

Not a Happy New Year, for Gaza

- Raj Verma Mudunuri

Welcome to 2009

Fortunately or unfortunately, impressively or depressingly, rationally or irrationally, peacefully or violently, over the millennia humanity has divided itself into a complex web of labyrinthal society with multiple cultural and regional identities. Some times a culture influences various regions, and some times a region accommodates different cultures. In this perennial struggle of culture versus region, the victim is none other than the humanity itself, the very same species who proclaim their verve for one's own cultural and regional distinctiveness. Disregarding the contours of the larger picture, these fragmented species have been battling for supremacy, either cultural or regional, from time immemorial. Over the centuries, each culture and region has developed manifestations of its own way of life. However, many of the fragmented societies, even today, are unable to come to terms with the very inherent conflicts of the human mind that has caused this fragmentation in the first place. Nevertheless, humanity lives on, by taking the mental fragmentation into its stride and perceiving it as cultural diversification.

One of the nice things about cultural diversity is its capacity to accommodate different ways of life. Individuals, or groups, can associate themselves with any of the myriad ways of living that are scattered across the world. Each society has come up with a number of ways to celebrate the joy of living in peace and harmony, and has its own share of traditional festivals to commemorate the different historical aspects of cultural and regional importance. However, we humans are still trying to find a common festival, where the spirit of humanity triumphs over the cultural and regional dogmas that prevail today. Perhaps, this might be the reason why most of the world celebrates the arrival of new year, with a sense of déjà vu and new hopes for a better future.

Everyone hopes that tomorrow should be better than today, that the new year

should bestow upon us some good times ahead and lead us into a better world. The arrival of 2009, I believe, was no different. Despite the pessimism looming over the global prospects, due to the meltdown of some major economies, most of the world did not shy away from celebrating those moments of bidding adios to the past and welcoming the new year. People around the world seemed to be busy with the fireworks, either firing or watching. However, fireworks need not always be associated with good times. Some times, even at the dawn of a new year, fireworks of other kind can create havoc to an entire society. For a million and half people, the arrival of new year has brought more sufferings than hopes. For three weeks, day and night, starting from the 27th of December 2009, a major military power has unleashed its brutal [fireworks](#) on a helpless people who are completely cut off from the rest of the world. Yes, I am talking about the recent Israeli "offensive" on [Gaza](#).

Offensive! or War!? Dictum of the media

Poets, novelists, lyricists etc. often thrive on the finesse of a language, in an effort to make their works look more attractive. Perhaps, this is based on the assumption that the real beauty of a masterpiece lies in its complexity. Whatever may be the reason, writers of that ilk have a specific agenda and the target audience is often restricted to some social groups. Journalists are a different breed. Their work plays a crucial role in the betterment of entire societies. However, based on the political ideologies that media houses lean toward, journalists who work for those news outlets are often bound to toe the line of their editors. While describing an event, the words are carefully chosen, to make sure that the gullible public understands the story the way the media houses want them to. So the language used by reporters and rapporteurs, both in print and electronic media, becomes all the more important, especially for critical issues that affect people's perception. The public opinion is often based on the information that the media feeds, and this public opin-

ion is something that slowly morphs itself into national conscience. In democratic societies, it is often the case that the prevailing public opinion and the deep rooted national conscience finally end up in shaping the national policies. Therefore, one can imagine what role the subtleties of a language does play, in the decisive path a nation would eventually take.

If one follows the chain of events of any critical issue, and delve into the multiple sources of information, then one can notice how the same event is presented in many ways by different news outlets. Apparently, every media house has its own self interests. They are mostly guided by political lineage, and to some extent driven by economic factors. One can find a number of [instances](#) where the media has directly played a crucial role in shaping up the public opinion. The most famous one in our recent times was the build up for the [Iraq war](#). No wonder then, that the national governments love the idea of having main stream media in the grip of few media moguls, such as [Rupert Murdoch](#). These media barons have as much [control](#) on the people's opinion as the prime minister has on his cabinet. The portrayal of the latest Israeli "war" on Gaza as Israeli "offensive" and [Gaza's war](#), by even respectable media houses such as [BBC](#), is no different.

