

The Pro-Israel Lobby and US Middle East Policy: **The Score Card for 2007**

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Introduction

Never in recent history has US Middle East policy been subject to such a barrage of conflicting pressures from erstwhile allies, clients as well as adversaries. The points of contention involve fundamental issues of war and peace, foremost of which are divergent responses to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the US-Iranian confrontation, the US occupation of Iraq as well as the US-Ethiopian proxy invasion and occupation of Somalia.

The major contenders for influence in the making of US policy in the Middle East include the 'war party' led by the Zionist power configuration and its followers in Congress and its allies among the civilian militarists in the White House led by Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Rice, National Security Adviser for Middle East Affairs Elliot Abrams, along with an army of scribes in the major print media. On the other side are a small minority of Congress-people, ex-officials linked to Big Oil, a divided Peace Movement, Arab Gulf States, Saudi Arabia and a number of European countries on specific sets of issues.

To date the Zionist Power Configuration (ZPC) has consistently lined up its Congressional and White House backers and steamrolled domestic opposition in securing unconditional US backing for Israel's position in the Middle East. One of the latest examples of the Zionist Power Configuration's political and media influence is illustrated by their dismissal or omission of a major document on human and civil rights in Israel issued by the United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (published March 9, 2007). The study compiled by two-dozen experts offered 19 recommendations for Israel to comply with in 25 areas of racial discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel. Israel rejected the report, the ZPC automatically followed suit, as did Washington.

Nevertheless there are signs (weak to be sure) that the visible and invisible power of the ZPC is being subject to critical public scrutiny and even 'put on trial' among US clients. The Council of Gulf Cooperation composed of Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrein and the United Arab Emirates are the world's biggest oil suppliers (over 40%), made up of conservative, pro-US regimes, housing US military bases, linked to the largest US oil and financial houses and the biggest purchasers of military hardware from the US military-industrial complex. They met in late March 2007, and called for the US to engage Iran diplomatically and not militarily or with economic sanctions. Israel took a diametrically opposing view pushing for tighter sanctions and a military confrontation. Automatically the ZPC echoed the Israeli Party line (Daily Alert, March 26-30, 2007). Congress and Bush ignored Big Oil, the military-industrial complex, its Arab clients and followed the Zionist line: they escalated sanctions, increased commando operations, added to the war-ships off the coast of Iran and offered to send fighter-planes into Iran after British sailors, engaged in espionage, were captured (Blair, for once, rejected the war

provocation). Once again the ZPC out-muscled Big Oil and the military-industrial complex in dictating US Middle-East policy.

Equally important, the US foremost Arab ‘allies’ in the Middle East have promulgated a series of proposals and policy options, which are directly opposed to the ZPC-Israeli agenda. Saudi Arabia’s proposal approved by the Arab League offering Israel recognition and normal relations in exchange for abiding by UN resolutions and returning territory seized in 1967 is one example. These Arab initiatives have elicited a positive response in many governments in the European Union and Turkey, adding to the forces arraigned against the ZPC-Israeli direction for US Middle East policy. Defectors from the Israeli lobby’s cause have been especially noticeable from among conservatives, including Robert Novack (“US War in Iraq – The Sharon War”, Haaretz, April 4, 2007).

New Directions for US Policy: Moderate Arab Agenda?

The primary pre-occupation of the moderate Arab regimes of the Persian Gulf is securing political stability, avoiding disruptive regional and internal conflicts and consolidating a favorable business climate for the dynamic development projects they have undertaken. The US military invasion, occupation and prolonged violent imperial war in Iraq have been a source of instability and internal conflict in the region. Israel’s repeated military assaults and violent seizures of Palestinian land, its invasion of Lebanon and threats against Iran and, most important, their political vehicle – the ZPC’s capacity to ensure US backing -- has created an environment of permanent ‘high tension’. The growing incompatibility between the conservative-business oriented goals of the moderate Arab states and the ‘radical militarist’ destabilizing policies of Washington and Tel Aviv has forced a widening breach between the long-time allies and clients. With large trade surpluses, enormous liquidity in dollars and Euros, the Arab East is intent on building economic empires both in the region and throughout the globe. For that they need, above all, a secure ‘home base’, the headquarters and operating base to sustain the global financial, commercial and real estate networks.

The recent meeting of Arab state in Riyadh, convoked by the Saudis, served as a platform for outlining a program for Middle East stability and the ending of violent destabilizing activities. Both in their formal proposals and informal pronouncements the conservative leaders put forth an agenda to re-direct US Middle East policy away from the ZPC-Israel line of military confrontation and toward diplomatic negotiations, elite reconciliation and the strengthening of regional economic stability. Within this conservative regional framework and the high priority given to economic stability, the ‘new facts’ on the ground (namely the critical position toward the US and the peace offer to Israel) become key markers in defining Middle East politics.

‘New Facts’ and the New Middle East Realities

The old clichés lobbed by liberal critics of the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia are highly misleading and fail to capture the new economic and political dynamics of the region. The liberal and Zionist images of reactionary sheiks engaged in conspicuous consumption, luxuriating in their backward and stagnant economies, living exclusively on ‘rents’ accruing from the gushing oil wells and dependent on US military protection, has largely been superseded. All the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia are heavily engaged in long-term, large-scale economic diversification projects, creating new business, financial, commercial and real estate markets, based on local capital and, in some cases, major overseas investment banks. Major joint industrial ventures in energy, refineries, and chemical plants between Saudi Arabia and China and India have been consummated. Multi-billionaire ‘princes’ are major investors and part owners of global networks of financial enterprises, hotels, ports and other large-scale infrastructure and construction sectors.

Energy wealth from gas and petroleum is the point of departure for the new ruling elites, reinventing themselves as regional if not global players. While still retaining many of the 'external traditional religious forms' (opposition to usury), vast armies of local financiers have in fact invented financial instruments that pay de facto returns equivalent to interest. Given the growing global and regional economic interests of these conservative elites they have everything to lose by following US-Israeli destructive-colonial-militarist policies in the region.

