

## **Islam: The Root Cause of the Palestinian Problem**

Author : Jacob Thomas on Nov 30, 2007 - 12:35 AM

By Jacob Thomas

As I write these words, the Annapolis Peace Conference has begun its sessions with opening speeches from President Bush, Prime Minister Olmert, and President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas. I don't intend to comment on the conference, as many experts on the subject have already made their points and predictions. I would like to offer a historical perspective on this subject, and deal with what I believe to be the **root cause of the Palestinian Problem**.

Actually, this problem is rather old, but it became acute and caught the attention of the world on the very day Israel was born on 15 May, 1948. Several Western statesmen have worked hard to bring about a solution for this problem over the last seventy years, but to date, they have been unsuccessful.

When the Ottoman Empire lost its hold on the Middle East in the aftermath of WWI, two European powers tried to fill the void. Britain and France got a mandate from the League of Nations to "lead" the nations of the area to political maturity and independence. France got the mandate over Syria and Lebanon; while Britain was burdened with a mandate over Palestine and Transjordan. Here I must add that the Arab population of Palestine had hoped for complete independence within a larger Arab state, comprised of what is sometimes known as the Greater Syria. On the other hand, the Jewish population in Palestine looked forward to the establishment of a "**Jewish Home**" in the Holy land. This hope was rekindled during WWI by the British Government's "**Balfour Declaration**" that had looked with favor upon the fulfillment of that dream.

The years between the two World Wars were tumultuous in Palestine. While Jewish immigration continued at a faster pace than before, the Arabs under the leadership of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, *Hajj Amin el-Huseini*, strongly resented the Jewish influx into Palestine, and rose up against the British authorities, in 1929, and in the mid 1930s. Just before WWII, the British Government issued a "**White Paper**" limiting the number of Jewish immigrants coming to Palestine, thus postponing a lasting resolution of the problem.

As soon as the war was over, the British Government having failed to convince the two antagonists to accept an interim resolution of the problem brought the matter over to the newly organized United Nations. Its General Assembly voted in 1946 for the partition of the land into an Arab Palestinian State and a Jewish State. The British, no longer able or willing to keep law and order in Palestine announced that their mandate over the country would end on 14 May, 1948. The last British troops sailed from the port of Haifa on that fateful day. At midnight, the leadership of the **Jewish Agency** announced the birth of the State of Israel, with David Ben-Gurion becoming its first prime minister.

On Saturday morning, 15 May, the armies of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Egypt entered Palestine in a move to stop Israel from taking those parts of the land that were allocated to it by the UN Partition Plan. The newly-born Israel rallied its forces and managed to stop these invading armies. The UN stepped in and brought about an Armistice Agreement between Israel and the Arab states. As a result of the fighting that went on and off during the summer of 1948 around 500,000 Palestinian Arabs left their homes and sought refuge east of the Jordan, in Syria, and in Lebanon. They and their numerous descendants still live in refugee camps in these countries, supported by the **United Nations Relief and Work Agency**, known by its acronym, UNRWA!

It is needless to give detailed accounts of the major and minor wars that erupted almost every decade since 1948. I will refer to them briefly. In October, 1956, Israel responded to the provocation of the Egyptian Army and Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza strip, by invading the Sinai and going all the way to the Suez Canal. This action was coordinated with the British and French attack on the Canal that had been nationalized by President Nasser of Egypt.

In June, 1967, after almost two weeks of Nasser's fiery speeches against Israel, he requested the withdrawal of the UN peace-keeping force in the Sinai Peninsula. Israel then launched a surprise attack on Egyptian airfields on 5 June. During this war that lasted six days, Israel occupied the entire Sinai, the West Bank of Jordan, and the Golan Heights in Syria. It was a stunning victory for Israel, and the most traumatic event for the Arabs. They refer to it as *al-Nakba*, i.e. *the Disaster*.

Nasser died in September, 1970, and was succeeded by Anwar Sadat. On Saturday, 6 October, 1973, he launched a surprise attack against the Israel forces stationed on the east side of the Suez Canal. This war, known also as the Yom Kippur War (Day of Atonement) resulted in the withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai and a peace agreement was reached between the two countries. A few years later, on the very day Sadat was commemorating his 1973 victory over Israel, he was gunned down by radical Islamist members of the Egyptian army.

