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Sea Cruise: Israelis and Palestinians Drowning in Water Sport

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Abstract: The article discusses differing Israeli and Palestinian narratives in regards to the deaths of 9 people during an Israeli blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza.

The common themes of public discourse on the May 31, 2010 Israeli boarding of 6 naval vessels—sponsored by the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Fund— have constituted narratives of winners and losers. These narratives drive conflict on perceptions as they become facts and values about the blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza, the deaths of 9 people before the all vessels were secured, the suffering of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, the legitimacy of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, who deserves to live and die, and who should have what power. These narratives affect the changing rules of engagement of the game to be won or lost with alternatives of win-win discounted and lose-lose mired in irony. These narratives may be split into Israeli and Palestinian, but only partially, because the constructs Israelis and Palestinians are locked in a symbiotic embrace at once toxic and essential. These narratives also may be split in the psychodynamic and sociodynamic sense because each person—Israeli, Palestinian, and many others—may be more usefully conceived as multi-beings—"constituted within multiple relationships from which each emerges with multiple, incoherent, and often conflicting potentials" (Gergen, K. J. (2008). Therapeutic challenges of multi-being. Journal of Family Therapy, 30, 335-350).

Israeli Narratives. The Israelis are in an existential fight of their lives which they can have no option of losing. So, they must closely regulate all incoming people and materiel headed for Gaza. So, they must use force up to and including lethal force to win. The huge negative reaction worldwide against the Israelis comes from participants and spectators who want them to lose or who want them to win only in certain ways and not others—the latter as if it's better to die than to win in certain ways. The boardings associated with fatalities were the result of failures in intelligence and in operational planning making it less likely that the Israelis would win both a tactical skirmish and the larger strategic war. The current Israeli governmental leadership is entrapped by ideological, historical, cognitive, and emotional blinders yielding perceptions and actions rendering it more likely it will lose a conflict that must not be lost. The leadership is implementing a losing plan because it does not get that killing a foe begets more foes and less supporters. The Israelis are oppressors and violators of international law and the human soul. The Israelis were winning, but they are now losing.

Palestinians Narratives. The Palestinians are in an existential fight for whether they will live, how they will live, and who will they be. They were losing, but they're now winning. They are supplely beating a foe that is superior in conventional military capability through the weapons of mass communications. Only representatives of the formal government of Gaza are on the playing field and may win or lose. Their constituents are not players and cannot be made to experience privation or the slings and arrows of the conflict. So, the Israelis must provide sustenance to the people of the government with which it is locked in mortal combat. Death to Palestinians and their supporters—whether deserved or not—is conceived as gains for Palestinians and losses for Israelis in the tactical and strategic conflict represented and mediated by communication. The Palestinians love death as the purest way to live. Touching the Palestinian in conflict is like Heracles enwrapped in the coat imbued with the blood of the centaur Nessus—given to Heracles by his wife Deianeira to ensure his love but only causing pain so severe that

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he threw himself into the fire. It is as if touching the Palestinian in conflict is like Br'er Rabbit fighting the Tar Baby constructed by Br'er Fox in an Uncle Remus story—with Br'er Rabbit becoming more ensnared with every movement. (There are many and much older versions of this story and—at least in the one compiled by Joel Chandler Harris—after being tricked by Br'er Fox, Br'er Rabbit tricks Br'er Fox and escapes with a victory). But a blockade conceived as part of a win strategy for the Israelis is actually a lose strategy. And with the game in progress, the Palestinians have what George H. W. Bush called the Big Mo after he beat Ronald Reagan in the 1980 Iowa caucuses. (Of course, Bush ultimately lost the primaries and the Republican presidential nomination.)

But there's a much more important story getting less attention than who's winning, and why, and for whom to root. Although always an Issue in the history of mankind, notions of truth, reality, knowledge, values, ethics, and the very essence of personhood and agency are up for continuous reconceptualization and renegotiation at speeds and accelerations never before experienced on an ever larger stage. And there's an ever increasing amount of information potentially available to all whether they are active players or not in the reconceptualization and renegotiation. This doesn't mean that more and more people are confused. Instead, it seems as if it's easier to come to quicker closure or to believe that closure is not even necessary, as it's easier to be exposed to and to find what one already believes, as it's easier to discount, ignore, or not attend to that which one does not already believe or is ready to believe.

It's almost as if the more the Israeli and Palestinian game increases in frequency, intensity, or interludes of frigid peace—and the more the reconceptualization and renegotiation of basic constructs become both tactical and strategic weapons and targets for weapons—the quicker more and more people cut to the chase by grabbing what's in hand or most easily grabbable instead of chasing. So observers are already at the ready with what happened and why and how the what is and should be valued, before specific perceptions are even constructed. These evolving perceptions become facts and values within narratives and together help constitute the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious mind.

As an example, here are two perceptions in the latest Israeli-Palestinian game—the water sport of sea cruise that is attempting to end the blockade of Gaza. One is made up of corpses and the wounded of the protestors from the Mavi Marmara, the other of Israeli forces under attack. They become facts and values within narratives of what Aristotle would call images of efficient cause; within narratives of other corpses and wounded and of other incidents deemed sacrilege from long ago; within narratives of what has occurred after the perceptions become facts and values as support for what has occurred before (!); and within yet other narratives covering personal lives, social myths, cultural shibboleths, and unconscious dynamics.

More provocatively, such phenomena may be occurring not via human identity and human agency but may constitute the human as subject, as agent, even as object and/or threaten the ontological stability of the human. In the Title of a work by Normal Mailer—The Armies of the Night—on the October 1967 March on the Pentagon, the subjects, agents, and objects may be historical forces not political demonstrators and their governmental and military targets. In theories of human evolution, the subjects, agents, and objects may be genetic materiel not their carriers. In the case of 9 dead on the Mavi Marmara, the death of the human in self-identity and body is there for all the world to see. How ironic then that internecine controversies wax about who is, isn't, should, and shouldn't be a Palestinian; whether Arabs, Muslims, Christians, and Jews can all be Israelis; who is and isn't a Jew; who's good and evil and how to get beyond good and evil. The center of meaning no longer holds and the sea cruise to

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break the blockade becomes a water sport in a drowning pool with ways to score and be scored on but no way to win.

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