Economic diversification and dynamic internal development has created a new bourgeoisie in the Gulf linked to European and Asian capital (state and private), increasingly politically independent from the US and less dependent on 'external' military power. These new economic facts provide clues to the new 'political facts' on the ground, including Saudi Arabia's low key, but forthright, critique of the US occupation of Iraq and demands for troop withdrawal. The Gulf States backing for the Saudi initiated "Mecca Agreements" leading to the PLO-Hamas unity government, explicitly went against the White House-Israeli-Zionist policy of isolating Hamas as did the explicit rejection by Saudi Arabia and the Emirates of US and Israeli war preparations against Iran. They have rejected Washington's and Israeli-Zionist's policy of refusing to meet with Iran, by holding separate top level meetings and discussions. The Arab League's offer – authored and authorized by Saudi Arabia – to Israel of peace and recognition in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from the 1967 regions of occupied Palestine has exposed Israel's pretexts for continued colonization and annexation of Palestinian land and US subordination to the Zionist Power Configuration.

The new economic and political facts in the Middle East pit an increasingly militarized US foreign policy elite, heavily influenced by the Zionist Power Configuration, against an increasingly marketized Arab Gulf elite. Israel's military-industries, central to its economy, the political leverage of the settler parties, religious fundamentalists and security apparatus, and the Israeli state's dependence on multi-billion dollar handouts from the US treasury and wealthy right-wing militarist Jewish donors means that Israel is structurally incapable of coming to any peace for land agreement. The re-settlement of a half-million armed fanatical Jewish settlers into pre-1967 Israel, the peaceful re-conversion of Israel's military industries and maintaining support from overseas Zionist plutocrats without the rhetoric of 'existential military threats' is beyond the boundaries of the Israeli political class as it is currently constituted. The deep integration and subordination of the Zionist Power Configuration to the Israeli power structure results in the demands of Israel's settler-military-industrial complex getting transmitted into the US Congress and Executive and eventually into policy.

In so far as this is the case, the ZPC is responsible for the rigidities of US Middle East policy expressed in its fixation on permanent warfare, and its blindness to the yawning gap between market-driven Arab states and US-Israeli militarism. ZPC accounts for the unchanging, unconditional support for an anachronistic colonial regime in a time of growing global market relations. The paralysis of US policy is the result of the power of a modern 21st century extraordinarily wealthy and entrepreneurial lobby (24% of Forbes 400 richest are Jews) acting on behalf of fundamentalist Judaic territorial claims going back to a period almost 2500 years ago. The notion of 'combined and uneven development' certainly applies to Israel's biggest overseas financiers.

The rigid structural parameters of Israeli politics are transmitted via the ZPC into the basic contradictory reality in US-Israeli relations: The rigid structural politics of a tiny 'isolated, militarized, settler-controlled' state blocking economic transactions of a globalized imperial economy by forcing it into disastrous military adventures.

Zionist Power and the Democratic Congressional Majority

Contrary to many war critics, especially those daring enough to attack the pro-war, neo-conservative and Zionist lobby, the US invasion of Iraq has not been a 'disaster', a 'debacle' or a 'defeat'. The corollary of this argument that the 'Iraq disaster' has led to a 'rout' of the Zioncons from the Bush Administration is also open to question.

The principle goal of the ZPC was the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the destruction of the Iraqi state (especially its military and intelligence apparatus) and the societal infrastructure in order to eliminate a key backer of the Palestinian resistance to Israeli ethnic cleansing, a staunch backer of secular Arab nationalism in the Middle East and a strong challenger to Israel's attempt to assert hegemony in the region. The Zioncon-orchestrated war succeeded in each and every one of Israel's strategic objectives: the Palestinian resistance lost a powerful financial and political backer. The Middle East opposition to Israel was reduced largely to clerical Muslim states and movements. The stage was set for a new sequence of wars with Israeli adversaries, including Hezbollah, Syria and, most important, Iran. As a consequence of the US destruction of the Iraqi state, Israel had a free hand in invading and devastating Palestine, especially Gaza, complete its ghetto-wall isolating Palestinian towns and villages from their markets and everyday activities, and extending its colonial settlements. US Zioncons in the Administration were able to scuttle any serious peace negotiations, using their scripted 'war against terror' as a pretext. The departure of some of the Zioncons from the Administration in the aftermath of the US military occupation of Iraq was a result of having successfully served Israeli strategic interests through a massive commitment of US economic and military resources. But as the Israel-serving war turned into an unpopular, prolonged and costly war for the United States, public and highly placed critics, investigators and military figures began to point their finger at the key role of the Zionist officials in the Government as the prime movers of the 'disastrous' war, the Zioncons 'resigned' from office. This short-circuited any wide-reaching and serious investigation into the inter-face between the US Zioncon war architects and the Israeli Foreign Office and its military command.

Out of their successful 'war with Iraq' operation the Zioncons suffered a few collateral losses. Irving 'Scooter' Libby, Chief of Vice President Cheney's military planning office, was convicted on peripheral perjury charges, which did not directly implicate the Zioncon network's role in the run-up and follow-through on the war. One major and one secondary AIPAC leaders were indicted for spying for Israel. The two indicted spies did not in any way materially or politically weaken AIPAC's powerful hold over the US Congress or White House. They continued to receive unconditional support from the US Congressional leaders of both parties, as well as the Vice President and Secretary of State who gave keynote addresses at the AIPAC's annual conventions in 2006 and 2007.

The fact that the ZPC considers the Iraq war a 'done deal' in enhancing Israel's Middle East position and has now moved onto realizing Israel's next strategic objective, the destruction of Iran, has caused a visible rift with key officials in the White House who are still stuck in a losing war in Iraq.

