

Isn't Israel more than a Zionist State?

STRANGER THAN FICTION

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ESSENTIALLY, since its emergence in 1948, Israel has remained a n unassimilated lump in the body politic of the Muslim World. So much so, Muslim-majority countries from Algeria to Afghanistan and Iran to Indonesia -- including those having no common border with Israel -- do not shy away from

expressing their solidarity with the Palestinian cause. This is an attempt to understand why Israel is so important in the collective psyche of Muslims from Morocco to Indonesia; and what are the short- and long-term ramifications of the collective Muslim hate against the Zionist State. Despite the tacit support for Israel's latest invasion of Gaza by some autocratic Arab regimes -- Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the UAE -- the overwhelming majority of Muslims across the world consider Israel a rogue state, no better than Nazi Germany or fascist Italy. The pro-Israeli Arab regimes have lost all credibility and support among the bulk of Muslims everywhere. Not only Muslims but also non-Muslims across the world, including the US, UK, Germany, France, and even in Israel, have been publicly condemning Israel for the mass killing of innocent civilians in Gaza.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration has been thoroughly discredited among Muslims for its blind support for Israel, the only country which has violated scores of UN Resolutions and international law with impunity. It has not only refused to withdraw from the Occupied Territories, but has also been illegally settling Jews in Palestinian and Syrian territories. Thanks to the overpowering influence of the Israel Lobby and the AIPAC in America, the Obama Administration (like those of his predecessors) seems to be totally spellbound and too eager to help Israel by condoning all its illegal activities, including mass slaughter of innocent men, women and children in Gaza, West Bank and elsewhere in the Arab World. Seemingly, Israel under Netanyahu is striking the last nail into the coffin of the so-called Two-State Formula, and is working for the realisation of Greater Israel to annex more territories from Syria, Jordan and neighbouring countries.

Interestingly, Netanyahu granted first Golan Heights oil drilling licence to Dick Cheney-linked company, Genie Energy, in early 2013. And we know Golan Heights is an Israeli-occupied territory taken from Syria during the 1967 War. In view of Israel's unique privileged position as it gets away with all illegal acts with impunity -- including war crimes and pogroms -- one wonders if there is a special set of laws for this Zionist State, or it is something more than just a Zionist State!

The *raison d'être* for Israel goes beyond the creation of a Jewish homeland. Theodor Herzl's (the "Father of Zionism") justified the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine in his famous 1896 pamphlet, *Der Judentstaat* [The Jewish State] in the following manner: "We should there form a portion of a *rampart* of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilisation as opposed to barbarism." European colonial powers, especially Britain, were enamoured by the idea of Israel, especially during World War I. Besides the "Balfour Declaration" made by British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour in 1917 favouring the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine; in the wake of the War in 1918, the British did everything possible to settle a large number of

armed European Jews in Palestine (which was under British occupation, 1919-1948) paving the way for the creation of Israel in 1948. Despite many leading Americans' opposition to the creation of Israel, President Truman (a Christian Zionist), favoured its creation.

Palestine was not a barren, uninhabited land, as claimed by Israel and its promoters. What the British did in occupied Palestine was rob Paul to reward Peter in the most cynical clever way. The British rulers allowed unhindered Jewish migration to Palestine without the permission of the Palestinian people. In May 1948, the British abruptly left Palestine and the heavily armed Jewish settlers (including Jewish British soldiers) declared the "independence" of Israel.

Since the overpowering Zionist Lobby in the West can brand one as "anti-Semitic" even for one's objective criticism of Israel's highhandedness in Gaza, West Bank and across the region, and for questioning the way the entity of Israel came into being in the first place, one may cite an Israeli author and activist Miko Peled, son of a former Israeli general who fought for Israel in its decisive wars against Arabs in 1948 and 1967, in this regard. Peled, the author of best selling *The General's Son*, questions several myths about the creation of Israel, "the myth of 1948"; "the myth of the existential threat of 1967"; and "the myth of Jewish democracy [in Israel]". He writes: *Growing up we were taught to believe that the Arabs had left Eretz Israel [in 1948] partly on their own and partially at the directive of their so-called leaders, and that therefore taking their land and homes was morally OK. It never occurred to us that even if they did leave willingly, we had no right to prohibit their return... It had been a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing by the Jewish militia involving massacres, terrorism, and the wholesale looting of an entire nation* [emphasis added].

