

ADDITIONS, INTEGRATIONS, CORRECTIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS  
TO THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ARNOLD JOSEPH TOYNBEE\*

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429) Arnold J. Toynbee, *In Palestine: A Disaster; But in Malaya: A Success. Two British Experiments*, in «The Daily Colonist», Friday, January 26, 1968, p. 4. Observer Foreign News Service article. Text below.

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\* *A Bibliography of Arnold J. Toynbee*, compiled by S. Fiona Morton, with a Foreword by Veronica M. Toynbee, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980.

## IN PALESTINE A DISASTER, BUT IN MALAYA: A SUCCESS

### TWO BRITISH EXPERIMENTS

By Arnold J. Toynbee

The binational state of Malaya that Britain attempted to make after the Second World War is working, it not altogether smoothly. When Britain, after the First World War, tried to build and launch a binational state of Arabs and Jews in Palestine, the craft broke in half before it was float; and it cannot be certain that Malaya, too, will not eventually blow up. So far, however, it is a credit to her Malay and Chinese citizens.

The unity of a binational or multinational state will be secure if the component communities are each other's equals, if each of them feels that it is its partners equal. This condition is fulfilled in Switzerland. Quadrinational Switzerland, with its four official languages (German, French, Italian and Latin) is one of the most solidly-built states in the world. But there is no second Switzerland.

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There are, however, two binational states – Belgium and Canada – in which one of the two component communities suffers from an inferiority complex. The Flemings in Belgium and the Canadiens in Canada feel, with some reason, that they have been treated as second-class citizens in the past. They feel, though with less reason, that they have not yet completely succeeded in asserting their equality with their Walloon and their English speaking fellow citizens.

But the Flemings and the Canadiens are still inordinately sensitive, and their state of mind is a danger to the preservation of the unity of their respective countries. If so slight an inequality as this can produce such disruptive political effects, what are we to expect where the inequality is far greater and far more difficult to redress? This is the situation in both

Palestine, where the Arabs are no match for the Jews, and in Malaya where the Malays are no match for the Chinese.

In each country, the weaker community was in possession before the stronger community moved in. In each country the weaker community's weakness – in the average level of education, in material standard of living, and in the kinds of experience and capability that are required for living in the modern world - is offset to some extent because this locally weak community is a fragment of a larger society occupying a vast area. The Arab world, to which the Palestinian Arabs belong, extends from the Atlantic coast of North Africa to the Persian Gulf. The Malay world extends from Madagascar to the Philippines.

In both cases, however, the potential advantage offered to the weaker community by its sheer size is largely cancelled by domestic political discord. Indonesia has only recently abandoned her hostile "confrontation" of Malaya in Borneo, though Indonesia and Malaya alike feel themselves threatened by the Chinese diaspora, with giant China looming up behind it.

Similarly, the United Arab Republic and Saudi Arabia have only recently abandoned their confrontation with each other in the Yemen, though, like all Arab states, they both feel themselves threatened by the state of Israel – a state small in area and population, yet strong in capability and in will-power, and also enjoying the support of the Jewish dispersion throughout the Western world.

A further point of similarity is that the religion of the weaker party is Islam – about 90 per cent of the Palestinian Arabs are Muslims, and so are virtually 100 per cent of the Malayan Malays. Most of the population of the wider Arab and Malay world is also Muslim. In the wider Malay world, the Filipinos are Christians, but the Javanese are Muslims, and Java is by far the most populous of all the Malay world's islands and peninsulas.

A final point in common is that in both Malaya and Palestine the stronger party, which is the later comer, has come in with the approval, encouragement and support of Britain, at a time during which the country was under British rule.

Considering that the two situations are analogous to this remarkable degree, how are we to account for the striking difference in the outcome? Why is it that Malaya has so far held together, whereas Palestine has broken in two?

The most likely explanation is to be found in some difference in the attitude and behavior of the stronger party – the Jews in Palestine and the Chinese in Malaya. Yet this difference is not easy to identify. The Jews believe themselves to be God’s chosen people. True, but the Chinese believe themselves to be “the people” – the only truly civilized human beings.

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The Chinese think and feel in secular terms, the Jews in theological terms; but is not the underlying attitude of both these peoples the same? Can it not be defined, in both cases, as being a superiority complex? And if the Chinese and the Jewish attitudes are, at bottom, identical, how is it that the Malayan Chinese have managed to keep on terms with the Malays, whereas the Israeli Jews have alienated the Arabs?

Perhaps there is a significant difference in the spirit in which the Chinese and the Jewish superiority complexes work. To an outside observer who is neither Jewish nor Chinese, it looks as if the Chinese sense of superiority is effortless and therefore bland, whereas the Jewish sense of superiority is agonizing and therefore aggressive.

The traditional Chinese spirit is sceptical and supple. For the Chinese “Heaven” has become as dim and distant a figure as “Zeus” eventually became for the Greeks. The Chinese do not feel that their superiority needs to be ratified by God’s Fist. For the Chinese, God’s choice of them would be superfluous.

The Chinese are seated comfortably on a mundane cushion, in contrast to the Jews, who are writhing on celestial tenterhooks. This difference in attitude may perhaps account for the difference in the outcome when the Chinese and the Jews dare confronted with the same awkward problem of having to arrive at a modus vivendi with a weaker people with whom the stronger people has to coexist.