

When 1+1 Does Not Equal 2

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All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.

Arthur Schopenhauer

German philosopher (1788 - 1860)

When it comes to settling the conflict in the Middle East one is flooded with too many contradicting options. Typically these options have numbers attached to them even if they do not add up. Forty two years ago it was the number one (state) and a couple of weeks ago that number has risen to five (states). It might appear that dealing with single digits should not be very complicated math but it provides clear proof that one does not need to deal with double digit options to realize the complexity of nebulous "peace" politics.

In 1947 U.N. Resolution 181 (a.k.a. Partition Plan for Palestine) formalized the national homeland for the Jewish people. It was accepted by the emerging state of Israel which was established six months later. Yet the same resolution that also called for a creation of an Arab state (the original two-state solution) was completely rejected by the Arabs who ganged up on Israel invading it in their first of several annihilation efforts. In August-September 1967 thirteen Arab states pledged at the summit in Khartoum, Sudan, to continue their "struggle" against Israel with their infamous three "no" resolutions: no peace with Israel, no negotiations with Israel, and no recognition of Israel.

From 1947 to the early 70s the score was 1:0. Namely one (new) Arab state and zero state for the Jews. First came the one-state "solution." Solution to what problem it may be asked? Not to the conflict between Israel and the surrounding Arab states. Rather, this solution was offered as a formula to do away with Israel. The "Secular Democratic State" was presented by the PLO's Ahmad Shukeiri at the UN in 1967 a month before the Six Days War. Under this plan all Jews who arrived in Palestine after 1917 (and their descendants) would be expelled and the remainder would be "allowed" in a "democratic" Arab state with an Arab majority. At best, that would have left the Jews as a 10% minority of the Arabs surrounding them in the new "secular democratic" state; a model which did not exist anywhere in the Arab Middle East and still does not. Ironically, the PLO charter considers the "liberation of Palestine" a religious duty and thus it is not clear how devoid the "secular state" would have been of an inherent religious fervor that is in its charter.

This (one-state) "secular democratic" solution became synonymous with the Binational State (another one-state) solution which was offered by a small left-of-center political party in Israel (Mapam) featuring two separate Jewish and Arab cantons. This solution is becoming popular

again among pro-Palestinian horn-blowers and as the darling of some career anti-Israel "peace advocates" such as Noam Chomsky.

Another proposal for a single state came from Libya where Gaddafi's son articulated the creation of a binational Jewish Arab state called the Federal Republic of the Holy Land known as Isratine (Israel and Palestine). In 2003 it became an official policy of the Libyan ruler and he re-articulated it in an op-ed in the New York Times (January 22). Not inoffensive, it actually called for the return of all (Arab) refugees and hence re-introduced the formula for the demise of Israel.

This is also one of the biggest drawbacks of the Saudi "peace" plan (known as the Arab Peace Initiative). Its insistence on the "just settlement" of the Palestinian refugee problem virtually means that with the influx of (yet to be determined) millions of Arabs under the guise of refugees, Israel will be no more.

After numerous attempts to impose the one-state solution failed, the "two-state solution" came into being. It called for the state of Israel and the state of Palestine to live side by side in peace as good neighbors. Jimmy Carter wanted it as President but instead ushered the Israel-Egypt peace agreement. It was the basis for President Clinton's mediation efforts and President Bush's "Road Map" (and the 2007 Annapolis Conference). Bush openly called for the establishment of a Palestinian state (stipulating reform and democracy and abandonment of terror as conditions). The weakness of this proposal is the lack of clarity as to which Palestinians are representing the negotiating side. For years the PLO claimed that it was the "sole representative of the Palestinian people." Now it has been steamrolled by the violent Hamas takeover in Gaza. Saudi-initiated "Peace talks" between Hamas and Fatah have not resulted in any reconciliation as of yet.

The ever busy Tom Friedman had time recently to come up with not one, not two, but with a five-state solution which he called Abdullah II. He volunteers Israel to give up "every inch of the West Bank and East Jerusalem" to establish a Palestinian state. He adds Egypt, Jordan and Saudi-Arabia to form the part of the quintet that was there even before the Palestinians were added to the equation. Of course as a columnist he does not bear any responsibility for any possible outcome of his free yet erroneous advice.

Recently John Collins - a pro-Palestinian academic - declared that the two-state solution "is no longer a desirable option" and he advocates a one-state solution. Back to the future. Interestingly enough, this is not an original position as it is copied almost verbatim from an article published by a U.S. Palestinian academic, Saree Makdisi (May, 2008). These efforts are trying to emulate the South African model that did away with Apartheid by applying an irrelevant and utopian solution to what they correctly analyze as the irreversible facts on the ground of fairly mixed Israeli-Palestinian populations. They maintain that having a society with equal rights for all citizens is a "cleaner struggle." Oh, yes, they demand the return of "all" refugees and they conveniently ignore the aspirations and forces that operate on the ground to avert any such development.

Alarmed at the re-emergence of calls in favor of the one-state solution, Israel's President, Shimon Peres, resuscitated the now almost defunct notion of two independent states living in peace side by side. He assumes that it is good for both Israelis and Palestinians to have their own independent states. Alas, had the Palestinians wanted that they could have had it decades ago.

