

The US and the Middle East:

A “Grand settlement” versus the Jewish lobby

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Introduction

Chances for a change in the direction of US Middle East policy are extremely unlikely. The reason is the growing power of the Jewish Lobby in Congress, the massive Zionist propaganda campaign in all the mass media, Olmert’s ‘nose leading’ of Bush, and a host of related activities. The end result is that Congress will not withdraw or reduce US troops and war funding for the Iraq War. Bush, with the support of McCain and Clinton, Liebermann, Reid and Hoyer, will push for more troops in pursuit of an all-out blood bath in Baghdad. The Baker Iraq Study Group under siege from the Zioncons and Zionlibs will be unable to deal with Israeli violence against Palestinians or enter into a dialogue with Syria and Iran on any but the most narrow and unpromising terms.

Baker’s Iraq Study Group and the Lobby’s Preventive War

Ehud Olmert, Israel’s Prime Minister, firmly imposed the party-line for the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (CPMAJO) and related pro-Israel groups during his November 13 visit to Washington in which he stated his categorical support for Bush’s Iraq War policy and confrontational strategy with Iran. According to the Israeli daily Haaretz (November 14, 2006):

“Olmert said Israel and other countries in the area should be thankful to the United States and Bush. He said the Iraq war had a dramatic positive effect on security and stability in the Middle East as well as strategic importance from Israel’s perspective (my emphasis) and of moderate Arab states. Olmert said he was satisfied with the position Bush took on Iran which went further (my emphasis) than in their previous meeting in May. “Iran’s role in the conversation was quite clear, very serious and very significant and I left the meeting with an outstanding feeling,” said Olmert.”

Nothing expresses the power of the Jewish Lobby over US politics as the cowardly silence of the leading Democrats before this gross intervention by a foreign ruler into the internal politics of the US: Democratic Congressional leader Pelosi swallowed the frog in silence. The only congressional critics complained about Olmert’s ‘partisanship’ – taking sides with Bush, tacitly accepting that Olmert was impinging on US sovereignty, a widely accepted principal by the fifty odd Jewish Senators and Congress-people, and their numerous Gentile pro-Zionist camp followers.

Clearly Olmert was pre-empting any new more flexible proposal, which might emanate from Baker's Iraq Study Group. In this regard Olmert successfully led President Bush 'by the nose' – as former Prime Minister Sharon had once so colorfully boasted. Following the meeting with Olmert, Bush echoed his master's voice calling for the world to unite in isolating Iran until it *“gives up its nuclear ambitions...If they continue to move forward with the program, there has to be consequences. And a good place to start is working together to isolate the country...Iran's nuclear ambitions are not in the world's interest. If Iran had nuclear weapons, it would be terribly destabilizing.”*

Olmert succeeded in committing Bush to a position incompatible with Baker's proposals for meeting with Iran: a strategy of isolation, sanctions and military threats is clearly incompatible with any opening or meaningful dialogue let alone Iran-Syria co-operation in stabilizing Iraq. Yet as Olmert explicitly states, it is in line with Israel's 'strategic interest' of extending its power and domination in the Middle East by weakening or destroying its adversaries. Moreover Olmert, embarrassed Jewish Zionists by publicly praising the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, when 85% of the Democratic voters and 60% of the US electorate are fed up with the deaths (2890 plus) and maiming (25,000 plus) of US soldiers. For the 'Israel First' Democratic Congressmen and women (the vast majority) who knew all along Israel's pro-war position, their faint outcry was over the fact that Olmert was so public, overt and aggressively pro-war, just after the same Zionlibs won the election by 'criticizing' the war (namely over the 'management' of the occupation).

The fact that Olmert intervened in US politics so openly and Bush followed so docilely should be no surprise to observers of US-Israeli relations. Moreover, it is the height of hypocrisy for the Democrats to express 'surprise' or chagrin, as they know from direct experience that the Israeli state intervenes on a daily basis through its proxy lobby on every policy having to do with the Middle East. AIPAC even boasts of writing the legislation and of securing massive Congressional majorities and of its close 'co-ordination' (read subordination) with the Israeli regime in synchronizing its political operations. What makes the Democrats angry is that Olmert exposed their servility to Israel. While they stomp and belch over Bush's pro-war policy, they dared not even convene a press conference to criticize Olmert, for fear of alienating the pro-Israel millionaires who provide 65% of the funds for the Democratic Party.

