



National Security and Our Next President
Rabbi Craig Scheff

In his [February 5 letter to the Journal News](#), Mark Weston supports Barack Obama as the candidate uniquely suited to weaken al-Qaeda and strengthen our national security. He claims this by virtue of Mr. Obama's name (Arabic), heritage (half-Kenyan through his father), religion (Christian through his mother, Muslim through his paternal grandfather), and facility with language (Indonesian). Mark Weston suggests that the election of Barack Obama could improve national security by showing young potential radicals how great is America to have embraced a man whose heritage runs closer to their own.

If Mr. Weston had stopped there, I might have simply disagreed and dismissed his words as naïve or perhaps politically motivated. However, in stating how much "Americans" actually have in common with "Muslims" as worshippers of one God and as capitalists, and how Mr. Obama can bring out these commonalities, he goes on to claim that the "biggest cause for Muslim anger is the humiliation that comes from the loss of land to non-Muslims . . . , especially Palestine to Israel." I frankly have no idea how these claims serve to support Mr. Obama's candidacy. The connection Mr. Weston makes between Mr. Obama's commonalities with the Muslims and the "biggest cause of Muslim anger" borders on suggesting that Mr. Obama is the candidate to undo the "humiliation" and restore pride (and the non-Muslim-held land) to the Muslims. I don't think Mr. Obama would endorse such a statement.

Mr. Weston claims to have spent several years trying to understand how "people in the Middle East think." This statement in and of itself reveals a bias bordering on racism; there is no monolithic way of thought in the Middle East. The people of Israel and Iran have very different ways of thinking. There is, however, just as there is everywhere in the world today, the presence of a radical fundamentalist Islamic ideology that has Mr. Weston and those who agree with him buying into the greatest and easiest of lies. They would have us believe that their major cause for anger, as Mr. Weston asserts, is Israel's possession of Muslim land. So long as there are those who buy that assertion, they will go on teaching their own that only one road leads to heaven.

For twenty years following the British Mandate in the Middle East and the United Nations' partition of Palestine into two states, one a Jewish state and the other an Arab state rejected by the Arab populace, the Palestinian Arabs lived in refugee camps created by the wealthy Jordanians. These Jordanian Arabs had little use-and less care-for the Palestinian Arabs who left their homes in 1948 to clear a path for an Arab offensive against the miniscule Jewish state. Even if one might argue that the new Israel displaced some of these Palestinian Arabs from their homes in the conflict that ensued from the Arab offensive, the Palestinian Arabs

received no support from their Arab neighbors (Muslim or otherwise) in the two decades that followed. The Arab world's indifference to the Palestinian for decades was astounding; the cause was only embraced when these nations recognized that they could use the cause for their own political gains and to America's disadvantage.

The terrorist radical fundamentalist ideology that has Arab killing Arab and Muslim killing Muslim is not the ideology of the Palestinian struggle for statehood. The fundamentalists, funded by Iran throughout the Middle East and around the world, have used the Palestinian plight as a diversion while they spread their seeds of hatred. They would have us believe that Israel is the reason they resort to sacrificing their children and murdering ours. All the while, they continue to grow a grass-roots effort to teach their brand of God. If the Muslim terrorists' biggest cause for anger is the humiliation that follows from the Palestinian Arabs' inability to seize a tiny strip of land, half of which was offered them sixty years ago but refused, I'm not sure how Mr. Obama's lineage or facility with language will assuage this anger. If anything, he may be viewed as a son-of-a-heretic father and a son-of-a-Christian mother by those same radical fundamentalist Muslim terrorists who are killing more Christian and Muslim women and children than they are killing Jews all around the globe.

I do not comment here on Barak Obama's credentials as a candidate for office. I question, rather, what I believe is Mr. Weston's failure to understand the radical Islamic fundamentalists' way of thinking. While they have us believing that there is a land bridge somewhere that we could sell them to solve what Mr. Weston calls "a fundamentally political problem," they will not rest at their task until their way of life governs every society, even if it means killing every other Jew, Christian and Muslim and obliterating our value system along the way. If any candidate is indeed best for our national security, I hope it is because that candidate so treasures our pluralistic values that he or she will fight the radical fundamentalist ideologies that threaten us wherever they exist.

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