Vice President Cheney, speaking at the AIPAC annual convention in 2007, directly challenged AIPAC leaders who seemed to be abandoning support for the Administration's Iraq war and pressing for more aggressive economic sanctions and the war option strategy toward Iran. The Zioncons seek to maximize support for their new phony 'existential' war against Iran among Jewish liberals who have turned against the Iraq war, thus leaving Cheney and Bush holding the US body bags. At the AIPAC convention, Cheney, no neophyte to backstabbing intrigues, offered to escalate US threats against Iran if the Zionists maintained their support for

the Bush-Cheney-Rice war in Iraq. While Israeli Prime Minister Olmert formally reiterated the importance of the US continuing its occupation of Iraq for Israeli 'security', in practice all his ministers attending every major Zionist conference have emphasized to their US acolytes the Iranian threat and the need to eliminate the Iranian regime, its nuclear power plants and state structures. Despite the fact that the US is bleeding white from the open wounds of the current war in Iraq, despite the fact that over three quarters of the US population is fed up with US involvement in Middle Eastern wars, this has not prevented or, even more important, weakened the ZPC effort to set the US on a course toward new wars with the whole hearted support of the majoritarian Democratic Party leadership.

With an eye toward campaign financial contributions, every single Democratic and Republican presidential candidate has pledged to unconditionally support Israeli interests, specific pledges to the ZPC-AIPAC included.

The Pro-Israel Lobby and Bush: War Powers and the Capitulation of the Democrats

The key factor in the Democrats' withdrawal of constraints of Bush's management of the occupation of Iraq was the Jewish Lobby. According to the Associated Press (March 13, 2007): "Conservative Democrats, as well as lawmakers concerned about the possible impact on Israel, had argued for the change in strategy..." As the Congressional Quarterly noted: "Hawkish pro-Israel lawmakers are pushing to strike a provision slated for the war spending bill that would require the President to seek Congressional approval before launching any military force in Iran."

The Iran-related proposal stemmed from a desire by some leading Democratic politicians to ensure that Bush did not launch an attack without going to Congress for approval, a measure approved by the vast majority of Democratic rank and file. But during the week of March 5-10, the Zionist elite both in Congress and in the Lobby banged heads in a series of closed door sessions and literally forced the 'leading Democrats' to recant and capitulate. Echoing the Olmert line, one of several Zionist mouthpieces in Congress overtly spoke against constitutional and legislative restraints on President Bush because of its 'effect' on Israel. Representative Shelley Berkley said in an interview, "there is widespread fear in Israel about Iran which...has expressed unremitting hostility about the Jewish State." Democratic Caucus Chairman Rahm Emmanuel, who works closely with AIPAC, 'predicted', "It would take away perhaps the most important negotiating tool that the US has when it comes to Iran," (Associated Press March 13, 2007). He succeeded in excluding the amendment in the Supplemental War Budget Allocation, although it was initially favored by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Representative John Murtha, Chair of the Defense Appropriation Committee.

A smirking Vice President Cheney pointed out the hypocrisy of the pro-Israel liberal Democratic Congresspeople and liberal Zionists who opposed Bush on Iraq and were pressing a pro-war policy on Iran. "It is simply not consistent for anyone (including pro-Israel liberals! JP) to demand aggressive action against the menace posed by the Iranian regime while at the same time acquiescing in a retreat from Iraq that would leave our worst enemies dramatically emboldened and Israel's best friend, the United States, dangerously weakened," (AP March 13, 2007). Once again the interests of Israel took precedence over the voting preferences of the Democratic electorate. Once more the power of Congressman Rahm Emmanuel and his fellow 'conservative' pro-Zionist congressional colleagues overpowered the 'conscience' of other leading Democrats. Once again AIPAC freed Bush from any Constitutional and Congressional constraints to launch a military attack on Iran. Once again Israel's bellicose policy dictates were effectively transmitted and implemented in the US Congress. The Democrats abandoned the war authority provision of the Constitution. Israel once again demonstrated that it is the supreme

arbiter of US Middle East war policy through its representatives in the US Congress. (*No wonder Buchanan and others call the Congress 'Israeli-occupied territory'*).

Bush got AIPAC backing for his arbitrary war powers; Israel retained a President who is a willing accomplice to its war aims in the Middle East.

Israel-AIPAC-US Middle East Wars

The role of Israel in mobilizing the Zionist Lobby in favor of Bush's broad war powers was evident in Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's forceful speech to the annual AIPAC conference in Washington in March 2007. According to the Israeli daily, Haaretz (March 12, 2007) Livni "warned the US not to show weakness in Iraq." She went on to emphasize the importance of exercising violence and power... "in a region where impressions are important, countries must be careful not to demonstrate weakness and surrender to extremists." This is another way of stating the familiar Israeli canard that 'Arabs only understand force', a well-worn colonial-racist justification for widespread and continued repression of subjugated Arab people.

Livni instructed the thousands of cheering AIPAC loyalists and hundreds of US Congressional followers at the convention of the Iranian threat and incited them to escalate their attacks on Teheran: "Iran was at the forefront of extremist threats to Israel, the Greater Middle East and the world in general because of its nuclear ambitions. To address extremism is to address Iran, she said urging tougher UN sanctions over its nuclear program," (Haaretz March 12, 2007). Livni's closing words touched all the agit-prop code words that fire-up the zealotry of the AIPAC leaders, followers and US Congresspeople. Iran, she stated, "is a regime which denies the Holocaust while threatening the world with a new one. To those states who know the threat but still hesitate because of narrow economic and political interests, let me say this: History will remember!"

Livni's speech served several purposes. It laid down the 'line' to pro-Israel loyalists in the US to continue supporting Bush-Cheney's policy on the Iraq war, independently of the sentiments of most American Jewish voters. It strengthened the hand of the Lobby and its US Congressional followers by forcing House liberals, Jews and Gentiles, to retract their American voter-mandated constraints on Bush's war powers. Thirdly it laid out the high priority agenda and campaign for its Zionist followers to pursue with regard to Iran. Finally it ended any breach between Cheney-Bush and the Lobby over prioritizing a 'new' war against Iran over the 'old' unpopular war in Iraq by tying them together.