It seems the main motive behind the creation of Israel was the Western desire to have a "rampart of Europe against Asia" in the oil-rich Middle East in close proximity to the strategically important Suez Canal. The Anglo-French and Israeli invasion of Egypt in the wake of Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 1956 may be cited in support of the above assertion. America's *carte blanche* to Israel is at the roots of the latter's dangerously arrogant policy toward the Muslim World. America favoured Israeli occupation of Arab lands in 1967 and subsequent invasions of Arab nations and Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Last but not least, America has been supportive of Israel's brazen and unabashed violations of around 90 UN Security Council resolutions condemning its violations of human rights and asking for its unconditional withdrawal from Arab territories it occupied in the 1967 War, which Israel started by invading Egypt, Syria and Jordan, contrary to the Western and Israeli propaganda on the contrary. America also condoned the Israeli (aerial and naval) attack on a US Navy ship during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War in international waters, as a "mistake." The attack sank the USS Liberty, and killed 34 US soldiers.

One wonders as to why the West does not take cognisance of Arab rebels' displaying the Palestinian flag in anti-autocracy rallies during the "Arab Spring" in the streets of Cairo, Damascus and San'a. While the Palestine issue has been a flashpoint, the West has been consistently supporting Israel since its hurried creation in 1948 following a UN Resolution in 1947 in favour of partitioning Palestine between Arabs and Jews. It is noteworthy that the decision to partition Palestine (Resolution 181) was taken at the UN General Assembly on November 29, 1947 by 33 votes against 13 with 10 abstentions and one absence while more than two-thirds of the World (under colonial rule) remained unrepresented in the United Nations. The reason of Western / American support for Israel is

not far to seek. Days after Resolution 181, on December 11, 1947 British Labor MP Thomas Reid stated in the Parliament the real motive of American support for Israel: "What is the motive? Let us be frank about it. One of the chief motives is that the Jews have a controlling voice in the election for the President in the States of New York, Illinois, Ohio and elsewhere in America. I suggest that the chief reason for this evil proposal of U.N.O. is that the political parties in America, or their party machines, are partly at the electoral mercy of the Jews. That is public knowledge" [emphasis added].

Israel's growing influence in world affairs has been the main catalyst in the fast deterioration of the Muslim-West understanding. Until 1991, majority of the UN members considered Zionism synonymous with racism. By 1991, the Israeli Lobby had become so powerful globally that the UN General Assembly -- for the first time in its history -- revoked Resolution 3379 by Resolution 46/86 by 111 votes against 25 on December 16. In 1991, countries that had favoured Resolution 3379 in 1975, either abstained/absented from voting or voted in favour of its revocation. USSR and India, which had voted for Resolution 3379, went against it in 1991. Afterwards, all attempts to find out a solution to the Arab-Israeli problem through the good offices of some European and American leaders, including Bill Clinton, failed. They failed as they wanted to find out a solution without compelling Israel to leave all "occupied territories," including Jerusalem, in accordance with UN Resolution 242 of 1967.

After Bill Clinton -- who had a better image than most American presidents had in the Muslim World -- Obama sounded quite reassuring to the Muslim World through his "path-breaking" Cairo Speech on June 4, 2009, and his insistence in May 2011 that the Palestinian State would be based on the pre-1967 War borders. In Cairo, he asked Israel to recognise the Palestinians' right to have a state of their own, and reiterated boldly: "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements [in the occupied West Bank]". In Washington, on May 19, 2011, on the eve of Israeli hawkish Prime Minister Netanyahu's arrival, he called for Israel's return to the pre-1967 borders. He asked Israel to accept the pre-June 1967 boundaries as the basis for negotiations for a lasting peace with the Palestinians. He wanted "full and phased withdrawal of Israeli military forces" from the West Bank in coordination with Palestinian security forces for "a viable Palestine, a secure Israel." "The dream of a Jewish and democratic state cannot be fulfilled with permanent occupation," he stressed. Instead of asking Israel to demolish the illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank, he advised Israelis and Arabs to do "land swaps to accommodate Israel's large settlement blocs".

