

Palestinians and Israelis Must "Go back to the future"

By Ray Hanania

I often hear people sigh: If only we could go back to 1967. Somehow, we believe, today's life might be so much different. Maybe better, given what we've gone through since 1967 and what we've all learned, or not learned.

In a way, the 1967 war is a reminder of how things could have been – two de facto states prior to the war— had Arabs and Israelis been on the same page.

But that is our tragedy. Palestinians and Israelis are never in the same place at the same time. When Israelis are pushing for peace, Palestinians are pushing for conflict. When Palestinians are pushing for peace, Israelis are pushing for conflict.

The 1967 war is more than just a bad memory. For Palestinians, it's a benchmark that only reminds us that things continue to worsen, a memory that only feeds feelings of anguish and hatred and fuels the drive for revenge and vengeance. It's a mental quagmire that cannot be resolved, a Gordian Knot that cannot be unraveled. For Arabs, moreover, the 1967 War is not just about occupation of Palestinian lands – it's about the humiliation of being so firmly defeated by a state believed weak and transitory. This humiliation only adds to the Gordian Knot. Indeed, it's like pouring glue onto the knot, making it that much more difficult to unravel.

Yet we continue to try. We continue to think that if we could only unwind the knot and lay out the strings, we might be able to restore something.

But what would we really restore? A past that was as bad then as it is today?

The truth is that both sides see 1967 in their own way, using the past as a basis for how we move forward in the future. The past haunts us and holds us prisoner.

We have even taken to using a term that describes this mental rut, not even realizing that Palestinians and Israelis share a "One-State of Mind Mentality." It's called "The Narrative."

We Palestinians have our narrative and Israelis have their own narrative. Most of the time, both sides waste their time arguing about "narratives." Past. History. We don't learn from history – we use history to inflict more conflict upon ourselves.

If we are to be freed from this prison, though, we must do something entirely different: We must stop using the past to justify our actions today.

We need to look forward and try, as difficult as it might be, to form a new vision for the future, a vision is based on the only solution to the conflict: Two states. One Israel. One Palestine.

There is no other answer. There is no other solution.

Aside from the tragedy of the conflicts that have grown out of the 1967 War, which is in fact something that grew out of 1947-48, we have also allowed an "Industry of Cause" to evolve.

Without even realizing it, we Palestinians and Israelis have sat back while an entire new industry has risen from the ashes of the 1967 war that serves to continue to feed the conflict.

There are organizations and theories and strategies and visions that have grown out of the 1967 War and the occupation. We are occupied with being occupied; it has become a way of life. We exist in part because the occupation exists.

We need to recognize that we are engaged in something that neither side can easily walk away from because it has become our lifestyle. We need an intervention. We need to be made to understand that this "Occupation of Occupation" must end. We need to create a new profession, one based on peace, not conflict. An occupation based on building a future rather than debating the past.

We need to learn history's lessons, but must stop using the past as the justification for each time we strike out to harm each other.

Justice and fairness are not about whether the border is here or there. They are about addressing each side as human beings, recognizing that we all have feelings, that we all have needs, that we all must be respected.

Once we start respecting each other, we might find a way out of the conflict.

Until then, the 1967 War and the occupation will define who we are. The 1967 War has already told us where we are headed: a dead-end with no solution in sight.

Let's go back to the future together, and leave the past. Let's define a new vision and work towards that as our shared goal, rather than a past that is our shared tragedy.

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