Olmert's pro-war position on Iraq, Iran and Syria were preceded by an unprecedented propaganda campaign in all the major media by all the principle Zioncon/Zionlib ideologues: articles, opinion pieces and editorials flooded the pages the Wall Street Journal, Foreign Policy, Washington Post, New York Times, New Yorker, and Christian Science Monitor. The usual crowd of unconditional Israel apologists dubbed "Middle East experts" pushed Tel Aviv's line of continual bloodletting in Iraq and military aggression in Iran. Michael Rubin, Charles Krauthamer, Clawson, Eisenstadt, Ledeen, Wolfenson ("American Jews should work hard for Israel and maximize gains for it"), Wurmser, Chertoff ("the US is threatened by international law"), Abraham Foxman ("Iran is worse than Nazi Germany") and an unprecedented one hour long uncontested tirade against Iran ("Iran is Germany, and it's 1938, except that this Nazi regime is in Iran..") by Benjamin Netanyahu on Glenn Beck's prime time CNN program preceded and followed Olmert's political intervention in Washington. The Wall Street Journal editorialized a full-scale attack on the Baker group, even before they had issued any report, backing Israel's position on war with Iran, their support for continuing war in Iraq and the massive ethnic cleansing of Palestinians (40,000 Palestinians have fled Gaza in the last 5 months in the face of 400 killed and thousands maimed by Israeli missiles and shelling). US United Nations Ambassador "Blowhard" John Bolton let out a maniacal screed against the United Nations General Assembly and all its agencies for voting to condemn Israel's deliberate, cold blooded massacre of an extended family of 19 mostly women and children in their beds in the Gaza

village of Beit Hanoun. Bush expressed ‘pride’ in the US’s 31st veto to stop UN resolutions condemning Israel’s savaging of Palestinians.

If Bolton represents the furthest right of an already highly skewed conservative spectrum (the ‘loony right’), he is not without support, especially among the most respectable and representative organizations of the Jewish Lobby. “*The Jewish community remains supportive and would want to see (Bolton) stay*”, said Malcolm Hoenlein, Vice-Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. “*He has been an effective advocate and he is appreciated by the diplomatic corp.*” (The Forward (Jewish Weekly) November 17, 2006). It should be remembered that most major Jewish groups publicly endorsed Bolton when his appointment became a political battle in Washington in early 2005. There is no doubt that Bolton is an “effective advocate” for Israeli Middle East interests over and above the lives of Americans, Iraqis, Lebanese and Palestinians. Hoenlein however confuses the appreciation of the Israeli diplomatic corps for the rest of the world’s diplomats who are amused or appalled by Bolton’s frothing rants against Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, the UN, International Lawyers or anyone that disagrees with him or dares to criticize Israel.

Israel’s stranglehold on the White House’s Middle East policy was explicitly revealed by Israel’s outgoing US Ambassador Danny Ayalon in an interview: “*US President George W. Bush will not hesitate to use force against Iran in order to halt its nuclear program, I have been privileged to know him well, he will not hesitate to go all the way if there is no choice.*” (Maariv Israeli Daily Newspaper November 14, 2006). This is a case where “knowing”, in the Biblical sense conveys intimate relations directed toward Bush’s compliance with the desires of his dominant partner. Israel’s intimate “knowledge” of the White House extends to setting the political framework for US policy toward Teheran’s nuclear energy program. According to Ambassador Ayalon’s time table:

“First the President will try to exhaust the diplomatic process, I estimate there is a 50 percent chance that the diplomatic effort will succeed. If not he will advance another step and consider imposing isolation and a blockade on Iran, like the US imposed on Cuba in the past. If this too does not succeed, he will not hesitate to employ force. If sanctions succeed, all the better. Otherwise, he will act by all means possible, including military action. (The Iraq War) is not the model. This (attack on Iran) is more a case employing air power combined with limited ground force...He (Bush) told me personally, in one of these difficult moments, that if you continue and persevere in your path, the people will ultimately follow you.” (Maariv November 14, 2006).

