

The ‘two-state’ delusion « the Jerusalem Connection Blog

by George Will, JewishWorldReview.com

‘Twas a famous victory for diplomacy when, in 1991 in Madrid, Israelis and Palestinians, orchestrated by the United States, at last engaged in direct negotiations. Almost a generation later, U.S. policy has succeeded in prodding the Palestinians away from their recent insistence on “proximity talks” — in which they have talked to the Israelis through American intermediaries — and to direct negotiations. But negotiations about what?

Idle talk about a “binational state” has long since died. Even disregarding the recent fates of multinational states — e.g., the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia, the former Czechoslovakia — binationalism is impossible if Israel is to be a Jewish state for the Jewish people. No significant Israeli constituency disagrees with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu: “The Palestinian refugee problem will be resolved outside Israel’s borders.”

Rhetoric about a “two-state solution” is de rigueur. It also is delusional, given two recent, searing experiences.

The only place for a Palestinian state is the West Bank, which Israel has occupied — legally under international law — since repelling the 1967 aggression launched from there. The West Bank remains an unallocated portion of the Palestine Mandate, the disposition of which is to be settled by negotiations. Michael Oren, now Israel’s ambassador to the United States, said several years before becoming ambassador:

“There is no Israeli leadership that appears either willing or capable of removing 100,000 Israelis from their West Bank homes. . . . The evacuation of a mere 8,100 Israelis from Gaza in 2005 required 55,000 IDF [Israel Defense Forces] troops — the largest Israeli military operation since the 1973 Yom Kippur War — and was profoundly traumatic.”

Twenty-one Israeli settlements were dismantled; even the bodies of Israelis buried in Gaza were removed. After a deeply flawed 2006 election encouraged by the United States, there was in 2007 essentially a coup in Gaza by the terrorist organization Hamas. So now Israel has on its western border, 44 miles from Tel Aviv, an entity dedicated to Israel’s destruction, collaborative with Iran and possessing a huge arsenal of rockets.

Rocket attacks from Gaza increased dramatically after Israel withdrew. The number of U.N. resolutions deplored this? Zero.

The closest precedent for that bombardment was the Nazi rocket attacks on London, which were answered by the destruction of Hamburg, Dresden and other German cities. When Israel struck back at Hamas, the “international community” was theatrically appalled.

A senior cabinet member — Moshe Yaalon, strategic affairs minister and possible future prime minister — says “our withdrawals strengthened jihadist Islam,” adding, “We have the second Islamic republic in the Middle East — the first in Iran, the second in Gaza: Hamastan.”

Israel’s withdrawals include the one that strengthened the Iranian client on Israel’s northern border, in southern Lebanon. Since the 2006 war provoked by Hezbollah’s incessant rocketing of northern Israel, Hezbollah has rearmed and possesses as many as 60,000 rockets. Today, Netanyahu says, Israel’s problem is less the Israel-Lebanon border than it is the Lebanon-Syria border: Hezbollah has received from Syria — which gets them from Iran — Scud missiles capable of striking Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. A leader of Hezbollah says, “If all the Jews gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide.”

Because upward of a million immigrants have come from the former Soviet Union, today one-sixth of Israelis speak Russian. Israel has Russian-language newspapers and television. Russian Israelis are largely responsible for Avigdor Lieberman being foreign minister. Yoram Peri, professor of Israel studies at the University of Maryland, says these immigrants “don’t understand how a state that can be crossed in half an hour by car would be willing to even talk about relinquishing territories to its seemingly perpetual enemies.” These immigrants know that Russia’s strategic depth — space — defeated Napoleon and Hitler.

Netanyahu, who is not the most conservative member of the coalition government he heads, endorses a two-state solution but says that any West Bank Palestinian state must be demilitarized and prevented from making agreements with the likes of Hezbollah and Iran. To prevent the importation of missiles and other arms, Israel would need, Netanyahu says, a military presence on the West Bank’s eastern border with Jordan. Otherwise, there will be a third Islamic republic, and a second one contiguous to Israel.

So, again: Negotiations about what?

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