

Melanie Phillips

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US presidential hopeful Newt Gingrich (whose Lazarus-like trajectory to the Republican nomination I flagged up [here](#) a month ago) has recently demonstrated yet again Melanie's First Rule of Modern Political Discourse - the more obvious the truth that you utter, the more explosive and abusive the reaction.

For Gingrich said the Palestinian Arabs were 'an invented people' - and the world promptly started hurling execrations at him, as if such a statement proved beyond doubt that Gingrich was indeed a dangerously extreme individual who, when it came to political positioning, was just off the graph altogether.

So just what did he say? [This](#):

' "Remember, there was no Palestine as a state - (it was) part of the Ottoman Empire. I think we have an invented Palestinian people who are in fact Arabs and historically part of the Arab community and they had the chance to go many places..." '

But of course, he is absolutely correct. As [Elder of Ziyon](#) pointed out, the Arabs

who lived in Palestine were a disconnected bunch of tribes who had nothing in common with each other except that they were Arabs. They never were, are not and never will be a Palestinian people (the claim that they are now just because they say they are is risible and would be dismissed out of hand if applied to any other self-defined grouping). There is not and never has been any 'Palestinian' Arab culture, language, religion or national identity separate from that of the wider Arab nation.

'Palestinianism' was invented solely to destroy Israel. The one and only characteristic of this 'national' identity is the aim of destroying another -- authentic -- national identity.

The Arabs have themselves repeatedly admitted this over the years. Auni Bey Abdul-Hadi, the Syrian Arab leader told the British Peel Commission in 1937:

"There is no such country as Palestine. 'Palestine' is a term the Zionists invented. There is no Palestine in the Bible. Our country was for centuries part of Syria. 'Palestine' is alien to us. It is the Zionists who introduced it."

At the United Nations in 1956, the Saudi representative stated:

"It is common knowledge that Palestine is nothing but Southern Syria."

And after the 1967 war Zuheir Muhsin, then military commander of the PLO and member of the PLO Executive Council, said helpfully:

"There are no differences between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese. We are all part of one nation. It is only for political reasons that we carefully underline our Palestinian identity... yes, the existence of a separate Palestinian identity serves only tactical purposes. The founding of a Palestinian state is a new tool in the continuing battle against Israel."

The agenda of 'Palestinian rights' is, however, now so deeply rooted in western discourse and diplomacy - and even in Israeli leftist discourse - that Gingrich has found himself under attack for talking rubbish. But it is his attackers whose arguments are jaw-droppingly absurd.

For example, a Fatah Revolutionary Council member claimed that Gingrich was 'racist' and 'ignorant' because the Palestinians had descended from the 'Canaanite tribe of the Jebusites'. But as [Elder of Zion](#) comments in a further hilarious posting, there are one or two, ah, obstacles in the way of this particular claim:

'The only confirmed mention of the historic Jebusites is in the Hebrew Bible. That's the only source that says that the Jebusites lived around Jerusalem. This exact same source says that one of their leaders, Araunah, offered to give the Temple Mount to King David; David insisted that he pay for it, and he did - for the amount of fifty silver shekels. So if you believe that the Palestinian Arabs are actually Jebusites, you must believe that they sold the Temple Mount to the Jews in a legal transaction.

'... There is another problem, though. The Constitution of Palestine refers numerous times to the "Arab Palestinian people" and that "Palestine is part of the large Arab World, and the Palestinian people are part of the Arab Nation." The PLO Charter similarly states "Palestine is the homeland of the Arab Palestinian people; it is an indivisible part of the Arab homeland, and the Palestinian people are an integral part of the Arab nation."

'But Jebusites were not Arabs. They were not even Semites! No self-respecting Jebusite (if any had still existed) would identify with the Arab hordes who overran his homeland in the seventh century. He would probably want to behead the infidel invaders.

'Is the constitution and charter wrong? When they call themselves Arab, are they all lying? Perhaps "Palestine" should quit the Arab League and re-assert its nebulous Jebusite ancestry.'

Next, [here](#) was Israeli revisionist historian Tom Segev:

""There is no intelligent person today who argues about the existence of the Palestinian people," Segev said. "Nations are created gradually. I don't think the Palestinians are less of a nation than the Americans," he added.'

There is no intelligent person today who would compare like with unlike in this shallow way. Americans became a nation solely because they created, lived in and governed America. The Jews were the nation who created, lived in and governed Israel. The Arabs were among waves of colonisers who took their national homeland away from them. The Americans did not base their entire claim to nationhood on the big lie that they were the original inhabitants of the land. The Palestinian Arabs do just that.

Daniel Greenfield, aka [Sultan Knish](#), rips the American analogy apart and goes on:

'Palestinian identity is just so much gibberish. The official definition of that identity encompasses only those parts of the Palestine Mandate which Israel holds today.

'The people who live on the parts of the Palestine Mandate that were turned into the Kingdom of Jordan in 1921 are not Palestinians. There is no call to incorporate them into a Palestinian state. The people who lived in the parts of Israel that were captured by Jordan and Egypt in 1948 weren't Palestinians, and there was no call to turn the land that today comprises the so-called "Occupied Territories" into a state. But in 1967 when Israel liberated those areas-- only then did they magically turn into Palestinians. How is anyone supposed to take this nonsense seriously?

'Suppose I were to tell you that there were an ancient people known as the Floridians whose land was seized from them to make resort hotels and orange groves. What would be your first clue that there was something wrong here? Florida is a Spanish name meaning flower. Palestine, which is a Latin name applied by its ancient conquerors, derived from the Greek, has the same problem.

'When the Jews rebuilt their country, they did not call it Palestine, that was the name used by European powers. They called it Israel. The local Arabs who had come with the wave of conquests that toppled Byzantine rule had no such history and no name for themselves. Instead they took the Latin name used by the European powers and began pretending that it was some ancient tribal

identity, rather than a regional name that was used by the European powers to describe local Jews and Arabs.

'... This bloody circus has been going on for way too long. Enough that the Arab states and the local clan leaders have managed to turn out generations of children committed to killing in the name of a mythical identity for a state that they don't really want. The call for a Palestinian state was a cynical ploy for destroying Israel. It's why the negotiations never go anywhere, they're not meant to go anywhere.'

Exactly. Which is why Gingrich's remark goes to the very heart of the issue; and it is the fact that so many in the intellectual, political and diplomatic world - including in Israel itself - find what he said so outlandish that goes a long way to explain why there is still no peace in the Middle East.

Gosh - a presidential candidate who actually understands what's going on in the Middle East and speaks the truth about it! No wonder they're so desperate now to stop him.