

Where Arab Irrationalism Leads

By [Jacob Thomas](#)

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During the decade of the seventies, I read several Arabic books written by an Egyptian scholar dealing with the modernization and renewal of the Arab culture. The author had received part of his education in his homeland, and then gone to Britain to study philosophy. Returning home, his writings advocated the necessity of change in the Arab mind; however no changes should be at the expense of the basic truths of Islam.

One of the books he wrote had this intriguing title: ***“The Rational and the Irrational in our Cultural Heritage.”*** It made interesting reading in the cultural history of the Arabs since the rise of Islam. His thesis was that a ***careful analysis of that history would reveal two main and opposite strains: one rational, and another, irrational.*** For the contemporary Arab world, it is necessary to stress and emulate the rational aspect of the heritage. At the same time, the Arabs must resolutely discard the irrational element of their heritage. Unless they endeavor to make serious efforts in that direction, no renewal would take place in the Arab culture.

I thought of this summary of ***“The Rational and the Irrational in our Cultural Heritage”*** after reading an article in an online Arab newspaper dated Sunday, 27 Ramadan 1426, and 30 October, 2005 . It was entitled, ***“Iran ’s New Task.”*** The author was rather sarcastic as he referred to the words of the Iranian President, Mahmoud Najadi about the task that faces the Muslim world: ***the erasing of Israel from the world’s map.***

The article in the Arabic language daily reminded Najadi that for over fifty years neither the Arabs nor the Muslims have succeeded in ending the existence the Jewish state, even though thousands of Arabs had sacrificed their precious blood in that cause. In fact, the irresponsible words of the Iranian president would give opportunity to Israel and the United States to take action against Iran which would be to the detriment of the Iranian people’s welfare.

Thus far so good. Almost 90% of the short column intrigued me, as I imagined that those words were very helpful, and could lay to rest any Arab-Muslim dream of precipitating another Holocaust. But as the Arab proverb puts it, “my happiness did not reach my head.” In other words, I was very disappointed in the closing words of the article.

It sent me back to reread it carefully from the beginning. The result of my analysis was very disturbing. The author was objecting to the project of terminating the existence of Israel ***solely on pragmatic grounds.*** His sarcastic style was amusing, however not one objection based on principle was adduced as to the enormity and madness of Mahmoud Najadi’s project. In other words, the Iranian president was laughed at, not because it was horrifically immoral and barbaric to end the existence of Israel , but because it was not realizable!

The article ended with these very revealing words:

“ Israel is in fact a criminal and aggressive state, but at the same time, it is lucky. Her enemies offer her free services on a golden platter. The words of the Iranian president amounted to a present from heaven for the Israeli propaganda machine to continue in its campaign of misinformation and disinformation. Furthermore, the pronouncements of the Iranian president give the justification for America and Israel to take action against the Iranian nuclear reactor with the consent of the international community.”

What a disappointing end to the article! Having noticed this up-dated version of the searing hatred of Arabs for Israel , the words of the Egyptian scholar came back to me regarding the coexistence in the Arab-Muslim culture of both rational and irrational elements. This is a very scary fact to contemplate in the early years of the twenty-first century. Let me explain.

For almost seventy years, our world suffered from the attempt of dedicated Communists to create an earthly utopia when the ideal classless society had finally come into existence. Instead of that, millions died through enforced starvation of the peasants and the sending of other millions to the Gulags that dotted many parts of the Siberian landscape. Add to that, the Soviet Union obtained the know-how for developing nuclear weapons. That emboldened them to attack the West by their proxies in North Korea and North Vietnam . As a result, over 100,000 thousands Americans died in those wars. Terrible as that period of history was, there was no resort to a nuclear war due to what was known as the **“Balance of Terror.”** The Soviets were evil, but they were rational. Their ideology was based on wrong principles, and eventually it lead to the implosion of the USSR .

I recounted the above history to point out that in any confrontation with an Islamic country, we must take into account that irrational element that is part and parcel of their worldview. This is especially true for Iran . In the Shi’ite version of Islam that is practiced in that country martyrdom remains as a basic motif. So we may expect a raving mad Iranian leader to embark on projects and tasks that a rational human being would never contemplate. I have written in the past about that potentially dangerous supernatural element in Islam which promises fantastic rewards for those who die **“fi sabeel Allah,”** (in the path of Allah.) I would not put it past a nuclear Iran under the leadership of the terrorist Mahmoud Najadi to embark on unthinkable acts of terrorism. He can always secure the approval of Allah for his irrational actions.

Furthermore, I was equally if not more disturbed by the email responses to the article. Most of them turned out to be in favor of the “Iranian project.” One “irrational” Saudi commented: **“We should not be surprised at the words of the Iranian president. This has been the policy of Iran since the days of Ayatollah Khomeini. The real question is: When would we Arabs, develop the courage to speak out as Iran does?”** In other words, this Muslim who uses the Internet to send emails to an online daily still exhibits this inherited irrational and dangerous worldview. Out of utter hatred for Israel (and for Jews, and most likely for Christians, Hindus and Buddhists), he would like to join the

demonstrators in Tehran in the call for a new Holocaust. This is exactly where Arab-Muslim irrationalism is leading!