How the Welfare of Children Is Affected by the Respective Political-Economic-Cultural Systems of Israel and the Palestinian Territories

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INTRODUCTION

Comparative politics is a response to human curiosity about how we stack up to other societies (and vice versa). We try to compare different ways societies are organized and how we secure the public interest within a society. We also ask: How do you care for the needs of everyone in that society? How do you care for the most vulnerable members of society — in particular, children — especially when there's ongoing upheaval and disunity?

The conflict between Israel and the inhabitants of the Palestinian territories (the West Bank and Gaza) is now more than six decades old and continues to fluctuate in intensity (with a significant contrast between Gaza and the West Bank's relationships with Israel). The third generation of children is now on the scene — which brings us to the questions to be addressed in this paper: How is the well-being of children affected by the respective political-economic-cultural systems of Israel vs. the Palestinian territories? What theory or theories of comparative politics best explain the research results?

Perspectives on "child welfare" vary from culture to culture based on whether that culture is subsistence-level or more developed, individualistic or collectivistic, religiously diverse or religiously monolithic, avoids risk or embraces it, etc. Cross-cultural communication principles and cultural anthropology can help us understand differing definitions of, and perspectives on, the well-being of children, even if we don't necessarily agree with them.

CHILD WELFARE DEFINED

For the purpose of this paper, I am defining "child welfare" according to United Nations standards — the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The following summary provides a general framework:

> "The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding
> international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights—civil,
> cultural, economic, political and social rights. In 1989, world leaders decided that

children needed a special convention just for them because people under 18 years old often need special care and protection that adults do not. The leaders also wanted to make sure that the world recognized that children have human rights too.

"The Convention sets out these rights in 54 articles and two Optional Protocols. It spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

"The four core principles of the Convention are **non-discrimination**; devotion to **the best interests of the child**; the **right to life, survival and development**; and **respect for the views of the child**. Every right spelled out in the Convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child. The Convention protects children's rights by **setting standards in health care; education; and legal, civil and social services**." *(Emphasis added.)* ("Convention on the Rights of the Child")

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Israelis and Palestinians alike have their particular narratives about the reasons for — and solutions to — the conflict. Both of these narratives contain themes of grievance and victimization, unprovoked assault and unreasonable response, theological claims, and international mandates. They are complicated by the financial and policy involvement of hegemonic powers on both sides. That said, certain pertinent facts should be stated:

"It is … important to remember that there never had been a Palestinian State in the region, as even Jews were called and registered as 'Palestinians' in 1948. British authorities held a Mandate over the country and accepted the right of Jews to have a state of their own in what was their ancient homeland. Even the United Nations accepted and voted for this right. When Israel implemented this decision by declaring its existence, she was immediately attacked by no less than five Arab armies.

"This brings into focus the real nature of this conflict. That is, it has very little to do with politics or peace agreements but everything to do with theology. By this I mean a radical jihadist theology that considers the whole Land of Israel and not just the West Bank as part of the 'House of Islam.'

"This theology dictates that all this land must be returned to Islamic rule, whether by peaceful, political or violent means of jihad. So from 1948 to 1967, when the Palestinians had everything they say they want now, they neither protested against the illegal Jordanian occupation of the West Bank nor even remotely demanded a state of their own. They did, however, found the PLO in 1964 with the distinct mission of destroying the State of Israel. They subsequently launched a terror campaign to force this end and throughout the Oslo era refused to remove the

infamous clauses from their Charter calling for the "elimination" of Israel.

"The same jihadist theology drives Hamas and its affiliated militia al-Aksa Martyrs' Brigades, as well as Hizbullah, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, and all the rest of the 'resistance' front . . .

"For sure, the Palestinians have suffered and still do but to place the blame entirely at Israel's door is folly. Their failed and corrupt leadership, missed opportunities, and willingness to support violence and terror are also central causes of their suffering." (Malcolm Hedding, ICEJ Special Commentary, 3/5/10)

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH: ISRAEL AND PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Culture - Palestinian Territories

The problem with research studies of Palestinians to date is that "... they do not render Palestinian lives very approachable or accessible. Even the voluminous literature on the first intifada (1987 to the early 1990s), with a few exceptions, treats Palestinians as one-dimensional political subjects. The internal dynamics, stresses, and contradictions of the social groups and communities within which people live out their lives, or the sensitivities and subjectivities of individuals as they negotiate their mundane existence away from the barricades have not received much serious attention from most researchers." (Taraki, xi)