The day after his speech, Obama met with the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu at the White House. Netanyahu publicly rejected the idea of Israel's going back to the 1967 border as impractical and hence unacceptable to Israel. Obama's speech was full of sound and fury and not so palatable to Palestinians for suggesting Palestinians to swap Jewish settlements in prime real estate in the West Bank with patches of desert. It, however, stirred up pro-Israeli Americans. Conservative American analysts and politicians -- from Glenn Beck to Sarah Palin -- ridiculed the idea of Israel's withdrawing from the territories it occupied in 1967 and likened it with the "absurd" idea of America's returning Texas and other territories it occupied in wars with Mexico. Israel and its American supporters have also rejected the idea of any peace talk between Israel and the Palestinian Authorities having links with Hamas, which does not recognise Israel's right to exist as an entity and publicly condemned the killing of

bin Laden.

Days before evoking some controversy by his Cairo speech, Obama mended fences with the Israel Lobby and Israel through his American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Speaking to the AIPAC, America's largest pro-Israel lobby, Obama said that America's support for Israel remained "ironclad" and that his emphasis on 1967 borders was "misrepresented" and his words were neither controversial nor new. He said he wanted Israel and the Palestinians to negotiate a border that would be "different from the one that existed on June 4, 1967". He also asserted that Israel was not under any obligation to sign peace with Hamas unless it recognised Israel as an entity and that he wanted the Palestinians and Israelis to "swap lands" (allowing Israel to retain the "Jewish settlements" in the West Bank). What the pro-Israeli Obama administration did to the Palestinian cause contradicted his Cairo speech of June 2009, where he promised to turn America into a benign soft-power: "Indeed, we can recall the words of Thomas Jefferson, who said: 'I hope that our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us that the less we use our power the greater it will be'". As King Abdullah II of Jordan has explained, while the State Department and the Pentagon have been soft on the Palestinians, Obama, under the influence of his pro-Israeli Middle East adviser Dennis Ross, has been soft on Israel.

What is noteworthy is Obama's volte-face at the end of the day. On September 21, 2011, his so-called soft corner for Palestine simply evaporated on the floors of the UN General Assembly. The Israeli Lobby in America -- possibly more powerful than the "Military-Industrial-Complex" -- forcefully retaliated against Obama's "harsh policy" against Israel. Consequently, the US president, supposed to be the "most powerful head of state" in the world, was forced to eat his words. In his UN General Assembly speech in September 2011 Obama unabashedly pooh-poohed Palestinian National Authority's President Mahmoud Abbas's proposal of granting formal UN membership to Palestine. Obama, as one analyst tells us, in "an empty and arrogant sermon" to the UN, which evoked no applause for "a single line in his speech," suggested that a Palestinian state would emerge only after "negotiations between the parties", the Israelis and the Palestinians. He simply ignored the fact that decades of negotiations between the two parties had been fruitless and futile. In the same speech, Obama concocted history and simply refrained from telling the truth to the world body. He said that a) Israel's neighbours had "waged repeated wars" against it; and b)

"In Bahrain, steps have been taken toward reform and accountability". Not long after Obama's UN speech, America condemned the Unesco for formally admitting the Palestinian State as a member and cut US funding for the world body -- worth \$60 million per year. In this backdrop, it seems the Palestinian State will remain even elusive unless "something" that will "somehow happen", to paraphrase Mark Danner, who is critical of both the UN and the US administration for their pro-Israeli bias.

What is most striking is the total inability of conservatives and other pro-Israeli Americans to understand the Arab and Muslim discourse on Israel -- which redraws the pre-1948 map of Palestine -- meaning the total obliteration of the Zionist State. Last but not least, the Israel Lobby is so well entrenched in US administration that even Obama has to concede undue advantages to the Zionist nation. Obama's inability to reverse the pro-Israeli US policy -- and his helplessness in this regard -- is well reflected in a private conversation with President Sarkozy (which journalists overheard as the microphone was on) at the G20

Summit in Cannes on November 3, 2011. On Sarkozy's terse comment on Benjamin Netanyahu, "I cannot stand him, he is a liar," Obama replied: "You're fed up with him, but I have to deal with him everyday".

In view of the emerging changes in the Arab World since the Spring of 2011, which have emboldened Islamist Hamas and other groups, they are least likely to cooperate with the West that is committed to protect the Zionist State to the detriment of more than ten million expropriated, humiliated and state-less Palestinians in the world. Meanwhile, Islamist parties are emerging powerful in Egypt and Tunisia. The fate of the rest of the Arab World will not be that different in the coming years; "anti-Israel public opinion will remain a feature of Middle Eastern politics until a final and equitable peace treaty is struck." Even "secular" Turkey -- a Nato member having diplomatic ties with Israel -- is not immune to the growing anti-Israeli sentiment that one notices in the Arab World, Iran and elsewhere in the Muslim World.