The Israeli Foreign Minister's direct intervention in the internal politics of the US, its blatant support for the Bush-Cheney war, and attack on the US public's anti-war sentiments, is reminiscent of the worst diplomatic intrusions by the US in the banana republics of Central America. Not a single Congress member dared to point this out, let alone oppose Israeli interference in US politics for fear of retaliation by the aroused mass of 'Israel Firsters'. Not a single 'leftist' or 'progressive' commentator noted that Livni's attempt to universalize Israel's hostility to Iran was nothing but a demagogic ploy. Extensive opinion surveys in Europe found absolute majorities rating Israel the most threatening and 'negative' country in the world, exceeding Iran, North Korea and Syria. The fact that Iran is a welcome participant in the World Congress of Islamic Countries representing over 500 million people is a slight omission in Livni's rhetorical excesses. These lapses are no cause for worry in the Israeli Foreign Office, because it is not the propagation of deliberate and verifiable falsehoods which is a problem, but the power of lies to arouse to action its US agents and to discourage any possible US critics. By sounding off on the 'Holocaust' and its corollary, 'History will remember', Israel was guaranteed the blind fanatical adherence of the ZPC to its bellicose war policies and the silence and capitulation of its ineffective Jewish liberal anti-war doubters. The Jewish-based 'AIPAC

Alternative', especially the 'Jewish Voice for Peace', spends as much time denying the power of the pro-Israel Lobby as criticizing US policy (Nation April 23, 2007 on AIPAC Alternative).

In an ironic and perverse twist of the pro-Israel, anti-war slogan, 'No War for Oil', Livni demanded 'No Peace for Oil'. Livni's warning to those "states who know the threat but still hesitate because of narrow economic or political interests", is a clear reference to the United States. More specifically it is aimed at politicians who might look toward peaceful negotiations with Iran, or accept the Saudi peace plan in order to safeguard US oil interests, rather than sacrificing these interests to serve Israel's political and military supremacy in the Middle East. Livni is clearly directing its 'Israel Firsters' in the US to trump the Oil Appeasers, to browbeat any politicians who raise US market concerns over Israeli and Zionist war demands.

While Livni's perception of the danger to Israel emanates from the peaceful-diplomatic approach of 'narrow (sic) economic or political interests' (to the even narrower Israeli concern for land grabs in Palestine and Lebanon), what passes as a US peace movement joins in chorus by blaming the oil industry for US Middle Eastern wars. There is a convenient coincidence of Israeli hawks and US doves in denouncing Big Oil, which is not such a coincidence if we remember that what passes for the US peace movement is inordinately influenced by prominent left Zionists, who combine criticism of 'Bush's war' with exclusion of any mention of Israel or criticism of the war mongering Zionist lobby. Before, during and after the AIPAC conference in Washington several thousand of its zealots blitzed the offices of Congress members and Senators. More than half the Congress members and practically every Senator were browbeaten in over 500 meetings in favor of Israel's war agenda against Iran.

In late March the Arab League led by Saudi Arabia proposed a comprehensive peace plan to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The proposal offered Arab recognition, trade and diplomatic relations, an end of the state of belligerency and economic sanctions, in exchange for Israel abiding by United Nations resolutions and withdrawing from all Palestinian lands seized during and after the 1967 war. The Israeli Prime Minister flatly refused to accept the Saudi proposal arguing that it was only the 'basis of negotiations'. The ZPC immediately echoed the Israeli party line, calling into question the form and substance of the proposal as well as attacking the Arab regimes. On March 29, 2007 alone, the organ of the Presidents of the Major American Jewish Organizations published four major propaganda pieces attacking the peace proposal and backed Israel's rejection. The Lobby ensured that the US Congress and executive either supported the Israeli position or refused to back the Saudi plan. Once again, AIPAC's 150 full time lobbyists ran circles around pro-Arab US oil multinationals.

House Majority Leader as Israel's Messenger

Democratic House Majority leader Nance Pelosi's visit to Syria stirred a hostile response from the White House and accolades from liberals and progressives. Bush objected to Pelosi for interfering with his foreign policy powers and 'non-negotiation' position vis a vis Syria. Liberals hailed Pelosi's visit as opening new vistas for 'diplomacy' rather than saber rattling. Both failed to recognize that Pelosi's main substantive task was to serve as a proxy and messenger for the Israeli state. During her visit to Israel, prior to going to Syria, the Israeli regime instructed Pelosi to pressure Syria to end support for Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran. The Israeli prime minister told his messenger, Pelosi, to relay to the Syrians that breaking ties and isolating itself from its only allies were the conditions for Israel opening negotiations. This was despite the fact that up to Pelosi's visit to Syria, AIPAC and the entire Zionist political machine had vilified any Congress member who even mentioned visiting Syria. However when Israel gave the word that Pelosi was running Israeli messages to Syria, the Lobby did not object. The party line from Tel Aviv had shifted and the Israeli Fifth column automatically shifted its line, and not one of its

‘functionaries’ raised a peep. There were far more overseas Communist dissenters when Stalin abruptly changed the party line than there are Zionist defectors under similar circumstances.

The almost comical back flips and ideological contortions which the ‘Israel Firsters’ (IF) engage in to conform to the zigzags of their Israeli handlers is evident in their treatment of the Arab Gulf states. For the longest time the IF did everything possible to discredit them, referring to them as decrepit, absolutist states, and debunked the State Department’s characterization of them as ‘Arab Moderates’. More recently when Olmert referred to the same states as ‘moderate’ largely because they engage in covert trade with Israel through third parties, and criticized Iran, the Lobby revised its line and spoke favorable of them. Then when the Saudis brokered the Hamas-PLO unity government, Israel attacked the role of Saudi Arabia as backing the terrorist Hamas and the Zionist propaganda machine followed suit labeling the Saudis as financiers of Hamas terrorism. The blind servility of the Israel Lobby to a ‘foreign power’ would simply be a matter for the Justice Department if it didn’t have such a profound impact on US Middle East policy, where every Israeli change in policy is automatically reflected in US policy.

