

Governance, Education and the Way to Peace in Gaza

Why the continuing problems in the Middle East? Is there a way to bring peace to the region and solve the long-standing disputes between the Israelis and the Palestinians? Is there a way to resolve the current conflicts between Israel and Hamas in Gaza?

Some institutions of higher learning specialize in different types of databanks depending on their academic strengths and research capacity, and one of these important “banks” is the Global Terrorism Database associated with the University of Maryland in the United States. Here we have one of the largest databases on terrorism and counterterrorism in the world—the who, what, when, where, why and how of terrorist acts and organizations—and the information in this database would not exist except for a reasonable consensus on how to define “terrorism,” which is difficult to do given that many countries define a “terrorist” relative to the political nature of the violent act and how it relates to national interests.

Revealing that terrorism often has a political context when it is associated with sectarian organizations and nation-states, which has implications for how we might define a terrorist (freedom fighter and/or terrorist), and by extension how countries might determine which laws and penalties should apply to suspected terrorist activities within different States. Requiring at least an acceptable consensus on how to define terrorism, especially within the international community and among the many international organizations that customarily deal with terrorism worldwide.

Now even though the definition of terrorism is open to some interpretation, with a closer look we can see that nearly all definitions meet the same basic criteria as to: “What is terrorism?” The FBI website, for example, has a common definition that anyone can

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review, and here we find that terrorism, whether domestic or international, is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property, with the understanding that these violent acts are directed to intimidate or coerce governments or civilian populations in a way that furthers the political aims of the terrorist group.

This definition then makes it possible for countries to develop “lists” of terrorist actors and organizations, which allows some countries to designate groups and lone actors as terrorists within another country. Making it possible for countries to bring international legal forces, and sometimes military forces, to bear on another country—complicating what we mean by international relations.

Now what is particular about such terrorist listings is that not every terrorist actor or group makes it onto every country’s list, as there are many lists in the world. For example, the Ku Klux Klan may be found on the Global Terrorism Database, but this organization is not listed on the US Secretary of State’s list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. The United Kingdom, France, Germany and Russia, and even Iran, all have their official terrorist lists, while some “terrorist” individuals and groups can be found on sanction lists and red notices—such as with the United Nations and Interpol.

Some might recall how this issue became a sticking point with Türkiye regarding Sweden’s membership in NATO. Which reminds us that the task of defining who and what a terrorist is—in a political context—is a complicated matter at best, and without some form of consensus on the definition it is difficult for nations to intervene in the affairs of other countries, even when a violent act is taken against their own citizens in another State.

Examples can be found throughout the [Near and Middle East](#)—in Israel, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, etc.—and this has relevance to our understanding of what is going on in Gaza today.

Notably, if one reviews the US Department of State website under the section of Foreign Terrorist Organizations one will find a listing of terrorist actors and groups, and on this list we discover the political/militant Islamist group referred to as Hamas, considered to be the party of “Change and Reform” (Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya, “Islamic Resistance Movement”).

Listed and designated as a terrorist organization since 1997.

Then about a decade later the political party of Hamas became the majority party in the legislative government of Gaza. This meant that Hamas came to governance as an already designated terrorist organization, leaving us to make a considered observation about the effects of terrorist ideology on the important regulatory roles of governance and education in Gaza.

So, as this is the case, let's think for a moment about the issues of terrorism and governance and remember that several political parties and terrorist groups in Gaza initially had socialist ideologies, and several of the parties running for seats in the 2006 parliamentary elections had party titles reflecting Marxist/Leninist underpinnings. With at least three of the political parties in that election having been associated with a terrorist organization and/or had been listed as such by the US Department of State.

Giving us reason to revisit what happened in the 2006 legislative elections, and how this event came to affect governance and education in Gaza.

Now in January of that year Hamas won a majority of seats in the parliament, and after forming a new government and taking political control over Gaza in 2007 we see there has not been another legitimate

parliamentary election since, and after factional fighting between government parties there was a split in the governance of the Palestinians.

Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza.

This naturally created a political atmosphere that changed the structure of governance and also the fragile educational institutions in Gaza, which fostered—over time—a way of thinking that affected the lives of millions of Palestinians, while allowing Hamas to effectively draw recruits from among the disenfranchised youth who were attracted to the ideology of Hamas.