That said, it is clear that Palestinian culture revolves around the extended family:

"Although polygamy is a common practice among Arab men, with as many as four wives allowed, most Palestinian men have only one or two wives.... Extended families tend to live together in the same household. Frequently, married children also live with their parents. Elderly parents are nearly always cared for at home by the families of their children. A people with one of the world's highest birth rates, the Palestinians care for their children with pride. Extended families help in caring for infants and young children." ("Culture of Palestine")

Many Palestinian men are against women working outside the home, so most women stick to homemaking or cottage industries. Women are also discouraged from wearing Western-style dress, preferring them to wear the traditional Muslim jilbab — a long, jacket-like dress — along with a head covering." As in other Arab and/or Muslim cultures, men are at the center of Palestinian life. The family patriarch makes all decisions regarding living arrangements, children's marriages, and money. Obedience to one's father or husband is [believed to be] one of the highest indicators of honor in an Arab woman's life." ("Culture of Palestine")

Culture - Israel

Much like that in the Palestinian territories today, Israeli culture in the first half of the 20th century was collectivist, traditional and generally religious. However, the influx of large numbers of secular Jews and the development of the kibbutz movement — along with a growing desire to emulate the United States — has transformed Israel into a diverse and largely non-religious society. "Eye on Israel" posits that "... the most significant moment of change in Israeli culture was almost certainly 1967. At that point, more than at any previous time, the country opened up to both the ideal and the reality of America [and Western values]" through a movement that began after a "... large group of [young] Jewish volunteers, largely from the English-speaking world, that flooded the country in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 war, particularly those who worked on the kibbutzim and moshavim." Another agent of change (as elsewhere in the world) was the advent of TV, which began to be broadcast in Israel in 1968. ("Eye on Israel")

The ultra-Orthodox Jews are much like their devout Palestinian Muslim counterparts (or even the Amish communities here in the United States), but they constitute a very small percentage of the total population. Moreover, "... ultra-Orthodox women have always worked (in feminine occupations, such as secretary and teacher) so as to enable their husbands to study. In addition, there is increasing cooperation with the secular authorities to deal with family problems that were traditionally kept within the community." ("Israel: Factors ...")

Today, "[Israeli] marriage is based more on emotional bonds than on economic or social considerations. Family functions such as childcare and caring for the elderly have been transferred to the community. Independence from the family of origin is encouraged from an early age.... The Israeli family also shares the stresses of other modern families: spousal tension over roles and tasks brought about by increasing gender equality, and difficulties, especially among mothers, in balancing childcare, work, and personal interests and goals.

"Among Israeli Jews, the great majority of families, of both European and Afro-Asian origin, combine traditional Jewish family values and norms with modern features. These are medium-size families with an average of three children. Marriage is seen primarily, though not only, as a framework for raising children. The man is expected to be the major breadwinner and the woman to fulfill the duties of wife and mother. Although 70 percent of the women work outside the home, work is secondary to child-rearing. [And] … under the impact of feminism

and Israel's egalitarian ideology, the men in these families are increasingly involved in childcare, decisions are made jointly, and resources are divided democratically." ("Israel: Factors ...")

Israel is a strongly familistic society, and family law comes under the jurisdiction of two parallel legal systems — secular and religious. The state-supported religious courts rule in accord with religious laws (applied according to whether the parties are Jewish, Christian or Muslim) — which restrict interfaith marriage, encourage family stability, and place obstacles in the way of divorce. However, the rulings of the religious courts are subject to the laws passed by Israel's parliament. "These forbid child marriage, polygamy, and the husband's one-sided, nonjudicial divorce of his wife, which are permitted by Muslim religious law. They allocate legal guardianship for the children of a union (whether in or out of wedlock) to both parents. In divorce, custody is to be awarded on the basis of the best interests of the child, and non-custodial parents receive visiting rights and pay child support." ("Israel: Factors ...")

