

January 22, 2007      Former President Carter's new book about the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine has raised the ire of Americans on two sides of the debate. I say "two sides" rather than "both sides," because there is another perspective that is never discussed in American politics. That perspective is the perspective of our founding fathers, namely that America should not intervene in the internal affairs of other nations. Everyone assumes America must play the leading role in crafting some settlement or compromise between the Israelis and the Palestinians. But Jefferson, Madison, and Washington explicitly warned against involving ourselves in foreign conflicts. The conflict in Gaza and the West Bank is almost like a schoolyard fight: when America and the world stand watching, neither side will give an inch for fear of appearing weak. But deep down, the people who actually have to live there desperately want an end to the violence. They don't need solutions imposed by outsiders. It's easy to sit here safe in America and talk tough, but we're not the ones suffering. Practically speaking, our meddling in the Middle East has only intensified strife and conflict. American tax dollars have militarized the entire region. We give Israel about \$3 billion each year, but we also give Egypt \$2 billion. Most other Middle East countries get money too, some of which ends up in the hands of Palestinian terrorists. Both sides have far more military weapons as a result. Talk about adding fuel to the fire! Our foolish and unconstitutional foreign aid has produced more violence, not less. Congress and each successive administration pledge their political, financial, and military support for Israel. Yet while we call ourselves a strong ally of the Israeli people, we send billions in foreign aid every year to some Muslim states that many Israelis regard as enemies. From the Israeli point of view, many of the same Islamic nations we fund with our tax dollars want to destroy the Jewish state. Many average Israelis and American Jews see America as hypocritically hedging its bets. This illustrates perfectly the inherent problem with foreign aid: once we give money to one country, we have to give it to all the rest or risk making enemies. This is especially true in the Middle East and other strife-torn regions, where our financial support for one side is seen as an act of aggression by the other. Just as our money never makes Israel secure, it doesn't buy us any true friends elsewhere in the region. On the contrary, millions of Muslims hate the United States. It is time to challenge the notion that it is our job to broker peace in the Middle East and every other troubled region across the globe. America can and should use every diplomatic means at our disposal to end the violence in the West Bank, but we should draw the line at any further entanglement. Third-party outsiders cannot impose political solutions in Palestine or anywhere else. Peace can be achieved only when self-determination operates freely in all nations. "Peace plans" imposed by outsiders or the UN cause resentment and seldom produce lasting peace. The simple truth is that we cannot resolve every human conflict across the globe, and there will always be violence somewhere on earth. The fatal conceit lies in believing America can impose geopolitical solutions wherever it chooses.