Ayalon’s interview reveals several important aspects of the future course of White House policy toward Iran. First and foremost, the Israelis have inside knowledge and access to the White House, and they have successfully imposed their confrontational policies on the Presidency. In addition they have encouraged the President “to continue and persevere” in his war policies, even when the majority of the US electorate, the people and nations of the world and even some of his advisers are against ‘his path’. The Israelis have pandered to Bush’s fundamentalist Christian belief that ‘the people will ultimately follow’ him in his Messianic delusions, even when all the evidence is to the contrary. Bush’s belief is not distant from the Israeli belief that if you defy the world community of nations and public opinion long enough they will eventually come around to acknowledging the righteousness of the ‘Chosen People’. Israel has, of course, the luxury of projecting their venal arrogance knowing full well they have the backing of US vetoes in the United Nations and the military of a support of a superpower. Bush lacks a superior power (unless we include the mighty Jewish Lobby) to counteract his political isolation. Bush has the dubious distinction of being the President-most-servile-to-a-foreign-power in US history (exceeding his predecessor, ex-President Clinton, Zionist Emeritus),

a point emphasized by ex-President Jimmy Carter in his latest book. No previous President has ever confided his war plans to a foreign emissary even before meeting with his top advisory commission, thus precluding the possibility of domestic influential leaders, like the members of the Baker group, from any substantial role shaping policy. Moreover Bush's servility to the Israel/ Jewish Lobby extends to blocking his European allies from formulating an alternative Iran policy to Israel's military 'pre-emptive strike' proposal. According to the Israeli daily Haaretz:

"Bush told his French counterpart (President Jacques Chirac) that the possibility that Israel would carry out a strike against Iran's nuclear installations should not be ruled out. Bush also said that if such an attack were to take place he would understand it", (Haaretz, November 20, 2006).

The single minded stranglehold of the Jewish Lobby expressed in White House support for an Israeli sneak attack on Iran, is such that Bush not only ignores the advice of Secretary of State Rice, but dismisses the fateful consequences: a massive Iranian military response against US occupation forces in Iraq resulting in thousands of deaths, massive oil and political dislocations in the entire Middle East, destabilization of the Gulf States and rising oil prices. The unprecedented Zionist control over the White House was summed up by Zioncon executive director of the Jewish Institute for (Israeli) National Security Affairs (JINSA), Thomas Neumann: *"The administration today was stronger on Israel than any administration in my lifetime", (JTA, November 14, 2006).*

While proponents of a 'turn' in US policy in the Middle East hailed the resignation of Rumsfeld and the appointment of Robert Gates to Secretary of Defense – a member of the Baker Iraq Study Group – as auguring a more 'realist', less bellicose policy, Zionist leaders were confident that their dominant influence over Bush would keep Gates in line with Israeli policy. Mara Rudman, a Zionlib former member of Clinton's National Security Council speaking at the Zioncon "Israel Policy Forum" in Washington accurately put the Gates appointment into its proper perspective: *"It's not really where he (Gates) goes, its where the president goes".* And as evidence indicates, the President 'goes' where the Israelis and their US transmission belts tell him. Thomas Neumann, the JINSA's propaganda master dismissed the possibility that Gates would front for the Baker Iraq Study Group: *"Gates was appointed more because he has a record of doing what he's told (by Bush). There's nothing good or bad about Gates, they (the White House) wanted someone who doesn't make waves", (Jewish Telegraph Agency, November 11, 2006).*

Along with White House support, Israel has successfully mobilized its political apparatus (the Jewish Lobby) in the US to direct political campaign funding toward the election of unconditional supporters of Israel. Democratic campaign finance directors, Israeli-US Congressman Rahm Emmanuel and 'Israel Firster' Senator Charles Schumer were backed by a multi-million dollar Wall Street slush fund (as reported by Time, Newsweek, and the Wall Street Journal). They ensured that over 30 Jewish Congressmen and women and 13 Senators were elected, including all of the Jewish incumbents, a number of senatorial and Congressional leaders married to Zionists as well as Lobby-certified 100% Israel supporters like Congressional Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate majority leader Harry Reid (praised by the Jewish Lobby for his life long unconditional support for Israel – JTA November 20, 2006). In the first test of Congressional Zionpower, Nancy Pelosi was defeated by a large majority in her effort to nominate the Iraq War Critic Congressman John Murtha as Majority Leader in the House, in favor of Steny Hoyer, a Congressman much more sympathetic to Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's pro-war views.

The Jewish lobby has erected a 'firewall' to any US rapprochement with Iran, and in particular any initiative in that direction from the Baker Iraq Study Group. This is especially necessary because of the dire crisis of the US in Iraq and public perception of a new bloodier and costlier war against Iran. Moreover the Lobby is desperate to counter the positive confidence building measures adopted by Israel's Middle East adversaries, namely Syria and Iran with regard to overtures to Iraq. The Israeli counter-measures were not long in coming.