Political Structure - Palestinian Territories

The Israeli military presence in the West Bank and other defensive measures has created a neocolonial situation where Israel exerts some degree of control over local Palestinian institutions (their economy, health, education and social services). As terrorism and distrust continue to be reduced, however, the Israeli presence is likely to recede accordingly. (*Israel's Changing Society*, 256)

Whether caused by Palestinian men in Israeli prisons because of terrorist activities, the egalitarian Israeli society, or simply the effect over time of regular interchange between the two societies, the only Palestinians today who live in strict adherence to sharia law are the ones in Gaza under the current Hamas government and those in a handful of sharia-observant towns in the West Bank. Moreover, in the Palestinian areas, change continues due to "tensions, fissures and contradictions within the social order." (Taraki, xv)

The Palestinian National Authority constitutes the legal government of the West Bank and Gaza. Formally, it is designed to be a democracy — but only functions as such (and then, only to a limited degree) in the West Bank. "According to the Palestinian 'Basic Law' which was signed by Arafat in 2002 after a long delay, the current structure of the PA is based on three separate branches of power: executive, legislative, and judiciary. The Judiciary Branch has yet to be properly formalized, however." ("Palestinian National Authority, Wikipedia, 3/9/10) The West Bank is divided into 16 "governorates," and the Palestinian Legislative Council is elected and

acts as a parliament. Nonetheless, more than half of the population do not accept the authority of the PNA, and elections have been held only sporadically. (Ha'aretz.com, 3/9/10)

In Gaza, the terrorist organization and political party Hamas won supremacy in the legislature several years ago because of widespread despair over Fatah corruption and ineptitude coupled with Hamas' commitment to and efficiency at delivering much-needed social services. But its imposition of sharia law, suppression of dissident views and terrorist activities — including regular rocket attacks against contiguous Israeli towns — has led to an economic blockade by both Egypt and Israel. Not surprisingly, therefore, the more free and less threatening West Bank is doing far better economically. ("Palestinian National Authority")

Political Structure - Israel

Israel has a complex parliamentary democracy with a prime minister (executive branch), the Knesset (Israel's legislative branch, which operates by consensus and an almost corporatist way of giving a voice to the country's many parties and factions), and the Israeli Supreme Court (judicial branch). Malcolm Hedding, international director of a Jerusalem-based nonprofit called the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, emphasizes that:

> "Israel is no apartheid state. She is a democratic state living under the constant threat of annihilation and thus seeking to balance her need to find a lasting peace with her neighbors with that of her security. Her regional experience has taught Israel that her security and very existence is the number one issue." (Hedding, by the way, was an anti-apartheid activist in his native South Africa, and has lived in Israel for more than two decades, so his views are not superficial.) (ICEJ Special Commentary, 3/5/10)

Many different influences have shaped Israel, including the immigration of millions of Jews (and non-Jews, even if simply as resident workers) from all over the globe.

Education - Israel

Human Rights Watch cites the fact that Israel has two separate school systems: one for Jewish kids and one for Palestinian "Arabs" (although so-called Palestinian Arabs may not be actually Arab but, rather, Samaritans (offspring of ancient northern Israelites and Assyrians) and Jews — according to the research of Tsvi Misinai — see "Tsvi Misinai" and "Palestinian People" in *Wikipedia*).

HRW alleges in the abstract of an article available on its website (Coursen-Neff, 2) that "... despite small advances in recent years, the discriminatory practices against Palestinian Arab school children that are institutionalized in its education system place Israel in violation of its international legal obligations." The article claims that "... according to official data released as recently as late 2004, the Israeli government continues to allocate less money per head for Palestinian Arab children than it does for Jewish children. Arab schools are still overcrowded, understaffed, and sometimes unavailable. On average, they offer far fewer facilities and educational opportunities than those offered to other Israeli children."

Nonetheless, Israel's educational system — whether Jewish or Arab — is modern and humanistic, and includes a "peace curriculum" to encourage understanding and bridge-building in the rising generations.

Education - Palestinian Territories

"Because about half of the Palestinian population is under age 15, education is a prime concern. The school system in Gaza is based on Egypt's and the West Bank's system is based on Jordan's, and there are numerous literacy and cultural centers at all learning levels. Schools vary, but most children get a free public education, from kindergarten through high school. Children from well-to-do families may attend an Islamic or a Christian school. Obtaining a university degree is a high priority for Palestinians. Palestine boasts eight universities and four colleges, all of which grant bachelor's degrees in arts and sciences. A few also offer graduate programs, and Al-Najah University awards a doctorate degree in chemistry." (from "Culture of Palestine")

The latter assessment of the Palestinian educational system warrants some qualifying facts. First, especially in the more conservative and devoutly Islamic areas such as Gaza and towns like Hebron and Nablus in the West Bank, families are much less likely to educate a girl through the end of high school, much less allow her to pursue a university education — unless the parents are part of the Westernized population of Palestinians known as "Returnees" who spent years abroad. Second, as scholar Khalil Mahshi revealed in an interview with the *Harvard Educational Review* (2006), well into the first decade of the 21st century, the Palestinian educational system has focused on political indoctrination far more than formal instruction.

