

Waiting for Godot?

By siding with the current Israeli government in the name of the his war on terror President Bush is once again sending a signal to the Palestinian people that the United States government cannot and will not play the role of a fair and neutral arbiter. This new "symbolic war" being waged against the Palestinian people cannot achieve its stated objective; it can only achieve greater frustration, disappointment, and bitterness.

That I myself do not become the target of patriotic recrimination for what I am about to say.

For half a century the Palestinian people have been humiliated, displaced, and terrorized by Western democratic governments, so that the Jewish people could have a nation of their own. The primary financial supporter of this democratic scourge has been the United States government. The principal driver behind this financial, diplomatic, and military support has been the highly organized, very wealthy, politically influential US Jewish community. Their success among USAmerica's political elite in the maintenance, growth, and expansion of the primarily Jewish state of Israel can be attributed to several, all too familiar sources of origin.

For years Western democracies stood by and even abetted the ethnic cleansing of the Jewish people on the continent of Europe. In an effort to atone for their moral negligence and alleviate an important source of social and political friction that was not likely to disappear after World War II, they helped the Jewish people create a Jewish state very distant from their own borders. This state was established at the expense of a little known and impoverished people, who was largely displaced as a result. Today, there are more Palestinians living abroad than are resident in Israel, on the West Bank, and along the Gaza Strip together.

The plight of the Palestinian people has become progressively worse, while the Jewish state has grown and flourished with the ongoing help of Western democracies under the leadership of the United States government.

Since the end of World War II Israel has served as a strategic foothold for North American, Western European, and East Asian petroleum and economic interests on the Middle East subcontinent. The United States owns only 4 percent of the world's petroleum deposits, but consumes more than 20% of the world's oil production. Japan, the United States most important ally in East Asia, and the world's second largest economy and consumer of petroleum fuel, owns few petroleum reserves of its own. Germany, the world's third largest economy has little or no petroleum reserves that it does not purchase on the open market. Although Western democracies have become increasingly less reliant on Middle East oil over the past few decades,

their dependency on it remains crucial. With the world's single largest deposit of petroleum within hours of downtown Tel Aviv and one of the world's principal, artificially constructed waterways even closer -- the Suez Canal -- Israel has become an important strategic ally to Western democracies in the Middle East. This alliance is nurtured by the United States government through direct government transfers. Although Israel ranks very high among the world's nations in terms of per capita income, it is the largest single recipient of US foreign aid!

In contrast, the people of Palestine are among the poorest of the world's nations and are becoming poorer as their nation is ravaged by an unending struggle against Israeli occupation and territorial expansion. Unlike their Jewish counterparts with a standing military of world caliber and a thriving economy to support it, the Palestinian people are largely reliant on foreign funding and their own courageous sense of human worth and self-preservation.

Little was ever heard about the plight of the Palestinian people until Yasir Arafat and other Palestinian leaders turned to military and civil violence as a means to attract world attention to their cause. If today, I were to lose my sight, a limb, or even a loved one in a terrorist attack, I would not blame the terrorists who brought about my injury or pain; rather I would blame the democratic governments, who were elected by "innocent" citizens like myself -- citizens, who have stood by while their national governments forced an entire nation of people to flee their homeland in order to escape poverty and violence. Those who have remained are struggling today in an almost futile, desperate hope that someday, like the Israelis, they too can once again enjoy a homeland they can call their own.

The violence will not end until the Israeli state has either purged the Palestinian people of its terrorist leaders and sympathizers and reduced the Palestinian people to little more than a weak, disadvantaged, ethnic minority of an expanded Jewish state, or a Palestinian state is created. In order to achieve this latter end Palestinian leaders must be given the bargaining power they need among their own people to put an end to the bloodshed. Waiting for the violence to end before creating a state for the people of Palestine, is like waiting for Godot, who never comes.

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