

100 Years Middle East Conflict - **An Honorable Solution**

Exposé

This book argues in favor of seeing religion as a major key to peace and using it for that end.

Most politicians and authors argue that in deliberations about peace in the Middle East religion should be disregarded, because so many troubles of the region have been caused by the religions; and so volatile are religious issues that the moment they are touched upon, new violence erupts.

Without question, the religions have hitherto exercised a considerable destructive influence. I analyze that influence in great detail in my book. But instead of excluding religious motives from my considerations I prefer to point to the most essential asset of each of the Middle East religions: their overwhelming potential for peace. Only, up until now, nobody has tried to harness that unifying potential. Politicians have rather made use of the delimiting, divisive power of religion, in order to infuriate their group and drive them against the others. That way the essence of religion, all-embracing compassion, falls by the wayside or even capsizes into hatred, the direct opposite of what religion is in essence about.

For all these reasons, many believe that religion should be excluded from political consideration. That view has gained wide acceptance. Thus, many people in the West tend to believe, that, basically, this conflict is only a conflict about land.

But that belief disregards the very real trauma suffered by the Muslims, when the Jews took possession of what had once been their ancient homeland, but which had for the last fourteen hundred years been one of the territories most sacred to Islam. It disregards the Muslims' fear that, with the Jews once again in possession of their Holy Land, they might even lose their great sanctuary in Jerusalem. Or why else would the Grand Mufti claim "there never has been a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem"?

A very similar fear is obviously motivating Hamas. Together with Iran, they are the only ones left who dare to point out the disaster Jewish domination of Jerusalem would pose to the belief in Muslim superiority.

If this were just a conflict about land, it would have been solved decades ago. All major 20th century conflicts about land have been solved rather quickly one way or the other. Think of the 15 Million German refugees from Germany's former eastern territories. All of them were integrated almost without a problem into the rather small area of Western Germany. Or think of South Tyrol, with its German speaking

population. After WW I it was annexed by Italy. Since Austria had surrendered unconditionally it could not do anything about losing the heart of its “holy land” of Tyrol! Yet today, 100 years later, South Tyrol is one of the provinces with the highest productivity in Italy – despite foreign domination. Nobody is talking about the injustice done to them anymore. So why is everybody talking about the injustice done to the Palestinians or the Palestinian refugees? What is preventing Palestinians from considering such a forward strategy for themselves?

In my view, the predominant tendency to treat religion in mainly political terms is that obstacle. Instead of allowing the spiritual function of religion to play its part, which touches every human being, the political aspect of religion can easily create an enemy image and, thus, an overwhelming obligation to feel offended. Nor does that obligation allow the Palestinians to react in a more positive way. If this observation is correct, the talk about the refugees may be primarily the shield they need to hide their trauma, the offense the Jewish conquest posed to their view of themselves.

But hiding motives can never bring lasting peace. Peace will be possible only if the real agendas are presented openly.

This book discusses all these questions. It will enable readers to look behind the scenes and understand why all peacemaking has failed thus far; they will see all that has been blanked out throughout the seventy years of international peace efforts. This book will enable politicians to avoid customary detours and to take the direct approach to peace by acknowledging the fears felt not only on the Jewish but also on the Muslim side, by targeting freedom of religion, equal rights and raising living standards, especially on the Palestinian side.

It is high time for such a book and above all for such an approach. It will pressure those in authority to include in their policy hitherto ignored spiritual and social factors in order to arouse essential reciprocal respect – for without such true respect there can be no hope of attaining lasting peace.

Peace will be based on building bridges.

Only once the underlying spiritual unity can be seen beyond customary divisions will ingrained prejudices lose their compulsiveness – and then, under these new auspices, Palestine will indeed stand a good chance of becoming one of the most productive countries of the Middle East.

If I’ve done my job right, the views presented in this book could change many people’s lives. They could change the lives of the people you love.

The author: Gottfried Hutter, psychotherapist, theologian, also studied history and political science, contact: gottfried.hutter@gmx.de

100 Years Middle East Conflict - An Honorable Solution

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¹ Update of a lecture already published in: Reinalter, Helmut (Ed.): *Weltethos-Gespräche. Interdisziplinäre Forschungen 24. (World-Ethos-Talks. Interdisciplinary Research 24).* Innsbruck university press, Innsbruck 2014, pp. 89-105

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Now a preface to my book by Arun Gandhi, the Grandson of Mahatma Gandhi:

Some remarks on “After 100 Years of Middle East Conflict – an Honorable Solution”

Many problems in this world have remained mired in politics for decades and have been churned into a muddy consistency so that most people believe they are intractable.

The most vexing of these problems are the conflicts between India and Pakistan and Israel and Palestine. Both have their origins in the arbitrary division of a country and both date back to the 1940s. Both of these issues became a problem because the authorities at the time applied a political solution to what is an emotional problem.

Politics is cold blooded. There is no room for compassion, understanding or respect and, certainly, no room for honor or an honorable solution. Politicians approach problems the only way they know — with hammer and tongs! Hammer out a deal which is not always conducive to peace and stability.

It is, therefore, refreshing to read this book written by Gottfried Hutter, a theologian well versed in the religions and history of that land, and an experienced trauma therapist, who has outlined an honorable solution to the Israel Palestine problem. If this problem is to be solved the only way this can be achieved is through compassion, understanding and respect for the sentiments of people on both sides. It has to be a non-political solution and who better to do this than someone experienced in trauma therapy.

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Arun Gandhi, Peace Farmer

Let's be the Change We Wish To See In The World