The attitudes of parents toward educating their daughters — and encouraging their daughters to have fewer children than they did and be able to work outside the home — are far more progressive in Ramallah (a more secular, diverse and cosmopolitan area just north of

Jerusalem) than in the very devout Muslim towns of Nablus or Hebron. (Taraki, 48-49) Child labor (often in lieu of education) is much more pervasive in the sharia law-friendly towns such as Hebron and Nablus. (Taraki, 27-28) Moreover, in the "collectivist" culture of the Palestinian-controlled territories (where the well-being of the community is far more important than the well-being or rights of the individual), the CRC's emphasis on the child's right to have his or her "views" respected is unlikely to be practiced, much less comprehended.

Perspectives on Children's Rights

The perspective of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is that the rights of the child are universal. In other words, "the rights of the child, as recognized or laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the child adopted on November 20, 1989, by the UN General Assembly ... are human rights." However, "the universality of the rights of the child does not mean that those rights should be interpreted and implemented abstracted from their context. Due account must also be taken generally of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each specific people for the protection and harmonious development of the child." (Freeman and Veerman, 48)

Adults are required to ensure fulfillment of these rights in the best interests of the child. This demands that "... all children should receive equal treatment without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status." (Freeman and Veerman, 49) Moreover, "the child is not the property of his or her parents nor of the State, the Church, or anybody else." (Freeman and Veerman, 49) Some might argue that it is wrong to insist on equal treatment in light of the importance of unique cultural traditions and values. However, cultural diversity and integrity cannot be put above children's rights. As Freeman and Veerman (51) say:

"The recognition of the importance of traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child does not mean that implementation of the rights granted to the child by the Convention should be relinquished *if such traditions are inconsistent with the substance of those rights." (Emphasis added.)* Therefore, child marriage, honor killings, imprisonment of those under the age of 18 without access to education, use of children in warfare and terrorist acts, and the systematic indoctrination of even very young children in racist and terrorist ideologies cannot legitimately be deemed culturally or religiously

sacrosanct. Unfortunately, while all of the above violations have occurred primarily in the Palestinian territories (although Israel has imprisoned teens under the age of 18), the United Nations has made few comments about them in spite of the CRC's prohibitions.

Since all but a tiny percentage of the inhabitants of Gaza and the West Bank (Jewish settlers excluded) are Muslim, and the institutions/practices of those areas are shaped by that religion and ideology, a fundamentalist Muslim ideology often shapes practice and institutions—leading to a patriarchal society with fewer rights and opportunities for females and the acceptance of the unquestioning submission of children to their parents and other authority figures. "While the appeal of the universal child rights regime [as codified in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child] is not contingent on the approval of God, nature, morality or reason, Muslim countries appear to claim that their child rights formulations are derived primarily through scriptural methodologies with a little support from socio-cultural traditions." (Fottrell, 37) Indeed, the main obstacle to western (or Israeli) ideas of child welfare being implemented is that while more than 20 Islamic countries have signed the CRC, such documents as the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights (UIDHR) and the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam make it clear that sharia law (based on the Koran) is "... the exclusive source of legitimation" and the means by which all other laws are to be interpreted. (Fottrell, 38)

Even a brief look at *sharia* law pertaining to children makes it clear that its philosophy about the span of childhood (ending at the first signs of puberty in various *sharia* provisions compared to 16 or 18 in modern standards), equal access to education for all children (very unevenly implemented for females as opposed to males — and excluding any idea of "independent thought"), corporal punishment (beating a child for certain offenses in mandated), and marriage practices (child marriage and/or forced marriages) differ dramatically from the principles espoused by the CRC. (Fottrell, 37-44)