The Israel First Lobby Blocks Big US Arms Sale

With the US trade deficit exceeding \$500 billion dollars, one of its few competitive export sectors is its arms industry, which is number one in world arms sales, followed by Israel. The Bush Administration’s planned arms sale to Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf allies has been blocked by Israeli action through its Zionist Lobby (NY Times, April 5, 2007). The Administration officials twice scheduled and canceled briefings for members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee because of AIPAC’s influence over the Committee and the likelihood that the arms deal would be rejected. As a result the Administration is hoping that Israel will call off its Lobby attack dogs in exchange for a 20% increase in US military aid and grants to Israel – upping the total of military aid from \$2.4 billion dollars to \$3 billion annually. Secretary of Defense Gates, who was unable to shake the Lobby’s influence over Congress, had to fly to Israel to plead with Israel to allow the sales to go through in exchange for receiving advanced US military technology.

US grants to Israel of advanced military research, design and technology has increased Israel’s competitive position in the world’s military high-tech market and increased its share at the expense of the US, as seen in its recent \$1.5 billion dollar military sales to India. In brief, the Israel Lobby runs circles around the US military-industrial complex in terms of influencing the US Congress, blocking lucrative deals and advancing Israel’s sales in the world market.

Democratic Party Candidates Truckle to the Lobby

Major Democratic Party Presidential hopefuls have made an extraordinary effort to secure the Lobby’s approval: All back Bush’s ‘military option’ toward Iran; all support the annual \$2.4 billion dollar foreign aid package to Israel, despite Israel’s \$25,000 per capita income and booming high tech industry. Speaking before the National Jewish Democratic Council, New York Senator Hillary Clinton called on the US to confront Iran militarily (Jerusalem Post, April 26, 2007). Taking advantage of the fawning behavior of all the candidates, the Israeli newspaper, Haaretz, promoted a panel of Israeli ‘experts’ to evaluate US Presidential candidates on the basis of their servility to Israeli interests. This, in turn, led Senator Obama to send his latest, most crass and bellicose pronouncements regarding Iran to the Israeli panel (see Robert Kagan, ‘Obama the Interventionist’, Washington Post April 29, 2007). Nonetheless, it is Hillary Clinton who leads the pack in securing Jewish campaign financing. The Lobby’s high regard for Clinton is not merely because of her total and complete identification with Israel – as stated at the March 2007 AIPAC Convention – but by the family’s notorious track record. Former CIA Director, George Tenet, in his latest book At the Center of the Storm, devotes an entire chapter to then President

Bill Clinton's proposal to free American-Israeli master-spy, Jonathan Pollard from federal prison. Under prodding from Israel's far right-wing President Benyamin Netanyahu, his National Security Advisor, the Zionlib Sandy Berger, Zioncon envoy to the Middle East Dennis Ross and a substantial sector of the Lobby, Clinton proposed to release the convicted spy Pollard. According to his book, Tenet told Clinton that he would resign because he would lose all his moral capital with the entire intelligence apparatus that would argue that an American traitor was being rewarded. More likely, the entire military and intelligence community was outraged that Clinton would follow the policies laid out by the Israeli spymasters and their US lobbyists over American national security concerns.

Clinton later broke precedent in granting a pardon to a fugitive criminal, the billionaire swindler Marc Rich, now a citizen of Israel and close friend of the Lobby and Israeli leaders. Hillary Clinton has demonstrated that she and Bill not only speak, but also act, for the primacy of Israeli interests even when it involves going against the entire US security community and its legal system. That sordid history must count a lot in securing guarantees that the Clintons are bona fide 100% Israel camp followers, something none of the other candidates can boast.

In early May, the Bush Administration proposed an 8-month timetable of steps meant to bolster prospects for peace between Israel and Palestine. The proposal simply asked Israel to allow Palestinians normal but urgent bus and truck travel between Gaza and the West Bank in exchange for Palestinians curbing the homemade cross border rocket firings. As was predictable, the Israelis objected to even the slightest breach in the oppressive ghettoization of the Palestinians (Daily Alert May 2, 2007). Israeli leaders rejected a time-table because it prevented them from procrastinating: Israeli military officers opposed any loosening of their stranglehold on Gaza for "security reasons" (Daily Alert May 8, 2007). They maintained that Hamas might increase its influence in the West Bank through persuasion. Once the Israeli military rejected the Bush initiative, the Zionist Power Configuration went to work. The Democrats, including all their leading Presidential candidates and Congressional leaders, refused to back Bush's anemic effort to open the Gaza ghetto. The mass media followed suit. The pro-Israel lobby buried the entire proposal before it even entered into public debate.

The Lobby Versus Federal Prosecutors: The AIPAC Spy Trial

On August 4, 2005 two AIPAC leaders and a Pentagon analyst, Larry Franklin were indicted by a federal grand jury and charged with spying for Israel. The indictment lists numerous acts of espionage dating back to 1999 in which the two AIPAC leaders acted as conduits for classified information flowing from Washington to Tel Aviv. Franklin has confessed and cooperated with the FBI in recording his meeting with Rosen and Weissman regarding the passing of high security White House document related to US policy on Iran to Israeli Embassy agents. Faced with overwhelming evidence AIPAC 'fired' Rosen and Weiss, stopped paying for their legal expenses and initially denied any responsibility for the pair. Subsequently however AIPAC and numerous satellite and auxiliary organizations decided to turn the spy trial into a campaign over 'free speech'. Accordingly the liberal and conservative members of the pro-Israel lobby succeeded in rounding up a 'Who's Who' of otherwise leftist journalists, progressive news broadcasters and academics in defense of Rosen and Weissman. Speaking in defense of the two AIPAC functionaries, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Dorothy Rabinowitz argued in the editorial pages of the Wall Street Journal that handing high security government documents to Israeli Embassy security agents are "activities that go on every day in Washington and that are clearly protected under the First Amendment" (Wall Street Journal, April 2, 2007). As the trial date approaches, major pro-Israel organizations, billionaire Hollywood producers and most, if not all, of the Jewish press in the US have taken the defense of Rosen and Weissman (The American "Dreyfuss Trial"). Except for a few internet bloggers, not a single political party, social or

political movement has dared to criticize acts of handing over classified documents to Israel or to raise eyebrows over the equation of 'free speech' with spying for a foreign power. Because of the pervasive pressure of the Lobby, the Federal Judge T.S. Ellis has made several procedural rulings weakening the case of the prosecution. Once again the Zionist Power Configuration seems to have successfully out-muscled US institutions, in this case Federal prosecutors and the FBI.

