

Palestinian Tragedy
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The Palestinians appear to be dogged by conflict and failure. They hover among a dwindling extreme form of Islam, modernization of culture, and violent authoritarian governance. As human beings, they are no different than all the others who are modernizing---as soon as they leave the Middle East. Muslims, including Palestinians, successfully integrate into American society, a bit less so in European countries.

Americans do not require immigrants to accept their own majority religion (increasingly secular), but they do require education, respect for the law, and diligent work. This respect for the law requires immigrants to abandon some traditions, such as sequestering and abuse of their females. A father (a Texas taxi driver) who killed his daughters for abandoning head scarves and wanting to go to college now serves a life term in prison.

But back to the Middle East, with a history full of myth and fantasy. "Palestine" is a block of land that has experienced changes of population, invasions and slaughters, going back to 1,000 BC. It is currently a block divided between two groups of immigrants, both of which arrived after the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, the 1920s.

The myth and fantasy is all Palestinian, claiming a timeless history of living in that land. They are immigrants exactly like the Jews, both of whom had long existing small populations that were swollen by immigrant hordes. Most "Palestinians" today can trace their ancestry back only a few generations.

The Hebrew tribes, according to the Bible, were migrants who invaded and took this fertile sliver of land from another ancient people, the Philistines. They ruled over it until it was conquered by Rome, and the majority were expelled after an uprising, not to return until the 1920s. Their return was swollen by the horrors of World War II, when Nazi Germany determined to exterminate Europe's Jewish population, most of which had lived there since the 10th century. They returned to what had once been a homeland.

The ancient Arab tribes shared a common language but were divided from the beginning into Bedouin (migratory) and urban (merchant city people). Until the 7th Century AD, they were polytheists, then converted by force into a new religion, designed for Arabs: Islam. From that point on, they spread and conquered a large part of the world, initially forcing conversion to Islam, not always successfully (Persia and Turkey), which developed rival forms of Islam.

Today's Arab world (better to call it Muslim World, because they are not all Arabs) is suffering from its ancient problem: Bedouin and rural tribal versus urban, population exploded cities. These countries all suffer from the same ill: dictatorships and corruption. None have succeeded yet with a completely modern society.

As the rest of the world, even China, is benefitting from the modernization of women, resulting in population decline, but the Muslim World is plagued with enormous birthrates and a glut of young males, a recipe for violence. Those with modern values, education of women and decline of birthrate, are among the ruling classes. They are resented and are often use their advantages for corruption and autocracy.

If the UN's solution of a Palestine divided between Jews and Arabs had been accepted by both, we would not be seeing the horrors unfolding today. The Israelis and Palestinians had many opportunities to end the constant terror and warfare, but every time Palestinian leaders came close to agreement, they were threatened by extreme factions with death. The extremists had one value system only: the extermination of Israel and all Jews. They had no positive values of creating a modern, democratic state, something that the majority of Arabs would have wanted.

The more violent the extremists were, the more bitter were the Israeli responses. Liberal Jews want a civilized society that treats all citizens equally. Illiberal and ultra-religious Jews want all Arabs gone. They want expulsion, not extermination, unlike their counterparts.

The consequences are what we see today, a conflict that horrifies all civilized people. The solution requires hope for the Palestinians and compassion by the

Israelis. Realism instead of historic fantasies.

686 words

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