An indirect indication of the pervasive acceptance of corporal punishment (including beatings, not just spanking) among the Palestinians was revealed when "... a study was conducted among 225 *Palestinian* pre-school teachers from Israel. Data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire that examined the teachers' attitudes towards reporting child abuse and neglect.... Willingness to report suspected cases of child sexual abuse to the police and CPS was higher than willingness to report other types of child abuse and neglect.... (Haj-Yahia and Attar-Schwartz, abstract)

Marriage practices in Palestinian society often are at odds with the provisions of the CRC. For example, in the more conservative Muslim areas of the West Bank, 71 percent of girls in Nablus and 76 percent of girls in Hebron over the age of 15 are already married — compared with only 61 percent in the more diverse, cosmopolitan Ramallah. (Taraki, 28) And it's unlikely that these girls made such a decision on their own. Postsecondary levels of education in the three cities are inversely proportional: in the areas where young teen girls are not married off, both girls and boys are much more likely to get some postsecondary education. Not surprisingly, more women move to Ramallah than to any other locale in the Palestinian territories. (Taraki, 44)

It's worth noting that life in Ramallah is much more similar to that in Israel than, say, in Hebron and Nablus. The fact that 32 percent of the citizens of Ramallah are Christian (and, therefore, share a similar, even biblical, worldview and value system to that of Jewish Israel) undoubtedly plays a large role in this. By contrast, only .8 percent in Nablus and .1 percent in Hebron are Christians. (Taraki, 43)

"Kin marriage in particular seems persistent in Palestinian society; the IWS survey [conducted in 1997] found that about a quarter of women were married to first cousins and over half to relatives of any sort ..." (Taraki, 53) The influence of the outside world in — particular, western culture and western courtship and marriage practices — may have a great deal to do with the fact that in the 1997 IWS survey of Palestinian society, "... women and men … expressed marital preferences for their children that were substantially different from their own experience." (Taraki, 81)

Israeli society is very child-focused — one in which crimes against children are rare compared to most other nations. For example, in what modern culture in the world do you find thousands of people of all ages pouring into the heart center of its capital city late every Saturday night with children running free and little to no concern about their safety? At the end of Shabbat (the Jewish day of rest), thousands of Jewish Israelis of all ages — both religious and non-religious — stream down from outlying neighborhoods into Ben Yehuda Pedestrian Mall to meet, eat, celebrate and connect. A child or young woman can safely walk the streets of Jewish Jerusalem at any time of day or night without fear of molestation or harassment.

Family law in Israel comes under both religious and secular jurisdiction, with two parallel legal systems working in tandem. These state-supported courts rule in accord with religious laws, which restrict interfaith marriage, encourage family stability, and place obstacles in the way of

divorce. The rulings of the religious courts are subject to the laws passed by Israel's parliament. These forbid child marriage, polygamy, and the husband's one-sided, nonjudicial divorce of his wife, which are permitted by Muslim religious law. They allocate legal guardianship for the children of a union (whether in or out of wedlock) to both parents. In divorce, custody is to be awarded on the basis of the best interests of the child, and non-custodial parents receive visiting rights and pay child support. Teen marriage rates are very low in Israel. Even among the Muslim population, only 15 percent of young women marry in their teens. And, unlike Western countries, most all unmarried people live in family settings. (*Israel's Changing Society*, 198)

Attitudes toward disciplinary methods to be used with children and their right to be protected from violence was codified at the highest judicial level a decade ago: "...[I]n January 2000, Israel's Supreme Court declared all corporal punishment to be unlawful [and] … the Director of Israel's National Council for the Child declared that the ruling established a precedent and 'finally recognized *the right of children not to be exposed to violence of any kind ...*" (Emphasis added.) (Fottrell, 123)

Children's Rights Violations

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has regularly faced allegations from Human Rights Watch and the United Nations of abuses, even war crimes, against Palestinian children (wounding or killing underage combatants or bystanders during defensive military actions; arresting and imprisoning underage Palestinians without notifying their families for up to 90 days). Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that the IDF has long been in an impossible situation when responding to hostilities from a Palestinian culture that seems to condone (or at least turn a blind eye to) the use of children in hostile actions. Such use has included using children (and other non-combatants) as "human shields," recruiting and deploying young adolescents as suicide bombers or guerrilla fighters — and the placement of rocket launchers and other dangerous military paraphernalia in areas frequented by children. (Human Rights Watch, "Erased in a Moment")

