One-state ‘solution’ will not bring peace

Is it time to think “outside the box” on the Arab-Israel conflict? In a recent op-ed in the New York Times, Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi wrote in favor of a single state that would include Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. The same suggestion was recently made in the Economist, the Toronto Star and National Public Radio’s “On Point.”

The idea may sound sensible, but it is not. Arab citizens comprise almost 20 percent of the population of Israel and go about their lives largely without fear. The opposite is not true. On Oct. 12, 2000, two Israelis in civilian clothes entered Ramallah by mistake and were beaten to death by an angry mob. As a result, the Israeli government forbids Jews from entering Palestinian areas. From time to time, news stories still appear about Jews who stray into the West Bank and meet a similar fate.

Integration is not always the right solution. The Hutu genocide of the Tutsis could have been avoided if the two ethnic groups had lived in two separate states. Even during the Oslo peace process, schools in the Palestinian West Bank continued to inculcate their students with anti-Semitic curriculum. Until these hardened attitudes change, separation will be crucial for Israelis’ security.

DAVID M. FRANKEL is a professor of economics at Iowa State University. He taught economics in Israel from 1994 to 2002. Contact: dfrankel@iastate.edu

Israel withdrew from Gaza in August 2005, hoping that the rocket attacks on nearby Israeli towns would stop. The opposite occurred. Many of the rockets that have been used in recent weeks are of Iranian origin and can reach deep into the Israeli heartland. The goal of the rockets is simple: to terrorize the Jews and drive them out. Indeed, Hamas continued to target Israeli cities during the recent war, ignoring the large Israeli army massed on the Gaza border.

Some claim that the war was disproportionate. Israel should limit itself to tit-for-tat retaliation. However, tit-for-tat does not deter fanatical movements who are “maxing out” by attacking at every possible opportunity. Israel’s limited strikes over the past eight years did not stop 10,000 missiles from landing on Israeli cities. Terrorists cannot be deterred. They must be incapacitated.

In fact, the problem with the recent war is that it did not go far enough. By attacking but not toppling Hamas, Israel has allowed the movement to claim victory, no matter how ridiculous this may seem to us. This has only increased the movement’s popular support. The heads of the Hydra that were lopped off will merely grow back.

Until the 1990s, Israel’s main enemies were secular Palestinian groups such as Yasser Arafat’s Fatah. In the 1990s, radical Islamic groups began to gain power. One reason is growing Iranian influence in the region. The moderate Arab states increasingly accept Israel’s existence and want to make peace. Iran views this as a threat to its power. To bolster its image, it has been arming Hezbollah and Hamas with sophisticated long-range missiles that can reach the main Israeli population centers. Reports now indicate that Iran already has the uranium for at least one nuclear weapon.

In light of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s public threat to “wipe Israel off the map,” many Israelis are rightly scared. Viewed in this greater context, Israel’s struggle against Hamas is a fight for survival that the West must wholeheartedly support.