Peace Initiatives from Syria

In November of this year (2006) British Prime Minister Blair, subsequent to a visit to the Middle East, issued a policy statement calling for a dialogue and negotiations for an overall peace settlement in the Middle East including all interested parties, especially Syria and Iran. The Israeli regime immediately rejected the proposal. 'The Lobby' echoed their patrons' policy and subsequently the White House and Congress followed suit. Syria proceeded to establish diplomatic relations and intelligence and economic cooperation with the US-backed Iraqi regime, demonstrating a major gesture toward 'stabilizing' the Mesopotamian region. The Israeli regime branded the policy a means of influencing Iraqi 'terrorists'. Predictably, the Jewish Lobby, its scribes and media outlets downplayed its significance or put a negative spin to the Syrian initiative – demanding "Syria follow words by action", namely stopping the flow of militants into Iraq. Syria responded by pointing to its far more extensive frontier patrol posts than those of the US or Iraqi government. The Israeli regime and its Lobby, the White House and Congressional clients' rejection of Syrian (and Iranian) peace initiatives is as much directed at neutralizing these overtures as it is in pre-empting similar initiatives emanating from the Baker Iraq Study Group. The Lobby's vehement dismissal of Syria's role as a stabilizing force sets the stage for linking it with Baker and undercutting his recommendations when they finally become public. A similar Lobby propaganda effort is directed at Iran and indirectly at Baker's proposals for negotiating with them.

The White House, Brussels and Tel Aviv's efforts to isolate Syria, undermine its conciliatory steps and block any overture from the Baker group is centered on the unsubstantiated accusations that Damascus assassinated two 'anti-Syrian' Lebanese leaders, Rafik Hariri and Pierre Gemayel. In the case of Hariri, the main witness against Syria later recanted and perjured himself and the principal Turkish investigator later resigned after having pursued only one line of investigation – to demonstrate the complicity of Syria – discounting the equally plausible hypothesis of Israeli involvement. The major beneficiaries of the Hariri assassination were the US and Israel, even as the European Union lent its weight to the accusation against Syria. The historical lessons of the anti-Syrian Hariri campaign were not lost on the promoters of the current political manipulators of the Gemayel assassination. The US and its Israeli ally succeeded in forcing Syria to withdraw its forces from Lebanon, apparently making Southern Lebanon and, in particular, Hezbollah vulnerable to Israeli military attack. Shortly thereafter, Israel used a routine border incident as a pretext to invade and attempt to destroy Hezbollah and decimate its social base among the millions of residents in Beirut and Southern Lebanon. Rather than strengthen Israel's position in Lebanon and increase the power of its longstanding Phalangist clients, the invasion strengthened Hezbollah raising its support to over 60% of the Lebanese population (Guardian of London November 15, 2006). The campaign to pin the Gemayel death on Syria and Hezbollah is designed to promote Israeli power aggrandizement in Lebanon by provoking internal civil conflict, orchestrating and mobilizing a mass smear campaign against Hezbollah to pre-empt the latter's effort to secure a more equitable representation of its electoral support in the Lebanese Cabinet. Israeli strategists hope to bring about a '*pincer*' operation in which Hezbollah will be attacked by the Phalangists in the North and by Israel from the South.

Hezbollah under siege would thus weaken its Syrian ally as a possible interlocutor for the Baker Group and encourage Israel's militarists to recover from their fall from grace following their ruinous Lebanon adventure. By tarring Syria with dual assassinations, the White House and Israel will strengthen its major Zionist organizations' campaign to undermine Baker's proposal to open a dialogue with Syria (Daily Alert November 22, 2006). More specifically it will neutralize the positive fall-out in Washington of Syria's establishment of relations with the US client-regime in Iraq. For this reason the rabidly pro-Israel Wall Street Journal screeched: "*Another Murder in Beirut for Jim Baker to Contemplate*" (November 22, 2006).