Presenting Israel and other nations with a problem in respect to the current conflict between Israel and Hamas, as the nature of the problem reveals the nature of the solution in Gaza.

Which is a point to be emphasized, and so perhaps we can say it this way.

It is reasonably easier to define and separate the Palestinian citizen from the militant Hamas fighter, than it is to separate the values held by the Palestinian community from the ideology of political Hamas. Which is an expected outcome when political terrorist ideology becomes intertwined in the governance and educational institutions of a peoples or a nation-state—anywhere in the world—and a relevant example can be found in the [Hamas Charter \(August 1988\)](#), and in article 12 of this charter, we read that: “nothing is loftier or deeper in Nationalism than waging Jihad against the enemy and confronting him when he sets foot on the land of the Muslims.”

Obviously, with such a political ideology influencing governance and education in Gaza it is easy to see why an attack on Hamas fighters is perceived as an affront to the Palestinian “cause” and a challenge to the hope of a separate Palestinian State. Likewise, it is also easy to see how the settlements in the West Bank, and the devastating war in Gaza, have only been

perceived as supportive of this same ideology that guides Hamas. Noting also that war, and the political chaos it creates, is the fertile ground from which terrorism grows, and with the lack of proper governance and mature educational institutions, and the right set of values that can challenge this way of thinking, the Palestinians of Gaza can only look forward to a broken and hopeless state (State).

This is certainly not the road to peace in Gaza or in the Middle East.

It should not be too difficult then to understand the apparent consequences of such political and religious meddling in the long history of the Middle East?

However, even though the faults of the Gazan regime may be apparent, it is also valid to say that many Israelis—with their intact government and educational institutions—are just as deceived about the way to peace, and it is clear that no one has clean hands in the current regional conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Just as it is also clear that peace in the Near and Middle East cannot be brought about by brokering narrowly defined trade deals, or by economic coercion, or by empty and meaningless grandiose promises, or by the escalation of military arms, or by challenging the mandates set by the United Nations.

Is this not the received wisdom from many years of conflict in the region, preserved for us in the diplomatic record of the Middle East?

If so, we should not expect peace in Gaza or the Middle East as long as all nations do not know the way to peace and cannot define the values that lead to real success, which has unfortunately been complicated by the sometimes undermining influence of Christianity, Islam and Judaism on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has only added fuel to the fire in the region as these religions have frequently adopted nationalistic aspirations, falsely believing they are helping to fulfill prophecy and/or do the will of God.

Now it is reasonable to assume if religion explains the purpose for our existence, and believers claim their respective books reveal to us the nature and will of God, then we should expect that these religions should have long ago brought peace to the region and to the whole world. Instead, what we find in the record of history is that religion has usually taken sides in national conflicts, especially in the Middle East. With each religion assuming that God is on their side. With each contributing to the religious confusion in the region. And, we have become used to it being that way—because we were born into it—and because so many people have never really stopped to question whether or not it should honestly be that way (Mt. 24:5).

And even though this issue is not something new to the modern age, it has certainly gained larger ground in modern times.

We can take an example from the Christian movement where some people have the notion that they ought to adopt the national aspirations of Israel, claiming also that it is a Christian duty to pray for Israel's successes against their national enemies, essentially supporting and validating—in their own minds—the wars of Israel. Some would go so far as to say that Christians would be under a curse if they didn't support Israel in this way, even though the truth of Scripture makes it plain that Christians should not politicize their beliefs by adopting the nationalistic goals of Israel or any other country in the world.

Also, in the same line, we see many “Christians” today using terms such as “liberal” and “conservative” to express their religious position, assuming that these terms are synonymous with right and wrong, reflecting a Christianity molded by political culture and nationalism instead of by the law of God and the dictates of Jesus.

Consequently, this mixing of religion and politics has given us the erroneous notion of a “just war,” and the idea that people may personally determine a moral cause to a war to justify their actions, but in respect to the

many conflicts in Gaza and the Middle East we should understand there are no victories from God.

Has this not been the problem with humanity from the time of Adam that people should choose for themselves what is right and wrong, and to define their lives in a religio-political context of which the ideology of religiously enjoined terrorism is simply an extreme example?

