

Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank")

Can Israel survive without it?

Many people believe that the "conflict" between Israel and the Palestinians could be resolved if Israel were to consent to the creation of Palestinian state in Gaza and in all or most of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"). Even our president has advocated this outcome, contingent on the "good behavior" of the Palestinians. But would the creation of such a state be a solution to the conflict or, just as the Oslo Accord, another illusion that would exacerbate the conflict, rather than terminate it?

What are the facts?

The Root of the conflict. The conflict between Israel and the Arabs is not about borders and not about the Palestinians. The conflict is not about the size of Israel. It is about Israel's very existence. Israel, of whatever size and within whatever boundaries, is unacceptable to the Arabs. In surrendering strategic territory, Israel is gambling with its very life. The PLO still adheres to its infamous "phased plan." It calls for first creating a Palestinian state on any territory vacated by Israel and then using that state to foment a final allied Arab assault against the truncated Jewish state.

The Importance of territory. Many believe that in this age of missiles, territory is of little importance and that Israel should therefore not hesitate to relinquish "land for peace." But that is not the case. The Arab states have acquired over \$50 billion of the most advanced armaments since the end of the Gulf War. And those are not just "conventional" weapons—enormous quantities of tanks, aircraft of all kinds, and much more. The Arab state possess large arsenals of chemical and biological weapons, and all of them work feverishly on the development of their nuclear potential. All of those weapons have only one single purpose: the destruction of the state of Israel. And that goal is not being cancelled for any agreements that Israel may make with the Palestinians.

For both "conventional" war and for war of mass destruction, territory and topography are critical for self-defense and deterrence. The mountainous territory of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") is an indispensable line of defense, especially for a country as small as Israel. It totally controls access to Israel's heartland from the east. Israel needs this high ground for defense,

to be able to peer deeply into the enemy's territory and to get early warning of any attack. The high ground allows Israel to detect missiles while they are still in the launch stage and to destroy them, with the Arrow or other sophisticated anti-missile systems. Unlike the U.S., Israel cannot maintain a fleet of nuclear submarines for "second strike" deterrence. But it can maintain dozens of mobile missile launchers safe in underground tunnels hewn into the rock of the Judean mountains.

Would the "West Bank" be demilitarized? Even those who want Israel to retreat to its pre-1967 borders are agreed that the evacuated areas must be demilitarized. But that would be useless. Because the Palestinians will have thousands of trained soldiers, camouflaged

as their police force. In case of war against Israel, these troops could be helicoptered in minutes to their positions, with armored forces reaching them within the same night. In any case, it is highly doubtful that the

surrounding hostile Arab nations would allow such a military vacuum to exist. And finally, there is the matter of terrorism. There are over fifteen Palestinian terror organizations that neither Yassir Arafat nor any other Palestinian authority can control. There would be a constant rain of Katyusha rockets launched into the Tel Aviv area and into the entire coastal plain, which is only nine miles wide at its waist. It contains 80% of Israel's population and of its industrial and military potential. Ben Gurion airport, every incoming and outgoing flight, would be subject to mortar fire or shoulder-held Stinger attack. Does anybody doubt that the Arabs would not exploit that irresistible opportunity?

"Without Judea/Samaria (the 'West Bank') Israel would be totally indefensible; therefore, neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States would be served by Israel's relinquishing control of the 'West Bank'."

Without the "West Bank" Israel would be totally indefensible. That is the professional opinion of over 100 U.S. generals and admirals. Israel's strong defensive posture makes it most inadvisable for Israel's enemies to attack her. But once this defensive strength is removed, a coordinated war against Israel can only be a matter of time. The example and fate of Czechoslovakia, which preparatory to the Second World War was dismantled and shorn of its defensive capacity, insistently comes to mind. What does all this mean to the United States? In a part of the world in which our country has the most far-reaching geopolitical stakes, Israel is the only democracy, the only country that is unquestioningly aligned with us. It is the guarantor of American interests in the area. With Israel in a position of weakness, the role of the United States in the area would collapse and radical states such as Syria, Iraq and Iran would dominate. That is why, despite the heady prospect of "peace in our time," neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States would be served by Israel's relinquishing control over the "West Bank."

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