The fact is that Israel and its Zionist representatives in the US are the main beneficiaries of the dual assassinations. There is both hard and circumstantial data pointing to Israeli complicity in the killings. There are several cases of notorious Phalangists being murdered just prior to their scheduled testimony in Brussels before a case brought by Palestinian survivors against top Israelis involved in the notorious massacres in Lebanon, especially at the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila in September 1982. On January 24, 2002, Elie Hobeika, a Phalangist warlord directly involved in the massacre, was blown up in his Beirut neighborhood along with 3 bodyguards just two days after agreeing to testify against the Israelis on behalf of the Palestinian survivors. Hobeika, who was the Phalangist chief liaison with the IDF during their occupation of Beirut, claimed to have worked with the Israeli Mossad in orchestrating the massacre. A mysterious group, 'Lebanese for a Free and Independent Lebanon' claimed responsibility from Cyprus. Just weeks earlier, another witness for the Belgian case and close Hobeika associate, Jean Ghanem had been killed in an auto accident. A few months later, a third close Hobeika associate and potential witness in the Belgian case, Michael Nassar, was assassinated with his wife in Brazil.

In these assassinations and unexpected deaths, most experts and Lebanese politicians, including Phalangists, pointed to Mossad operations. In other words, the fact that Phalangists were Israeli's clients did not preclude selective assassinations when it was in Israeli State interest: They treated the Phalangists, their former allies, like used condoms. Pierre Gemayel, the grandson of the founder of the Lebanese fascist Phalange Party, was a marginal figure in the Lebanese political equation; in death he becomes a pivotal figure in Israel's Middle East power grab.

In June 2006 Lebanese military authorities announced the arrest of Hussein al-Khatib, a Lebanese former Israeli prisoner, who confessed to have worked in Lebanon as part of a Mossad-led assassination team killing Lebanese and Palestinian leaders using car bombs. Throughout Lebanese history, Mossad operatives have been imputed with political assassinations of Palestinian and Lebanese adversaries, car bombings and commando operations in Beirut as well as throughout the country. As early as the foundation of Israel, its leaders, including Ben Gurion, advocated promoting civil war in order to establish a Christian Maronite government in Lebanon allied to Israel.

In summary, Israel has a motive for killing Hariri and Gemayel, has a history of killing 'clients' to further their state interests and certainly has exercised the practice of executing Lebanese political figures. Given the high stakes involved in a possible re-direction in US policy toward engaging Syria, as proposed by the Baker Iraq Study Group, and given Damascus efforts to facilitate such a dialogue by giving legitimacy to the US bloody client in Baghdad, the Israeli ploy of political murder and Zionist media blitz condemning Syria makes political sense from the point of view of Israel's quest for Middle East dominance.

The Iranian Peace Overtures

A key interlocutor for a general Middle East settlement in which the US retains its strategic Arab allies in the Middle East passes through dialogue, negotiations and power sharing with Teheran. Contrary to the demonic propaganda spewed by the Israeli regime and the Jewish Lobby in the US, Iran has repeatedly demonstrated that far from fomenting 'terrorism' it has co-operated with the US on a whole series of important measures compatible with US imperial policies in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the run-up to the US invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq, it is a publicly known and officially acknowledged fact the Iran supported the US overthrow of Saddam Hussein, provided intelligence to the US, advised and supported Shia co-operation in the formation of a US client regime, recognized and established formal relations with the puppet regime despite its collaboration with the killers of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians.

Iran has been a major bulwark against Al Queda, arresting and in some cases offering to extradite them to the West, thus showing a decided partisanship to some aspects of the US 'War on Terrorism'. Equally important, Iran has played a major stabilizing role in Western Afghanistan, especially in Herat, severely limiting Taliban influence. Iran works closely with Italian and ISAF reconstruction teams in rebuilding the region. The Financial Times (November 18, 2006 p.11) reports: "*The main factor holding the west of Afghanistan together is the positive influence of neighboring Iran which is 'pumping a lot of money into the reconstruction of the west', says a senior US administration official in Washington*".

The army of 'Israel-First' publicists in the US and Europe continue to lump Iran with Al Queda, Taliban, Iraqi terrorists despite all the evidence to the contrary. The 'Big Lie' campaign is directed toward isolating Iran and securing United Nations sanctions as a prelude to a US-Israeli sneak attack on Iranian cities, infrastructure, military and scientific research installations and nuclear research facilities. To proceed toward the destruction of Iran and the consolidation of Israeli dominance in the Middle East, the immediate target is to pre-empt the Baker Group from proposing a dialogue with Iran or at a minimum of setting parameters, which will virtually undercut the possibility.