However, despite the growing influence of the Israel Lobby on the Congress, many American security analysts and even a general consider Israel a threat to "U.S. national security". In January 2010, General David Petraeus, in his brief to Admiral Michael Mullen, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, depicted Israel as a "security threat" to America. Despite many Americans' strong reservations about Israel and the perils that Israel poses to America's national security, the Congress remains unperturbed about having Israel as America's main ally in the Middle East. America's failure to understand why "they" (Muslims) hate Americans is unbelievable. Ehsan Ahrai has pointed out: "It took the American policy makers more than fifty years to realise that the Arab-Israeli conflict has been a core Muslim issue." And one cannot agree more with him that although Saddam Hussein was "no one's hero" in the Muslim World, yet the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 made the average Muslim very angry at America. What the West has persistently failed to understand is that, despite its avid promotion of democracy, Western tolerance of unpopular autocrats in the Muslim World, along with its pro-Israeli and, by implication, anti-Arab / anti-Muslim policy, secular democracy has become synonymous with Western "hedonism", "materialism" and "Godlessness", as we find in the writings of Sayyid Qutb and his ilk.

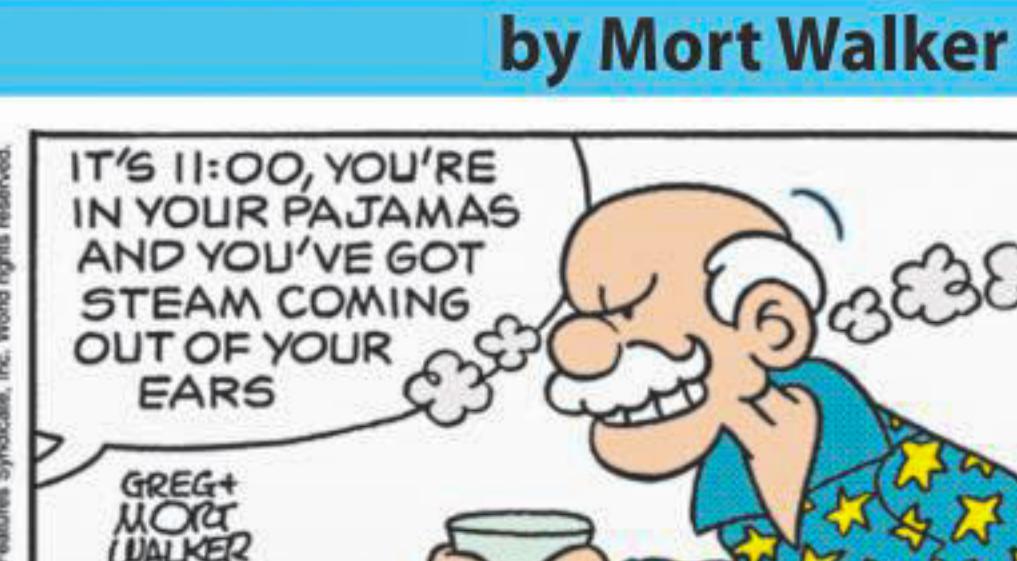
This incident and its positive repercussion in the Muslim World should be an eye-opener to Western policymakers. The mass protests in the Muslim World against Israeli air raids in Gaza since 2008 and Israeli commandos' killing nine Turkish civilians in the Gaza-bound aid flotilla in May 2010; and the Muslim mass support for Hezbollah's war against Israel in 2006 simply reflect Muslims' contempt for Israel and the West. As the West condones Israeli retaliatory air raids as acts in "self-defence", Muslims in general have no qualms about justifying Hezbollah or Hamas rocket-attacks against Israel to kill indiscriminately. It is noteworthy that while the Western media in general, and the ones run by the neo-cons in particular, -- Fox News for example -- portrayed the Israeli bomb victims in Gaza as "Palestinian militants", most other sources confirmed the bulk of the victims as non-combatant civilians, women, children and the elderly. In view of the above, it appears that Israel is more than a Zionist state. It is a rogue state serving the interests of the neo-imperialist West, as Theodore Herzl envisaged, "a rampart of Europe [and America] against Asia".

The writer teaches security studies at Austin Peay State University in Tennessee. He has authored four books, including *Global Jihad and America: The Hundred-Year War Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan*.

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Alfred North Whitehead

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