However, the common thread that runs through all these proposals is the attempt to identify Israel's weakest point so it could be dismantled under the guise of an appealing plan. Whether a country with an Arab majority or one with "equality for all" (also under an Arab majority) in a secular democratic - or other type of - state, guarantees that Israel will not be there for long. In fact, the underlying working assumption of all these initiatives is finding the golden path to assuring the destruction and elimination of Israel. After all, why should any Arabs have the "right to return" to another state (Israel) if they will have their own state (Palestine) established? And why assume that just because Arabs and Jews live under a single umbrella state that peace will suddenly erupt? Moreover, why assume that such peace will be emerging when two states will be living "side by side?" It is indeed highly instructive to realize it could have easily happened under the Gaza model yet it did not.

A simple - even simplistic - solution would appear to be the Bush proposal for the two-state format. The fact is that had the Arabs wanted to accept this solution they could have had their Palestinian state back in 1947/8 and certainly following the Carter-mediated Camp David negotiations (1979), the Clinton-mediated signing of the 1993 Rabin-Arafat White House pact and later the Barak-Arafat talks at Camp David (2000). Instead they have wrought years of abhorrent terrorist attacks. One could only be baffled as to why the endless efforts by well-intended mediators (and some who were less than well-intended) to reach a genuine peace accord - worth more than a piece of paper - have not yet come to fruition. The fact remains that the Palestinians are not interested in their own state as much as they are interested in the negation of and the destruction of Israel. Even the "moderate" Fatah is not hiding that desire although it disguises it well in its declarations aimed at the west. Suffice it to look at how Palestinians draw maps of Palestine to realize that it is REPLACING Israel rather than existing side by side with it.

There are some inherent problems with various versions of the single state, two-state, and five-state solutions. The key element is the "return" of refugees. If there is a Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel then "return" means two "Palestine" states: The one designated under the "road-map" and then Israel itself that will be the target of the "return." These efforts ignore the fact that Jordan is heavily Palestinian and thus forms a third Palestinian state. A further complication is the split between Hamas and Fatah. So in addition to Jordan and Israel, a key Palestinian component could create a Palestinian state in the West Bank (under Fatah) and a separate one in Gaza (under Hamas). So now we already have four Palestinian states (in addition to 22 Arab states).

Even if an agreement is reached that precludes the "return" of a single Arab to Israel, the country's Arab minority - now at 20% - is demanding not merely equal rights but rather special rights and entitlements as a national minority. It is demanding the change of the flag and of the national anthem as well as special preferential national rights. The establishment of one or two Palestinian states will only further radicalize Israeli Arabs (who already call themselves

"Palestinians") and will surely place Israel under a double noose: one that tightens from the outside and one that gets the willing help of a key element from the inside even if in the process it might strangulate itself as well. Thus a possible cessation would create a fifth Palestinian state.

The solution is not in mathematics of a single state or multiple states. The solution lies in reaching the end of conflict. Not in striving for peace. Not in the negation of Israel but in attempting to provide for the welfare and well-being of all people in the region. Peace will be a natural derivative of an end-of-conflict status once reached. At this point Hamas clearly declares its desire to destroy Israel. The Fatah and the Palestinian Authority would gladly see that happening but are somewhat less explicit yet eagerly hurry to offer support to their brethren in Gaza. So is a fairly large and vocal element of the Israeli Arabs. Iran looms at a not too far a distance with daily nuclear threats and openly expresses aspirations for obliterating Israel. Therefore, the end-of-conflict is imperative to ensure that no further demands or grievances will ever emerge with Israel having to foot the bill.

It is therefore imperative to change the equation from 1:0 to 0:1, namely, no Palestinian state. Recent articles by Daniel Pipes and Caroline Glick suggested such a constellation: Let Egypt take responsibility of Gaza, let Jordan take responsibility of what is now the autonomous West Bank. Then let the inhabitants focus on building infra-structure, education, health, agriculture, industry, and services in the hope that this may sway them away from the destructive culture of death. An interim period of a few decades is required to evidence that indeed there is such a transition away from the culture of death. Then perhaps the grand grandson of George Mitchell can come to mediate some sort of a real peace plan and have a chance to succeed. Certainly more so than the current mission.

What adds up is not the old narrative of the various one-state models. Nor do the two-state solution and certainly not the five-state solution offer any viable alternatives. Given that such plans change every 8-10 years from one to two and back to one again let's consider the 0:3 solution: no Palestinian state and let Egypt, Israel, and Jordan form the three states that will truly achieve the welfare for the Palestinians that they seem unable and unwilling to achieve for themselves. Jews were never more deserving to have a country of their own and the efforts to destroy it and to de-legitimize it have to be vigorously countered. Palestinians have yet to prove that they deserve to have a state. Their collateral should be good behavior. It is time to end the policy of Israel-bashing and negation and adopt a policy of construction and betterment for all.

Israel has been ridiculed (demonized) and violently attacked by its enemies. It is yet to reach the hardest stage: that of being accepted as self-evident.

The latest U.S. and international efforts at the "two-state solution" constitute a very bad omen by placing unrealistic and unjust demands on Israel instead of focusing on the real culprits of Iran and its proxies.

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