Even though the Palestinian Authority voted for international legislation prohibiting the use of child soldiers in 2001, abuses by radical groups in Palestinian-controlled areas (the al-Aksa Martyrs' Brigades, Islamic Jihad and Hamas) went relatively unopposed for much of the subsequent years of the first decade. And the PA itself was complicit in much of this. As Human Rights Watch has noted (and as an Israeli watchdog group, Palestinian Media Watch, has

extensively documented), "There have been several reports of segments on PA television [including TV shows for very young children] that explicitly encourage children to take part in clashes with Israeli forces and extol the virtues of martyrdom." (Human Rights Watch, "Erased in a Moment")

TESTING THEORIES OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) is sometimes considered the founder of comparative politics. He produced three different types of political systems, each with a plus and minus:

Rule by the people (democracy) — This is essentially the political system of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, although it has a form of an Enlightenment "hybrid" as proposed by Montesquieu: An executive branch based on a single leader (the prime minister) to provide that system of respect/enforcement, plus a popular legislative body based on democracy (the Knesset — Israel's parliament, chosen from the people), plus a touch of aristocracy in the judicial branch (the Israeli Supreme Court) — experienced, wise and "special" interpreters of the law. The existence of an institution such as the Israeli Supreme Court, which operates apart from the Israeli government, is a means of "checks and balances" within Israeli society.

Aristocracy — Rule by the few or the best. Its downside is that it can devolve into oligarchy — the corrupted rule by a self-interested few who were simply able to gain control. They help their allies at the expense of the people. In general, this has characterized the Palestinian governments in the West Bank and Gaza, although Hamas was initially elected in Gaza due to its many humanitarian activities — ones which are, unfortunately, juxtaposed with a highly coercive/terroristic approach to governance. However, a shift toward democracy is occurring, although only time will tell whether it's temporary or permanent. And the Palestinians do not yet have such a functional judicial branch at the top (no Supreme Court).

Monarchy — This third option proposed by Aristotle is not applicable here.

Modernization Theory (otherwise known as the Behaviorialism School) is very helpful for explaining similarities and differences in Israeli and Palestinian perspectives on child welfare. The behavioralists set up "pattern variables" with traditional vs. modern, ascribed (assigned) vs. achieved status, sentimental vs. realistic, and individualistic vs. collectivistic categories. This theory is most helpful when attempting to navigate the cross-cultural communication challenges between the Israelis and the Palestinians:

PALESTINIANS	ISRAEL
Traditional	Modern
Ascribed status (this is morphing somewhat)	Achieved status
Sentiment	Reality
Collectively oriented	Individually oriented

The third theory that's applicable here is dependency theory as espoused by Andre Gunder Frank. Frank posited a system that is international in scope — somewhat along the lines of Theda Skocpol's thought (you have to take a look at the system within which a state develops and functions). Frank used concepts of core (diverse economies, amenable to democracy) and periphery (post-colonial countries that either segue into democracy or continue to be exploited if they are resource-wealthy).

In a very real sense, the land insultingly renamed "Palestine" ("Philistine") by a conquering Roman general in 135 A.D. (now divided into Israel and the Palestinian territories) was in a semi-colonial position for almost two millennia under the Romans, then the Turks, then (briefly) European Crusaders, and finally the British. It was not a true colonial presence because the foreign powers saw few, if any resources, worth exploiting. Rather, as a major trade route and crossroads of the world, control of the area gave the particular occupying power added international influence. Also, there was almost always some degree of religious motivation for the occupying power to be there.

The international states that are heavily involved with Israel (the Anglo-Saxon nations) and the Palestinians (the Arab nations) financially and through policy pressure bring certain dynamics of structure into play: empowering or disenfranchising certain political parties and weakening the dependence of Palestinians, in particular, on traditional community and family networks. The structures and institutions present in both cultures began changing late in the 20th century. After the 1967 War, Israel — already a fledging democracy — shed much of its collectivist nature, adopted Western ideals and practices, and became fully industrialized. The Palestinian territories (at least in the West Bank), still beset by infighting and a terrorist mentality, are still in the process of evolving. While they have officially adopted a parliamentary style of government, unofficially it operates very much as an authoritarian oligarchy in Gaza and a quasi-democracy with strongly oligarchic characteristics in the West Bank.