Lesser wars between Israel and the Arabs took place in the 1980s, 1990s, and the 2000s. Throughout all these years, several American administrations got involved in diplomatic efforts to bring about a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, beginning with Presidents Carter, Clinton, and now Bush. During these years, quite often a resolution seemed to be at hand, only to vanish when put to the test.

What causes the Palestinian problem to be so impossible to solve? Or, what is the root cause for the seemingly perpetual Israeli-Palestinian conflict? I believe that it is Islam. As it has evolved over the years, Islam developed an ideology that goes like this: **any land or country that becomes a part of Daru'l Islam must always remain Islamic**. In other words, Islamic imperialism has distinguished itself by being totally different from the European imperialisms. The latter were all "over-seas" and eventually came to an end. On the other hand, Islamic imperialism has spread in a contiguous manner, and did not

easily divest itself of its territories. The lands lost to Islam were those that resisted total assimilation to the Islamic faith such as took place in Spain (1492), in Central and Eastern Europe (1800s), and in the Indian subcontinent (1947.)

The central drive or impulse of the Islamic ideology is what I would like to call “*the Divine Right of Conquest.*” Muslims glory in the great *Futuh* (Conquests.) After all, they were done “*Fi Sabeel-Allah*” (in the Pathway of Allah.) Therefore they are blessed by Him; more than that, they have been foreordained by the divine will! Thus, Islam cannot and would not concede to a Jewish homeland within Palestine. This land so important to both Jews and Christians, had been “hallowed” by the Prophet when he had his special “visit” to the heavens via Jerusalem. *Ipsa facto, Jerusalem became the third holy city of Islam after Mecca and Medina.* In fact Islam’s hegemonic penchant is seen in its appropriation of all the great men and prophets of antiquity, beginning with *Adam*, and ending with *Jesus*. All of them have been declared as Muslims, even before the advent of Islam!

I don’t want to show any disrespect for Western political leaders. They need our prayers and cooperation in these difficult times. Unfortunately, they don’t seem to have comprehended the true nature of Islam when they launch their initiatives for solving problems between Islamic countries and their neighbors. Islam is far more than a religious faith; it is a complete worldview with global aspirations and pretensions. If the West during the last three or more centuries have succeeded in separating church and state, this has not happened in *Daru’l Islam*. **The opposition to the very existence of Israel is a religious matter for Muslims, and therefore cannot be negotiated.** This is why I cannot be hopeful about the outcome of the Peace Conference at Annapolis.

I would like to end my article with some quotations from Bernard Lewis’ article, “**On the Jewish Question,**” in the Wall Street Journal, of 26 November.

**“The first question (one might think it is obvious but apparently not) is, ‘What is the conflict about?’ There are basically two possibilities: that it is about the size of Israel, or about its existence.**

**“If the issue is about the size of Israel, then we have a straightforward border problem...**

**If, on the other hand, the issue is the existence of Israel, then clearly it is insoluble by negotiation. There is no compromise position between existing and not existing, and no conceivable government of Israel is going to negotiate on whether that country should or should not exist.**

**“PLO and other Palestinian spokesmen have, from time to time, given formal indications of recognition of Israel in their diplomatic discourse in foreign languages. But that’s not the message delivered at home in Arabic, in everything from primary school textbooks to political speeches and religious sermons. Here the terms used in Arabic denote, not the end of hostilities, but an armistice or truce,**

**until such time that the war against Israel can be resumed with better prospects for success. Without genuine acceptance of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish State, as the more than 20 members of the Arab League exist as Arab States, or the much larger number of members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference exist as Islamic states, peace cannot be negotiated.**

**“[To go] back to the Annapolis summit. If the issue is not the size of Israel, but its existence, negotiations are foredoomed. And in light of the past record, it is clear that is and will remain the issue, until the Arab leadership either achieves or renounces its purpose -- to destroy Israel. Both seem equally unlikely for the time being.”**

It will be very helpful to read the entire article. Its URL is: [Link](#)