The most vicious and effective Israel-centered propaganda campaign against Iran focuses on its nuclear research programs. The Zionist-led campaign against Iran has not provided any basis to contradict the IAEA inspection team's findings that no evidence for a nuclear weapons program exists. Iran's forthright offers to the US and the EU for detailed inspection tours by all inspectors has been dismissed outright by the White House as a 'propaganda ploy', a 'ploy' which Israel has refused to offer with regard to its own illegal nuclear and chemical-biological arms facilities. No expert or political leader in the world, now or in the recent past, has ever argued that Iran is violating the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Israeli-US opposition toward uranium enrichment is applied singularly to Iran. Otherwise all one hundred nations with nuclear energy programs should be threatened with pre-emptive war.

Palestinian Peaceful Overtures

Despite sustained bloody attacks from the Israeli military machine (the misnamed Israeli 'Defense' Forces) the Palestinian Hamas government had made two peace proposals. Between January 2005 and June 24, 2006, the Hamas government refrained from responding to Israeli military attacks on Gaza and the West Bank (despite numerous assassinations, house demolitions and illegal arrests of activists) in hopes of inducing Tel Aviv to begin peace negotiations. The Israeli State, backed by the US, categorically rejected peace and imposed a total blockade on the Gaza Strip. It was only when the IDF shelled a Palestinian beach filled with families, murdering

18 picnicking children and their parents that Hamas responded with sporadic shell firing and the capture of an Israeli tank soldier engaged in shelling into the Gaza neighborhoods.

The subsequent Israeli massacre of 400 Palestinians (over 200 of whom are non-combatant civilians, mainly women and children) between July and November 24, 2006 failed to dampen Palestinian resistance. Palestinian and international proposals to end the blood bath have been consistently rejected by the Israeli regime. On November 24, 2006 the BBC News reported: *“ Israel has dismissed an offer by Palestinian militant groups to stop firing rockets into Israel if Israel ends attacks on Palestinians. An Israeli government spokeswoman, Miri Eisen, said...the offer of an end to firing rockets from Gaza showed the lack of real commitment to peace (sic!). ”*

By that twisted logic, Israel’s continued artillery barrages of Palestinian towns demonstrated a ‘real’ commitment to peace! The BBC points to what most experts acknowledge is Israel’s long-term bellicose posture: *“Israel has in the past consistently rejected ceasefire offers by Palestinian militants, saying it refuses to do deals of any kind (my emphasis) with what it describes as terrorist organizations ”*, (November 24, 2006).

The Olmert regime rejected outright a new peace initiative proposed by Italy, France and Spain, which would have allowed United Nations peace forces to safeguard the frontier between Gaza and Israel (Reuters/Haaretz November 21, 2006). In the face of Israel’s systematic daily killing of Palestinians and ethnic cleansing of over 8,000 Palestinians each month (40,000 since June), the United Nations General Assembly voted to condemn Israel 150 to 7 for its mass murder in Beit Hanoun and call for an investigation. The Israeli Ambassador walked out. The Israeli regime rejected the UN resolution and continued in its slaughter, killing a dozen Palestinians in the immediate aftermath, as a sign of its contempt for the United Nation.

Israel’s disdain for world public opinion has the unequivocal support of the Presidents of the Major American Jewish Organizations and their counterparts in Canada, England, France, Argentina and elsewhere throughout the world. But it is in the United States where the Jewish Lobby’s power really counts: it is the US, which exercised its 31st veto protecting Israel from a censorious UN Security Council resolution. It was the White House’s dismissal of the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair’s proposal for an all inclusive Middle East conference, including Syria, Palestine, Iraq, the Jewish State and Iran, which allowed Israel to ignore the entire European Union, the Middle East, and for that matter the rest of the world. The Financial Times (November 18-19, 2006 p.6) reported: *“Tony Blair’s call this week for a ‘whole Middle East strategy’ sent a message that the road to peace in Iraq passes through Jerusalem and Beirut. In his foreign policy speech to the City of London, the UK Prime Minister recognized the region’s crises were interlinked and required a comprehensive approach.”*

It should be clearer than ever that the Israeli ethnic cleansing of Palestine, rather than being a catalyst for Israeli extremism, is a reflection of the pervasiveness of racist attitudes which characterize Zionist extremism and that threatens everyone in the Middle East, Europe and the United States. Zionist unwillingness to compromise, the belief that the future is theirs alone, the denial of the legitimacy of the other’s narrative, and the determination to pursue one’s ideology even at the expense of one’s own people, are characteristics that have made resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict impossible. These characteristics are at the heart of the extremist Zionist assault on Western nations and people who propose constraints on Israeli militarism. In 2003 the West failed to act in time to protect its own interest in the Middle East from a Zionist-backed war. It is paying a price but the Iraqis and Palestinians are paying infinitely more. This time around with the same White House/Israeli forces pushing for a new pre-emptive war against Iran, we must do better. If not, a higher price will again be paid because the Iranians and world opinion are infinitely stronger.