AIPAC and Israel: Strategic Informant in the White House

The spy trial of two top officials of AIPAC, who admitted to handing over strategic documents to Israeli diplomats, (and who have been defended on the basis of 'free speech' by a host of American progressive left Zionists) has turned up further evidence of their deep penetration of the highest echelons of the White House. In the preliminary hearings of the spy trial, defense attorney Abby Lowell, in an attempt to exonerate the Zionist spy suspects, announced that the accused received 'explosive' and even more volatile information from then National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice (Jewish Telegraph Agency, April 10, 2007). There is little doubt that the Rice's transmission of confidential security information to AIPAC was also handed over to the Israeli embassy and its undercover Mossad agents operating in Washington.

The Lobby spy network extends beyond confessed Pentagon spy, Laurence Franklin, who handed confidential documents to the accused AIPAC officials. According to the Jewish Telegraph Agency quoting Attorney Abby Lowell, "Rice had not merely been Rosen's interlocutor but had leaked information identical to and at times more sensitive than examples cited in the indictment." In addition Lowell said the information Rice provided was more volatile than the information described in the indictment. Lowell claimed that 'three other current and former Middle East policy officials, in addition to Rice' were providing information to the AIPAC accused Israeli spies.

The Zionist Power Configuration (ZPC): Cultural Repression at the Service of Israel

Racist rabble-rousing against Muslims runs rife among zealous Zionists inside the US Government and outside among mainstream pro-Israel organizations with no apparent reprimands. The Conference of Presidents of the Major Jewish Organizations (CPMJO) backed co-thinker and Israeli-US dual citizen Michael Chertoff's (head of the Department of Homeland Security) efforts to curtail Muslim visits to the US, including British citizens, of what the New York Times (May 2, 2007) diplomatically refers to as of "Pakistani origin". In a follow up lead article in the CPMJO news bulletin The Daily Alert (May 9, 2007) they featured a xenophobic article by Josh Meyer and Erika Hayasaki titled, "Six Foreign-born 'Radical Islamists' Charged in Plot to Strike Fort Dix Army Base." When pro-Israel zealots in high government positions engage in blatant racist witch-hunts against Muslims and respectable mainstream Zionist umbrella organizations publish inflammatory, xenophobic rhetoric, no Congress members or Justice Department officials call for public hearings or inquiries.

The power of ZPC far exceeds the political lobbying of AIPAC. It extends to every realm of US cultural and intellectual life. The frenzied vitriolic nation-wide mass media personal assaults on former President Jimmy Carter for authoring a critical book documenting Israel's apartheid system is one example of the extensive web of Zionist propagandists. Many are situated in major academic and media institutions and share a common set of hardened doctrinaire beliefs in Israel's infallibility. The same malicious treatment was dished out to Harvard Professor Mersheimer and University of Chicago Professor Walt for writing a critical article on the US Zionist lobby. Apart from the wave of ideological screeds condemning the essay and slandering the authors with the usual banalities ('anti-Semites'), several wealthy Jewish

'philanthropists' forced the Harvard corporation to dissociate itself from the essay on its Kennedy School website. The same Zionist octopodian reach was manifested in the canceling of a meeting discussing Israel, which included New York University Professor Tony Judt, a rather mild critic of the Jewish state and its Lobby. Most pernicious, and in some ways even more demonstrative of the brazen repressive cultural role of the Zionist Power Configuration is their power to prevent a play which is based on the writings of the murdered American human rights worker Rachel Corrie, who was crushed by an Israeli army bulldozer in the Gaza Strip in April 2003. In New York, Miami and Toronto, publicly scheduled performances of My Name is Rachel Corrie were forced to cancel because of financial threats by local Jewish 'philanthropists' and 'patrons of the arts'. The seriousness of these blatant acts of political and cultural censorship reveals the ZPC's profound and open hostility to the best examples of US humanitarian solidarity and embrace the worst kinds of Israeli violence. Not a single leftist or progressive critic dared to raise the issue of American Zionist complicity in this egregious 'hate crime' committed by a foreign power against an American human rights worker. No other group can successfully back the cold-blooded killers of an American citizen with impunity, anonymity and continue to retain credentials as 'patrons of the arts and culture'. To this day, 40 years after the fact, the same pro-Israel crowd defends or excuses Israel's deliberate military attack on the unarmed US naval surveillance ship the USS Liberty in international waters, killing and wounding about 150 US sailors. This gang of 'Israel Firsters' is honored in their communities here in the United States, welcome to high office and secure in their affluent surroundings.

Highly qualified candidates with outstanding résumés are denied academic and professional appointments or threatened with loss of tenure or expulsion for the mere reason of criticizing Israel. The cases of Professor Juan Cole's appointment at Yale and Professor Norman Finkelstein at De Paul University are the most notorious cases. The world-renowned Palestinian American scholar, Edward Said was persecuted and slandered up to his recent death by the attack hounds of the Lobby.

The theoretical and practical point is that the ZPC includes hundreds of local organizations and tens of thousands of individuals who take local initiatives in defending Israeli policy, its image and interests by trampling on the Constitutional and academic freedom of other Americans.

For every play which is banned, producer chastised and theater put in the red, thousands of other cultural workers and institutions are intimidated. They internalize the repressive codes imposed by the Zionists and self-censor. They submit to ZPC dictates of what can and cannot be performed, what is or is not offensive to 'Jewish sensibilities', that exquisitely stated euphemism for Zionist power.

