

Dr M joins Netanyahu in spurious theorising

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Terence Netto

COMMENT Dr Mahathir Mohamad has the dubious distinction of joining Benjamin Netanyahu in presently fraught times in airing shaky theories about causal factors behind not-so-recent and recent history's mass murders.

The Israeli Prime Minister told a Zionist conference in Jerusalem on Oct 21 that the longtime mufti of Jerusalem Haj Faisal al-Husseni had urged the Holocaust on Adolf Hitler at a meeting in Berlin in November 1941.

The claim, seen as absolving Hitler of responsibility for genocide, triggered a firestorm of controversy.

No less than German Chancellor Angela Merkel denied Netanyahu's claim, saying that responsibility for the Nazi extermination of six million Jews during the Second World War was "German and very much our own" and "I see no reason to change our view of history in any way."

Now Mahathir, ostensibly a modernist Muslim but not above manipulating Muslim phobias for political advantage, has joined Netanyahu in spurious blame-shifting.

He said the [murders of Parisians](#) on Friday evening by bomb and Kalashnikov-wielding assailants, almost certainly belonging to the Islamic State (IS), is attributable to the creation of Israel in 1948 and to ongoing Jewish depredations against stateless Palestinians.

Further, Mahathir fingered the work of Irgun, the Zionist terrorist organisation, and Haganah, the militant Jewish body - both active in the period before the creation of Israel - as antecedents for the atrocity the world witnessed in Paris on Friday.

"Before that [the terrorist acts of Irgun and Haganah], there were no such terrorist attacks anywhere, not even in the Middle East," said Mahathir.

This latter bit is quite broad in eliding inconvenient facts as the genocide that happened to Armenians in what is now northern Syria and eastern Turkey from 1915 on.

It's historically indisputable that something like 1 million Armenians were killed by the Ottomans in 1915-17, in what is now regarded as the bloodthirsty 20th century's first genocide.

Sure, one may argue that the pogrom against the Armenians was committed by a state actor, and so strictly-speaking, cannot be equated to the terrorism of non-state actors like Irgun and Haganah, which Mahathir cites as antecedents for the behavior of Daish (the Arabic term for IS).

Here again, inconvenient realities obstruct: If Daish is mainly motivated by revenge against Zionist criminality in Palestine, why does it slaughter Shia, Alawite, Yazidi, Arab Christians and peshmerga Kurds, as it has done in its march since June 2014 across swathes of northern Syria and western Iraq?

Isn't Daish up to something more radically imperialistic?

If one agrees that clarity is imperative in finding the causes of problems, one has to see why some groups are hell-bent (some would say, paradise-bent) on subduing the world.

About what is at the nub of the furies in the Middle East, one could no better than to see what Daish believes in and that starts with the view that the Muslim world took a wrong turn more than a thousand years ago.

Rejection of modernity

Daish is not alone among Islamists in holding this worldview which rejects what modernity has brought to hitherto backward parts of this world: pluralism, secularism, gender equality and democracy.

On whole or in part this rejection is shared by the Taliban, the Wahhabis, al-Qaeda, and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Not all Islamists believe in exterminating Shiites, slaughtering Alawite, Druze or Yazidi, crucifying Christians or throwing acid in the face of girls going to schools.

But all of them are partial to terrorism as a tactic and point to Quranic texts for validation of their position.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (*photo*), the founder of theocratic Iran and spiritual leader of contemporary Islamist terrorism had this response to the question, "Is Islam a religion of peace?"

"Those who know nothing of Islam pretend that Islam counsels against war. Those [who say this] are witless. Islam says: Kill all the unbelievers just as they would kill you all! ... Islam says: Kill the [the non-Muslims], put them to the sword and scatter [their armies] ... People cannot be made obedient except with the sword! The sword is the key to paradise, which can be opened only for holy warriors!"

Khomeini went on to express his contempt for those who prefer to ignore Quranic exhortations to violence:

"There are hundreds of other [Quranic] psalms and hadiths [sayings of the Prophet] urging Muslims to value war and to fight. Does all that mean that Islam is a religion that prevents men from waging war? I spit upon those foolish souls who make such a claim."

It must have been revulsion from this kind of thinking that led Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi to plead at Al-Azhar, renowned seat of Sunni Muslim learning, on New Year's Day 2015, in a speech urging renewed thinking on Islam:

“That thinking - I am not saying ‘religion’ but ‘thinking’ - that corpus of texts and ideas that we have sacralised over the centuries, to the point that departing from them has become almost impossible, is antagonising the entire world. It’s antagonising the entire world!”

Al-Sisi’s concluded his speech with an impassioned call: “I say and repeat again that we are in need of a religious revolution. You, imams, are responsible before Allah. The entire world, I say it again, the entire world is waiting for your next move... because this umma is being torn, it is being destroyed, it is being lost - and it is being lost by our own hands.”

There was no small irony that this plea has come from someone who is regarded as a dictator.

The harsh reality of the Middle East is that, sometimes, dictators are better than their Islamist alternatives.

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