Now one would think that if there was a solution to conflict, to poverty, to war, to ignorance, to world hunger, and so much more, then it would be religion that would have the solution to our problems. That it would be religion that would show us how we are to be educated so that we would know the way to have peace, which draws our attention particularly to the religion of Christianity, who of all groups should be able to teach and model the way to peace.

After all, doesn't Christianity teach that a conversion of mind is needed to change the nature of humankind, and to change the way people think, and to have the same mind that was in Jesus the Christ? If so, wouldn't Christians above all people understand that conversion is nearly synonymous with education, and by that fact should be able to teach the way to cooperation, good governance and how to establish educational institutions that teach and perpetuate the way to peace?

One would certainly think so.

However, what we have in the world today are "wars and rumors of wars," which is what happens when "nation shall rise against nation," all because humanity has turned their backs on the law of God, which is the body of law that leads to good governance and right education and to peace. For it is this law, for those who desire to live by the "rule of law" that can lead to peace, which has been typically summarized as the way of "give" instead of "get," and so if the world wants to see the problems in Gaza resolved, then people will have to educate themselves

differently in a way that leads to peace based on the Ten Commandments (Mt. 24:6).

Meaning that people will need to find a way to have right education at the forefront of any rebuilding and restructuring in Gaza.

Otherwise, we only have the alternative as we see in Gaza today.

Where the political ideology of Hamas and its militant activity did not allow for sufficient effort and proper resources to be invested into the infrastructure of Gaza and the primary institutions of change and reform—government and education—which would have given the Palestinians of Gaza an ability to conceive of themselves as a viable State.

Noting also that Hamas has primarily focused its political and militant agenda on trying to change Israel's status as a State in the Middle East because Hamas does not accept the two-state solution, as this would mean recognition of Israel as a State, to which [Iran takes a similar position](#) in their foreign policy as well.

Allowing us to say that with the current political situation in the Middle East, and by reason of the governments and educational institutions that are in place at this time, it would seem we have no hope for a two-State "solution" (or one-State solution, or an internationalization solution), and even though there is a two-State "imperative" we can really only expect a two-State "situation," which cannot possibly effect a change in the terrorist ideologies held by many terrorist groups, including Hamas, which would in no way lift the people of Gaza out of their burdensome problems.

Because without the proper educational institutions there is little means to combat the embedded terrorist ideologies and political turmoil in Gaza, and with the troubling problems brought on by the interventions of the international community, and the confusion brought by nationalistically motivated religions, we should only expect to see an increase in

poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and value deprivation for many Palestinians who see themselves as legitimate citizens of a mandated Palestinian State.

Creating a crushing situation that would not allow for reform and change, which would only perpetuate the tragic plight of many Arab and non-Arab Palestinians who have been deceived and disillusioned by how political terrorist ideology has affected the concept of governance, education and individual prosperity in Gaza.

So what can we conclude about Gaza and also the Middle East?

That people—and nations—don't really know the way to peace, and so the current ideas of how we define peace, and how to achieve peace, have only brought suffering and poverty—with no real and lasting solutions in sight. It is this lack of understanding of how to define peace, and how we are to learn what real peace is that has made the people of Gaza and the West Bank feel like they are living in some form of open-air prison, with little hope of a better life. (It is reasonably understood that Israel's short-sighted policies and de-legitimization of the Palestinian Authority, and Israel's failure to deal more directly with the growing settlements in the West Bank, have only aggravated the formation of a Palestinian State, which may in time only serve to create an open-air prison for the Israelis as international interests are drawn to the Middle East.)

Thus, we are brought to understand the significance of the “gospel” or good news that Jesus brought, which was a message about a coming kingdom of God. One that will take over the governance and education of the nations and bring about change and reform in a way that leads to peace. For as Isaiah wrote about the Christ: “the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this” (Isa. 9:7).

Pointing us then to an amazing fact about the gospel of Jesus.

That there is indeed a new world order in the future, and the geopolitics of that world will be shaped by one who can judge rightly and who also has the power to make things work out right for peoples and nations, and it is this inheritor of the promises of Abraham who will rule the world in righteousness to the benefit of everyone, and he will teach the way to peace.  (andrewburdettewrites.com)