Manifestations of Zionist cultural authoritarianism is found at the local level and is closely linked with national campaigns to monopolize the entire discussion of US Middle East policy, and in particular, to exclude any criticism of Israel and the powerful role of the Zionist Lobby. That monopoly is most evident in any systematic study of the op-ed pages of the big circulation print media and the panels of 'experts' included in the major broadcast media. The role of the pro-Israel repressive cultural-ideological hydra especially finds expression among the great majority of 'progressive' critics. 'Marxist' ideologues and 'peace' advocates deliberately and totally ignore the ZPC's influence in Congress, the Executive and in cultural life. Instead they repeatedly criticize Bush, Cheney, the Republicans and Democrats without mentioning their prime movers among the hundreds of thousands of Zionist zealots and thousands of prime political donors. It is no wonder that the Zionist power configuration has greater power than any other lobby in Washington – they are the only power group which has no opposition, no organized group willing to name them, let alone challenge and fight their stranglehold over

Congress. Worse still, some of the most influential critics of the war in Iraq provide ideological cover by denying the ZPC's dominant role and deflecting attention to either non-existent war-makers (Big Oil) or to secondary political actors, who carry out Lobby initiatives.

Re-arming Clients: Washington and the ZPC's War Machine Rolls On

The political-military setbacks inflicted on US-Israeli policy in the Middle East in 2006-2007 has not led to any moves toward serious diplomacy or negotiations. On the contrary the lessons drawn by Washington and Tel Aviv is to escalate the militarization of client groups and prepare for destructive civil and ethnic wars.

In response to the failure of the US-backed Israeli attack on Lebanon to destroy Hezbollah, Washington has been engaged in a large-scale rearming of right-wing Christian, Druze and Sunni militias in Beirut and throughout North-Central Lebanon (Guardian, April 11, 2007). The purpose is to provoke an armed conflict with Hezbollah which will force it to move its resistance fighters northward and weaken its defense of the Southern Lebanese border. A US-Israeli induced 'civil war' will, it is presumed, divide the Lebanese army and weaken any auxiliary role it might play in defending the country from Israeli cross border attacks or invasions. Given the widespread violence, resulting from a conflict, Israeli aircraft, now engaged in daily over-flights and reconnaissance would be free to bomb and destroy any and all reconstruction and Hezbollah defenses.

Israeli-backed American arming of a Palestinian military force led by longtime CIA collaborator, Mohammed Dahlen, working with 'President' Abbas, is advancing rapidly with the training of hundreds of officers in Jordan, pre-selected for political loyalty by Israeli and US officials. A heavily-armed force of 12,000 US-paid Palestinian mercenaries is being prepared to oust Hamas from power, destroy its police and defense forces and hunt down its leaders and intimidate its electoral supporters.

The Zionist lobby succeeded in inserting an extraordinary clause in Bush's military aid to the Abbas faction in the Palestinian government. The lobby secured Israeli as well as US political screening of all Palestinian trainees before they are allowed to travel to Jordan for the US-funded training. In defense of the Jewish state's right to oversee the administration of US military aid, the Lobby argued that the clause was necessary because of Israeli 'fears' – in other words – Israeli interests in retaining Palestine as a colony policed by Israeli screened Palestinian mercenaries (Adam Entous, Reuters News Service quoted in the Daily Alert, March 29, 2007.)

A Palestine destroyed by US-Israeli induced 'civil strife' will be in no position to negotiate any peace agreement that returns Israel to its pre-1967 borders. The idea is to establish a pro-US Palestinian-run police state within the territorial limits dictated by Israel.

The third area of militarization involves Northern Iraq where the US and Israel have financed the Kurdish military build-up. They politically support Kurdish separatists who for all intents and purposes operate as an independent state. According to Laura Rozen's article, "Kurdistan: Covert Back Channels", published in Mother Jones, April 12, 2007, the US and Israel support a willing Kurdish client in the plot to break up Iraq, impoverish Baghdad as its capital and set up Irbil as their capital. In June 2004, US top official Paul Bremer 'transferred' \$1.4 billion US dollars from Iraq's oil for food funds to the Kurds. Israeli 'counter-terrorist' training given to Kurdish security forces is used by Kurdish death squads under US direction in Northern Iraq and elsewhere. Seymour Hersh, writing in the New Yorker (June 2004), stated that Israeli-trained Kurdish commandos infiltrate Iran and Syria. According to Rozen, the Mossad station chief Eliezer Geizi Tsafirir in Irbil, the 'capital' of Iraqi Kurdistan, set up a Kurdish intelligence service for the war-lord Mustafa Barzani. He is better known as the 'rent-a-Kurd'

mercenary leader, who has served the US CIA, the former Shah of Iran and whoever else could pay him. The Kurds provide the bulk of what General David Petraeus has called ‘reliable Iraqi troops’ collaborating with the US colonial occupation forces. They have been active in infiltrating Iraqi resistance groups and fomenting ethnic-religious strife. They are responsible for the massive forced eviction of Iraqi Arabs, Turkomen and Assyrian Christians from Kirkuk and other multi-ethnic towns and cities in the north and repopulating them with Kurds. The Kurdish leaders in Northern Iraq have provided bases and arms for pro-US armed groups operating in Iran, Syria and Turkey, although the latter is without formal US approval. The Kurds serve as commandos and guides for US Special Forces engaged in assassination missions in Iran. The Kurds based in Northern Iraq are instructed to incite ‘separatist’ regional movements in Iran. With strong backing from the US, the Kurds have seized control of the rich oil wells in Kirkuk and surrounding areas, have signed oil contracts with European and US oil companies, de facto privatizing Iraqi public enterprises. The Kurds play a vital role in the US-Israeli strategy of breaking up Iraq into a multiplicity of mini-client entities divided by sectarian ethnic-religious identities with no influence in the region and incapable of ousting long-term US military bases in the country.

In the Horn of Africa, the US has armed and directed the Ethiopian client regime to restore the totally discredited ‘Transitional Regime’ to power in Mogadishu, killing over one thousand Somali civilians and displacing over 300,000 civilians during April-May 2007. The Ethiopian mercenary armed forces caused over \$1.5 billion dollars in destruction with the advice of US Special Forces officers and Israeli counter-insurgency advisers. Once again, US policy is directed at destroying an Islamic country as much as it is defeating a potential political adversary – the Islamic Court Councils. Certainly the policy of relying on the military might of a hated Ethiopian dictator to invade and occupy Somalia has no possibility of creating a viable client regime. Washington’s quick resort to military escalation follows recent defeats and is preparatory to its forthcoming large-scale air war supplemented by mercenary ground attacks against Iran. This is where the ZPC comes into play as key policy makers and propagandists.

