

"A passionate attachment of one Nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other . . . It leads also to concessions to the favorite Nation of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the Nation making the concessions; by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained; and by exciting . . . ill-will . . ."

—President George Washington, 1796¹

Illegal and Ill-Advised

US POLICY TOWARDS ISRAEL

The United States is providing substantial military, economic, and diplomatic support for Israel's 37-year old illegal military occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. This enables Israel to suppress Palestinian self-determination and sets the US apart from the international consensus on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by implementing United Nations resolutions and international law. When did US support start and why does it continue? What specific forms does it take and what are the prospects for change?

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

US support for Israel falls into three historical periods: 1948-1967, 1967-1991, and 1991 to the present. During the period between 1948 and 1967, annual US aid to Israel averaged \$63 million, almost entirely economic development assistance and food aid.² Immediately after the Israeli military

victories of the 1967 Six-Day War, the US increased the military component of its aid package to account for almost half the total. Subsequently, both the size of the pie and its military slice increased steadily. Between 1971 and 1985, total aid averaged over \$2 billion per year, two-thirds of which was military assistance. By 1985, all military and economic aid—by now some \$3 billion per year—was in the form of grants.³ It was during this period that the already close relations were transformed into a "strategic relationship," marked by unwavering US support for Israel in international forums. This relationship became more powerful still after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the successful 1991 US military action against Iraq. The Middle East peace process launched at that time sparked hopes for a just settlement. Unfortunately, although the US claimed it was pursuing a just solution to the conflict, in reality the entire "peace process" started at Oslo (1993-99) was fated to fail. Although declaring itself the "honest broker," the US provided Israel with \$31 billion in economic and military assistance loans and grants during the Oslo years, more than 45 times the total aid given Palestinians in the same period.⁴ It also continued to shield Israel from international censure by using its veto power in the U.N. Security Council.

THE TIES THAT BIND

Some analysts argue that access to—and control of—the vast ME oil reserves are the primary motivation for the strategic US-Israel relationship. Saudi Arabia and Iraq have, respectively, the first and second largest proved oil reserves, a lifeline not just for the US but also the European and Japanese economies.⁵ The US has both acted militarily to protect its control over ME oil, and has relied on Israel to serve as its regional gendarme. During the Cold War,

Washington perceived military assistance to Israel as a means of containing Soviet ambitions in the ME.⁶ The US has also used Israel as a surrogate to provide military assistance to other parts of the world when the US did not feel free to act, particularly in Latin America and Africa.⁷ Today, Israel is partnering with the US to redraw the contours of the ME.⁸ Another important factor in the strategic relationship is the vested interest of the US military industry, due to the fact that Israel must spend most US military aid on US weapons. Finally, the pro-Israel lobby on Capitol Hill has helped to ensure that military and diplomatic aid to Israel must not be questioned.⁹

FORMS OF SUPPORT: ECONOMIC, MILITARY, DIPLOMATIC

The three billion dollars per year Israel receives accounts for a quarter of the total US foreign aid budget. For almost three decades, Israel has been the largest annual recipient of such aid.¹⁰ In fact, since World War II, the US has given more aid to Israel than to any other country.¹¹ In 2004, the US gave \$480 million to Israel in Economic Support Funds to be used to "promote economic and political stability," but which in fact freed up Israeli state revenues to be applied toward the occupation. The US also parcels out billions in loan guarantees, shields Israeli loans from default, and provides a tax reduction to US citizens who donate to Israeli charities.¹²

The bulk of US taxpayers' aid to Israel is funneled directly to the Israeli army, which administers and enforces the occupation over Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.¹³ For example, of the \$2.58 billion approved by Congress for Israel in 2005, \$2.22 billion is in the form of military assistance grants and loans.¹⁴ Around 74% of this aid must be "recycled" for the purchase of Apache



