jordan River Valley, and high-tech surveillance installations strategically located on the high points of the mountain ridge that forms the spine of Judea and Samaria.

Third, she blithely suggests that West Bank Palestinians will prefer Israeli rule because it will provide civil rights and economic opportunities they lack under the PA. She backs up this dubious suggestion with polling data which, she contends, indicates that a majority of Palestinians oppose Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. But the 2012 poll she cites merely indicates that a majority opposes a particular version of the two-state solution, a part of which involves withdrawal. The survey provides no evidence that West Bank Palestinians would prefer living in the Jewish state—and there's ample evidence that this very concept is a non-starter among the Palestinian political leadership and among the Palestinian people.

Another poll she cites, conducted by Ariel University researchers in 2013, finds that “59 percent of Israeli Jews believe that Israel should apply its laws to all or parts Judea and Samaria.” But this hardly means that a majority of Israelis affirm “the sovereign rights of the Jewish people to Judea and Samaria.” The finding is quite compatible with a majority believing that Israeli law should be applied only to the major settlements blocs—between 3 and 10 percent of the West Bank—within the framework a two-state solution.

Glick's poll-driven arguments appear half-hearted. Her real view, stated robustly and repeatedly, seems to be that the Palestinians, and Arabs more generally, are resolutely opposed to living in peace and harmony with Israel.

She ridicules the idea that “Palestinians and the wider Islamic world” are “by their nature moderate and peaceful.” She mocks George W. Bush's conviction that elections would bring democracy to Arab countries. She scoffs at President Obama for what she characterizes as his “belief that empowering Islamists was the answer to the region's ills.”

Glick argues, moreover, that despite Israel's peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, "the people of Egypt and Jordan never made peace with Israel." She emphasizes that "hatred of Jews in these and in every other Arab state is endemic, reaching levels of between 98 and 100 percent." And she insists that "Palestinians from every part of the political spectrum have made clear through word and deed that they are uninterested in peacefully coexisting with the Jewish state under any conditions that would allow the Jewish state to survive."

If Glick is right that the root cause of the conflict is Palestinian rejection of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, then under her one-state solution West Bank Palestinians, who would constitute approximately 20 percent of Israel's population, might well refuse Israeli citizenship and the associated right to vote. This would transform the ugly slander that Israel is an apartheid state into an ugly reality.

Alternatively, Palestinians will demand citizenship, the better to make good on their oft-expressed ambition to create a single non-Jewish state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Caroline Glick vividly demonstrates that a two-state solution will not bring peace to the greater Middle East and will not dispose of Israel's need for constant vigilance. Yet the baleful scenarios that flow from her one-state solution support the broad consensus in favor of a two-state solution by vindicating the judgment that it is the least-bad option Israel confronts.

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