While one can debate whether the latest wave of US military escalation is the ‘dying gasp’ of a desperate empire, an irrational miscalculation by civilian militarists pursuing a military victory to bolster flagging domestic support or a continuation of long-standing imperial policies in the region, the fact remains that the principle domestic backer of the re-escalation strategy is the ZPC. No other organized political-economic force consistently supports all US military efforts in each of the zones of conflict. No other group backs US military action in countries where there is little or no oil. No other group totally ignores the ‘overstretch’ of the US military – the over-extension of US military forces in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa at the expense of providing military defense of other strategic imperial regions. Only the ZPC, of all theoretically possible influential ‘interest groups’ has put all countries – Islamic or secular – critical of Israel on the US’s military hit-list. Only the ZPC has orchestrated legislation to bar US financial institutions, pension funds and major oil and gas companies from lucrative investments in Arab and Persian markets. Not a single oil company has favored or benefited from the restrictive legislation on Iran authored by AIPAC, sponsored by Zionist Congressman Tom Lantos and approved by a Congress dominated by the Zionist ‘lobbies’ – the alphabet soup of organizations -- whose prime reason for existence is to promote Israeli state power. Every big oil company in Europe and Asia opposes the US confrontational posture to Iran. As the Financial Times states, “Europe’s oil majors have plans to invest billions (in Iran) but US sanctions mean they are reluctant to go ahead.” (Financial Times May 10, 2007 p.2)

The self-styled ‘alternative’ Jewish lobbies, which claim to speak for liberal Jews critical of Israel, maintain that AIPAC is merely ‘one of many factors’ influencing US policy, in a ‘complex mosaic of changing circumstances’. Using the argument of ‘complexities’ and

packaging the ZPC with ‘numerous groups’ they downplay or eliminate the essential role of the pro-Israel forces and join their mainstream brethren in smearing as ‘anti-Semite’ writers who put the ZPC at the center of their analysis of US policy toward Arab and Muslim countries. The liberal Zionists have a disastrous impact on the peace movement, by deflecting its attention away from a prime mover of US military policy and thus giving the ZPC an uncontested and open terrain for continuing their dominance of US Middle East policy. The liberal Jewish lobby willfully ignores Israeli geopolitical interests, Israeli reliance on military rather than diplomatic measures, its pursuit of ethnic cleansing and the ZPC influence on US policy, in terms of the methods and strategies that Washington should pursue. They deliberately and continuously ignore the opposition of all the major oil companies to US sanctions against Iran.

Conclusion

From 9/11 to the present, the pro-Israel power configuration has broadened its definition of ‘the areas of interest for Israel’, and thus the issues on which it will intervene, thus narrowing the parameters for discussion and policymaking in the US. By defining the limits of action that the US President and Congress can take on issues relating to Israel, the ZPC now influences US policies toward the entire Middle East. Today issues of war and peace, trade and investment agreements by US, European and Asian oil companies and banks in the Middle East, multi-billion dollar arms sales to Saudi Arabia are subject to ZPC scrutiny and veto. The new ‘broad definition’ of what effects Israel includes Lobby backing for Bush’s shredding of Constitutional restraints on his war powers. According to Zionist ideologues unleashing presidential authoritarianism at the service of Israeli extremism is no vice.

The Lobby’s concept of what ‘relates to Israel’ – its guiding light for intervening in US politics – has been stretched, along with Israel’s expanding interests. During the 1940’s to 50’s, the main focus of the Lobby was to secure US diplomatic support for Israel’s ethnic cleansing of Palestine. The Lobby’s focus on areas of ‘interest to Israel’ extended to Israel’s wars with Egypt and Syria in the 1960’s and 1970’s; to Lebanon and Iraq during the 1980’s and 1990’s; and to Iraq and Iran during the current decade. The extension of the Lobby’s intervention in US Middle East politics mirrors Israel’s growing regional aspirations. But according to both Israel and its bucket carriers in the Lobby, it is not merely regional expansion which ‘interests Israel’ but economic and military aid and sales – namely who determines what military goods the US can sell to Arab states as well as what high end military technology the US should provide to the world’s second biggest arms merchant – Israel (which is also the US’s biggest arms export competitor).

What ‘relates to Israel’ involves the Lobby in intervening and determining the US votes in the United Nations, what pressures it will exert on the European Union in the Security Council, and how the White House should react to peace proposals from its clients in the Gulf states. As Jeff Blankfort correctly points out: every US President starting with Richard Nixon has attempted to pressure Israel to withdraw from land it occupied in 1967. And except for Jimmy Carter forcing Israel out of Sinai, Israel has successfully pressured the Israeli Lobby to mobilize the US Congress to end these presidential efforts. Today the ‘Israel Firsters’ do not have to ‘mobilize the Democratic Congress’ – they are automatically programmed to work for Israel, as is the US President. As former Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon once said: “We tell him (Bush) what to do, and he does it.”

The score card for the ZPC under the Bush Presidency and the Democratic Congressional majority is 10 for the Israel Lobby to 0 (zero) for the American People. These ‘10 Points’ are:

1. No limits on the Presidential war agenda toward Iran.

2. No end of sanctions against Palestine
3. No arms sales to Saudi Arabia without Israeli approval.
4. No withdrawal from Iraq.
5. No land for peace agreement to end Israeli colonization of Palestine
6. No end of US escalation of troops in Iraq
7. No end to the power of the Lobby in making US Middle East policy
8. No end to Israeli spying on the US (its even called 'free speech')
9. No end to the censoring of US cultural and intellectual work critical of Israel and to uncontested harassment of Muslims
10. Undisputed Judge and Jury of the beauty contest of US Presidential candidates.
11. No end to the Peace Movement's silence and cover-up of the Lobby's power over US Middle East policy.

James Petras latest book, The Power of Israel in the United States (Clarity Press: Atlanta, 2006). His forthcoming book is Rulers and Ruled (Bankers, Zionists and Militants) (Clarity Press, Atlanta).