US CAMPAIGN TO END THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION

The US Campaign is a diverse coalition of over 200 groups working for freedom from occupation and equal rights for all by challenging US policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Campaign is based on human rights and international law, providing a non-sectarian framework for everyone who supports its *Call to Action*. Its strategy is to inform, educate, and mobilize the public so as to change the US role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

and Cobra helicopter gunships, F-16 fighter jets, and other sophisticated US weaponry.¹⁵ Caterpillar D-9 bulldozers are used by the Israeli military to illegally and systematically destroy Palestinian homes in the occupied territories,¹⁶ and are responsible for the deaths of US and Palestinian civilians.¹⁷ They are sold through the US Foreign Military Sales Program, then equipped by Israel with “machine guns, grenade launchers, smoke projectors and armored plating.”¹⁸ This military aid violates our own US domestic law, which prohibits military funding of major human rights violators and limits its use to internal security or legitimate self-defense.¹⁹

Diplomatically, the US and Israel have collaborated to marginalize international law. Within the international community they stand virtually alone in asserting that UN Security Council Resolution 242 does not require full Israeli withdrawal to the 1949 Armistice line (“Green Line”). The US has also disregarded the recent ruling by the International Court of Justice that obligates it not to “recognize” or “render aid or assistance” to the maintenance of the illegal situation created by Israel’s construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.²⁰ In the U.N. Security Council, the US has repeatedly vetoed resolutions that affirm Palestinian human rights.²¹

Successive administrations have opposed the “internationalization” of the conflict, including attempts to send an international observer force that would provide protection for civilians on both sides of the conflict until Israel withdraws. With regard to cases where Israel most clearly deserves censure, the US still offers some degree of support: contrast Israel’s refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty with the ongoing pressure on North Korea and Iran. Even when the Israeli military has killed US citizens, the United States has failed to adequately investigate.²²

CURRENT POLICY

In the aftermath of 9/11, the “War on Terror” has again raised the profile of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The Bush administration has employed confused and inconsistent rhetoric, pronouncing the inevitability of an independent Palestinian state²³ and demanding that “the occupation must end,”²⁴ while proclaiming Israeli

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to be a “man of peace.”²⁵ On April 14th, 2004, President Bush signed a letter to Israel indicating that the US would condone its annexation of settlements in the West Bank, and describing as impractical the Palestinian right of return, a right expressly guaranteed by international law.²⁶ This is a reversal of decades-long official US policy, and reflects the influence of neo-conservatives within the Bush administration, who see Israel’s territorial expansion as part of their larger ambitions for the ME.²⁷

PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE

Change is not just possible, it is necessary! US policy towards Israel has increased antagonism between much of the world and America, cost innumerable Palestinian and Israeli lives, funded human rights violations, promoted regional instability, and depleted US tax dollars that could have been much better spent on education and health needs at home.²⁸ Although much of the world, including the Israeli peace movement, identifies the occupation as a root cause of the ongoing conflict, these views rarely find their way into the US mainstream. Consequently, the US public has had no opportunity to understand that the Palestinians are fighting for their freedom and the right to determine their own future—rights guaranteed under international law.²⁹

However, things are changing: US citizens are organizing to change US policy by refocusing attention on the occupation as the central obstacle to peace in the Middle East. In order to ensure peace with justice, citizens of diverse backgrounds, races, and creeds—many of them members of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation—are calling on the US government and private corporations to respect human rights and international law and to stop supporting the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Add your voice to ours today!

ENDNOTES

- 1 Washington’s Farewell Address, available at <http://www.bartleby.com/43/24.html>.
- 2 Clyde R. Mark, Israel: US Foreign Assistance, Congressional Research Service, IB85066 (updated July 12, 2004).
- 3 Mark, supra note 2.
- 4 The \$695.1 million given to the Palestinians from 1992-2001 was restricted to Palestinian NGOs. US Agency for International Development, Overseas Loans and Grants (“Green Book”), available at: <http://quesdb.cdie.org/gbk/>.
- 5 See CIA World Factbook, “Rank Order—Oil—Proved Reserves,” available at: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rankorder/2178rank.html>.
- 6 Clyde R. Mark, Israeli-United States Relations, Congressional

Research Service, IB82008 (updated November 9, 2004).

