

## **Unhelpful View of Israel**

Walter Hixson's Nov. 9 column ("Why Israel must confront its past") on Israel and Palestine will probably be attacked intemperately, as he predicted. But it does no good to advocate from error for the Palestinians anymore than for the Israelis.

I write as a Jew who has dissented literally for decades from much of what has been said and done in support of Israel. I've long advocated for a two-state solution.

Professor Hixson wrongly depicts Israel's actions as nothing but unjustified aggression. Israelis forced out some Arabs in 1948 and some atrocities occurred, on both sides. But the 1948 war was unquestionably started by the Arabs who refused to accept the creation of any Jewish state.

Current scholarship shows that most of the Arab out-migration in 1948 was not caused by the Israelis. Hixson notes in passing that many Arabs live in Israel. They are the ones who stayed in 1948 and their descendants. The Jews never tried to force them out. They are full voting citizens of Israel, albeit a minority with some legitimate grievances.

As to 1967, there is no serious question but that if Israel had not struck preemptively, it would have been attacked by its Arab neighbors and put at a huge disadvantage. It was an appropriately defensive first strike, not a war of aggression.

Hixson casts Israel as a rogue state and a legitimate enemy not only of the Palestinians, but of the U.S. and all other right-thinking nations. That is not only factually and morally wrong, it contributes to the problem rather than solving it.

What Israel has done — both right and wrong — has largely been the product of the centuries of oppression that culminated in the Holocaust. Think of Israel as a post-traumatic stress disorder victim, still. Unjust attacks only reinforce Israel's instinct to fight no-holds barred against perceived threats to its survival, whether it's really threatened or not.

That doesn't mean that Israel shouldn't be criticized for its wrongful acts and strenuous efforts made to correct them. But putting Israel in the false light of a ruthless aggressor only feeds the problem.

Thus, I agree that Israel had no right to colonize the land it occupied in 1967 and has no right to continue to settle people there. Hopefully that will not ultimately be fatal to Israel's existence. If Israel will not agree to the Palestinians in the West Bank having a viable state there, it must eventually make them citizens of Israel, too. And that will be the end of Zionism, brought about by Zionists themselves.

Israel will never change course until it feels free of the centuries of unjust slanders that led to slaughter. Hixson's poor scholarship and distorted rhetoric are distinctly unhelpful.

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