Cease Fire Violation!! An Evident Alibi

Israel has repeatedly pointed out that the shooting of rockets from Gaza, soon after the termination of a 6 months long cease fire, was the casus belli for its 'offensive' on Gaza. It is nothing but an [alibi](#). A ceasefire is not merely a cessation of firing, but an agreement between the aggrieved parties on mutually acceptable terms and conditions. There are two important aspects where Israel did not meet its obligations. As per the ceasefire [agreement](#) that started in June 2008, Israel would drastically reduce its economic blockade of Gaza, and would halt all military incursions into Gaza. Hamas on their part would halt all rocket attacks into Israel. However, this ceasefire did not stop

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Israel from continuing its great [experiment](#) which was started in the summer of 2006. Israel has never really halted its [embargo](#) on Gaza. As a result, Gazans continued to suffer from lack of food, clean water, fuel, electricity, medical supplies, financial aid, and more. Gaza's economy was wrecked. This has been, inarguably, an [attack](#) on the innocent civilians.

Moreover, even if we were to listen to the Israeli claims that Hamas broke the cease-fire in late December by firing rockets into Israeli towns, there is a fallacy to this argument if only the [incidents](#) of [4th November](#) were taken into consideration. Apparently, the mainstream media did not think that those events are worthy enough to be [reported](#). When a powerful army of a democratic nation perpetrates such [crimes](#) on defenseless people, and accuses their violent resistance (with mostly primitive weapons when compared to the might of the Israeli army) as terrorism, it is appalling to see the glaring ineffectiveness of the so called world bodies such as the United Nations to act promptly.

Losing the future for present, and present for the past

History is a good teacher, if only one tries to learn something from it. There is no definitive answer, however, if one asks when exactly history begins. Nevertheless, the [reality](#) of the present does apprise us to look into the relevant past and search for practical solutions, rather than losing our present and future for the sake of history. Israel, right from the days of its creation in the middle of the [20th](#) century to this day, has been playing the [card](#) of its existential threat from its neighbours. But look at the current situation. Is it Israelis, or the Palestinians, who are facing the existential threat today? Is it Israel, or [Palestine](#), that has been wiped off from the map during the past 60 years?? Palestinians, after considering the ground realities, have long been seeking for a two-state [solution](#) based on the 1967 (pre-war) borders recognized by the UN. However, looking at the unbridled expansion of the Jewish settlements in the West bank even today, only an ignorant dimwit would

believe that Israel has any realistic aim to yield for a Palestinian state. It is no surprise then that the fundamentalist factions such as Hamas are gaining Palestinian people's confidence, for fighting against the occupiers. The violent resistance of Hamas is a tailor made situation for Israel, to use its propaganda machine to show to the world that it has no partners for 'peace'. The state of Israel is constantly at war with the Palestinian people, irrespective of its treacherous peace proposals time and again. Even the sane voices in Israeli government [acknowledge](#) this view.

Of course, peace is possible only if both the parties show their credibility towards achieving it. During a conversation, a German friend of mine mentioned about the Palestinian way of celebrating the death of a Jewish girl murdered by a Palestinian suicide bomber. She found it outrageous and disgusting, naturally so, to imagine a group of humans frantically celebrating the cold blooded murder of an innocent school girl. This was one of her arguments to point out the Palestinian attitude and their contempt towards peace. Another point she mentioned to support her argument was, unlike from the Israeli camp she could not find any peace initiatives or peaceful protests from the Palestinian side. Now, this begs a serious investigation into questions such as, what constitutes a peaceful protest, how many people have to join if it has to be called a protest, and how long should the [protest](#) continue to make it into the main stream news papers and TV screens around the world, to prove that peace is very much desirable in the shattered and battered lives of Palestinians. Her fundamental argument was, being a victim does

not provide Palestinians the right to be morally justified and thereby become a culprit again by indulging in gruesome acts of terror in this vicious cycle of violence. I wonder what the founding fathers of Israel could have possibly answered, if this same line of argument was used in the context of Holocaust and Israeli occupation of Palestine thereupon.

The Middle East conflict is a complex [issue](#) and not easy to comprehend or explain in few paragraphs or pages. However, by confining oneself to this notion of complex issue, one should not turn away from the harsh realities of today. By constantly talking at the abstract level, about the complexities involved in this conflict, and that it is not an easy issue to solve in couple of years or decades, and that one has to take too many factors into consideration etc., one is only blinding oneself from the reality and circumscribing to the media [myths](#). What kind of complex factors do we have to harp upon to say that a war of any kind can only cause destruction on both sides? If all those complex factors are indeed impending to solve the puzzle, then doesn't that reflect our collective failure to decode those complex factors for all these years?? Isn't it the collective failure of the public, to understand the totality of the issue and force the leaders to take justifiable actions?? Isn't it the responsibility of the common man to be more aware in seeking for what is unsaid?? It takes courage to read history, but it takes greater courage to make history.

Note: The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author's and are not to be associated with Sangam e.V organization..



Fireworks in Leipzig



Firing at Gaza

Cometh the Year 2009, cometh the fireworks at two different parts of the world