Certain of Barrington Moore's structuralist comments about Russia and Pakistan are applicable to the Palestinian territories: In Russia, there's a weak but rising middle class with a high unemployment rate, a strong political structure, a government that's perceived as stronger than it is (and uses propaganda to whitewash problems). The population feels underrepresented but supposedly has not lost faith in the government due to perceived military threats. International issues and issues of power can drive an orientation toward a strong leadership structure. It reflects the population's desire that a strong government will protect them and advance their interests.

In Pakistan and the Palestinian territories alike, you have a strongly Islamic orientation. (It should be noted that there used to be more Christians in the Palestinian territories; but in towns like Hebron, Nablus and Bethlehem, they have been marginalized and often persecuted.) The population is tied together by social and religious beliefs along with massive corruption and/or coercion by the dominant political structure. Other countries and international organizations (Arab countries, in particular) reinforce that structure.

CONCLUSION

Child welfare in Israel and the Palestinian territories is shaped by governmental structures (democratic in Israel vs. oligarchical in Gaza and the West Bank—albeit with democratic aspirations in the latter), economic realities (developed and entrepreneurial in Israel, controlled and relatively undeveloped in the Palestinian areas), culture (individualist and progressive in Israel, collectivist and traditional in the Palestinian areas), and worldview (largely secular but humanistic in Israel; largely Islamic, traditional, and focused on adhering to religious requirements and maintaining the status quo in "Palestine").

Decades ago, former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir remarked in frustration, "There will be no peace until the Arabs love their children more than they hate Israel." While there is no doubt that Palestinians (whether Arab or not) love their children as much as Israelis do, how that love is perceived and expressed is affected by the respective cultures, educational and governmental institutions, community expectations, and worldviews. It has also been impacted for decades by the chaos and deprivation engendered by a series of wars, governance by corrupt and brutal oligarchies (although this has changed for the better in the West Bank since the demise of Yasser Arafat) or, in the case of Gaza, by sharia-adherent and repressive Hamas leaders. Throughout the world, ideas of how best to raise and treat children have evolved in various

countries in direct proportion to greater stability, education and economic well-being.

Among most of the populace in the Palestinian territories, children are seen not as individuals so much as an expression of the extended family or even the larger community. A child's individual well-being is greatly subordinate to a child's ability and willingness to promote and advance the well-being of the group. A child's welfare is directly affected by whether or not he or she brings honor to the family and community — and preserves the "face" of both. Girls are not necessarily seen as less important than boys; but, certainly, the opportunities open to them are far more limited in the patriarchal Palestinian culture.

In Israel, with the exception of the small percentage of children raised in more extremist Jewish or Muslim families, the ideology of child welfare coheres with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (and with western ideology related to child-rearing and the best interests of children). Children are seen as individuals who have the right to be raised in a non-violent, supportive, healthy, encouraging atmosphere with full educational opportunities. Girls are considered no less important than boys—and with the exception of girls raised in ultra-Orthodox families (and even then, they have more opportunities than their devout Muslim Palestinian counterparts), all spheres of Israeli life are open to them with the exception of a few combat roles. Free public education and health care are available to all (either through the government or programs run by a plethora of international NGOs — Jewish, Christian, and secular), and child labor is strictly regulated.

To conclude, therefore, the theories of comparative politics that best explain child welfare philosophies and practices in both Israel and the Palestinian territories are (in order of importance) behaviorialism, dependency, structuralism, and Aristotle's governmental models of democracy and oligarchy. Israel is a democracy; the West Bank is an oligarchy with emerging elements of democracy; and Gaza is an oligarchy. Both peoples are highly influenced and intensively funded by international hegemonic interests with their own agendas because of the strategic value of this part of the world.

In the Palestinian territories, in particular, cultural norms and values will need to change before ideas of child welfare are in line with the ideals of the CRC. Also, in Gaza and the West Bank, it has been difficult to establish high-quality institutions offering high-quality health care, education and cultural opportunities. To some degree, international NGOs have tried to help; but instability, terrorism and sanctions (in Gaza, in particular) have kept that option very limited.

Also, for whatever reason, Muslims do not have a track record of setting up charitable organizations to help their fellow Muslims. The role of Hamas (a terrorist organization, unfortunately) in doing so in Gaza is a rare exception.

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