7 See Israel Shahak, “Open Secrets: Israeli Foreign and Nuclear Policies,” (Pluto Press: 1997).

8 See US-authored policy paper for incoming Israeli Prime Minister Nentanyahu, available at <http://www.israeleconomy.org/strat1.htm>.

9 For further analysis on the strategic relationship, see Naseer Aruri, Dishonest Broker (South End Press: 2003).

10 Mark, supra note 2.

11 USAID, “Green Book,” supra note 4.

12 Mark, supra note 2.

13 At Israel’s apparent request, the US Congress in FY1999 began reducing annual ESF by \$120 million while increasing annual “Foreign Military Financing” by \$60 million. The goal is to eliminate economic aid by 2009. Security Assistance Act of 2000, § 513(c)(2).

14 Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005, Title III (Military Assistance).

15 An astonishing 26% of this money can be used to support the Israeli arms industry, a perk only allowed to Israel. See Mark, supra note 2.

16 Human Rights Watch, “Razing Rafah: Mass Home Demolitions in the Gaza Strip,” p 110 (October 2004).

17 CNN, “Israeli bulldozer kills American protester: Israeli bulldozer runs over 23-year-old woman,” (March 25, 2003). See also www.rachelcorrie.org.

18 Alexa Smith, “Jewish peace group challenges Caterpillar stock business: PC(USA) backs shareholders’ resolution seeking stop to demolitions,” (October 11, 2004), available at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2004/04455.htm>.

19 The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 USC. § 2304) states that “No assistance may be provided . . . to the government of any country which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights . . .”; The Arms Export Control Act of 1968 (22 USC. § 2754) authorizes military sales “solely for internal security, for legitimate self-defense, to permit the recipient country to participate in regional or collective arrangements or measures consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, or otherwise to permit the recipient country to participate in collective measures requested by the United Nations . . .”

20 Legal consequences of the construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, 9 July 2004, paragraph 163(D), pages 63-64. At a State Department Noon Briefing on July 9, 2004, spokesperson Richard Boucher characterized the ICJ advisory opinion as not “appropriate under international law” because it could “complicate the [peace] process” (available at <http://israel.usembassy.gov/publish/press/2004/july/071103.html>). The US House of Representatives passed a resolution (H.R. 713) on July 15 2004 by 361-45-13 that “deplores” and “regrets” the advisory opinion.

21 Since 1972, the US has vetoed a total of 40 UN Security Council Resolutions critical of Israel. See the Jewish Virtual Library’s collection, available at: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/usvetoes.html>.

22 The sinking of the USS Liberty by Israel in 1967 has been investigated, but not by Congress. See Admiral Thomas Moorer, Stars and Stripes (January 16, 2004) available at <http://www.usliberty.org/moorer2004.htm>.

23 President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership, President George W. Bush, The Rose Garden, Washington, DC, June 24, 2002, available at <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/11408.htm>.

24 Foreign Policy Address, November 19, 2001, US Department of State Secretary Colin L. Powell Remarks at the McConnell Center for Political Leadership University of Louisville, Kentucky, available at <http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/hyper/2001/1119/epf105.htm>.

25 Peter Slevin and Mike Allen, “Bush: Sharon A ‘Man Of Peace’: Israel ‘Responded’ To Call for Pullout,” Washington Post, (April 19, 2002).

26 “Letter from President Bush to Prime Minister Sharon,” available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040414-3.html>. The meaning of the letter is clouded by Bush’s comments after a May 6, 2004 meeting with King Abdullah of Jordan that “all other issues” (apart from the “Gaza disengagement”) should be negotiated. See Mark, supra note 6.

27 See, “Empire Builders: Neoconservatives and their Blueprint for US Power,” a special project of the Christian Science Monitor, available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/specials/neocon/neocon101.html>.

28 A 2002 report by the Pentagon’s Defense Science Board concluded that “American direct intervention in the Muslim World has... diminish[ed] support for the [US] to single-digits in some Arab societies. The overwhelming majority voice their objections to what they see as one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights...” available at http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2004-09-Strategic_Communication.pdf.

29 See Phyllis Bennis, *Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, p. 23, Trans-Arab Research Institute (2003).