The Israeli rejection of Palestinian, European and United Nations proposals for peace negotiations is directed as much at the Baker Iraq Study Group, which also sees that the road to peace in Baghdad passes through Jerusalem. The full court press by the Israeli and Jewish Lobby on the Bush Administration and the US Congress to back Israel's opposition to peace negotiations is designed to undermine any recommendations by the Baker Group and its numerous backers in sectors of the US military, finance, petroleum, Congress and mass media calling for pressure on Israel, inclusion of Iran and reduction of US troops in Iraq. Led by arch-Zionist Michael Ledeen of the American Enterprise Institute some in the Jewish Lobby dismiss the Baker Iraq Study Group as 'the realists and anti-Semites'. Kagen and Kristol explicitly mock them as 'defeatist' and traitors. (Novartis November 4, 2006)

The Baker Camp

There is no doubt that Baker's Iraq Study Group's proposals to the White House and Congress take place in a generally favorable setting. Domestically, anti-war sentiment in the run-up to the Congressional election in 2006 is at an all-time high; the 40% of the electorate that voted repudiated numerous Republican candidates identified with Bush's policies (and even others who were not). Top advisers to the Bush regime have publicly supported opening a discussion with Iran – a major recommendation of the Baker Group. David Satterfield, a senior adviser to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, told the Senate Armed Services Committee, "*We are prepared to discuss Iranian activities in Iraq. The timing of such a dialogue is one we still have under review.*" (Financial Times November 16, 2006 p.1) Satterfield's comments followed the Congressional testimony of General John Abizaid (the top US general to Iraq) who categorically rejected sending more troops to Iraq. Interviews with top military officials, retired and active, have called for a phased withdrawal. Equally important, in an unprecedented turn of events, the weekly publications of the three military sectors (Army, Navy and Marine Corps) editorialized in favor of the firing of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld just two days before the mid-term elections – and succeeded in precipitating his ouster.

A feature article in Newsweek (November 20, 2006, pp. 40-43) favorably referred to the Baker Group as the "Rescue Squad." Other sectors of the media followed suit. The Financial Times (Nov. 14, 2006) editorialized:

"The last five years have seen Israel extend and consolidate its hold on the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem despite western rhetoric. That, every bit as much as the unprovoked invasion of Iraq, is what constantly threatens to set the region alight.

The bipartisan Iraq Survey Group, led by James Baker, a former Secretary of State, and Lee Hamilton, an influential former congressman, is likely to focus on these issues and the need to re-launch the peace process. That, in turn, will require engagement with Iran and Syria, and should lead to the reconsideration of the Arab peace plan of 2002 – full Arab recognition of Israel in return for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab land. Ignoring the roots of Middle East volatility, as the accelerating cycle of conflict in the region should remind us, is a dangerous abdication of responsibility.

By including former leading Republican and Democratic Congress people (Hamilton and Simpson) and cabinet members, Baker secured at least the support of some sectors of the two parties and Congress. By ensuring that one of the Iraq Study Group, Robert Gates, was named to replace Rumsfeld in the crucial position of Secretary of Defense, Baker potentially has some direct leverage in the Executive branch. With the exception of Edwin Meese, a leader in the far-

right Heritage Foundation, Clifford May of the Zioncon Foundation for the Defense of Democracy and Michael Rubin (who has since resigned)- all members of the Israel First crowd - Baker has limited the influence of the Zioncons who designed Middle East war policy in the Bush Administration.

Equally important, Baker has the backing of the major petroleum and gas companies of Houston-Dallas, who have been sidelined from Middle East policymaking during the Zioncon-militarist ascendancy in the White House. They are eager for an “even-handed” Middle East policy to serve their economic ties with Middle East oil producers and to facilitate commercial negotiations with Iran and the Gulf States. Major US investment houses, including those whose CEOs are prominent donors to the pro-Israel lobbies, are eager for a peace settlement, which includes Iran, in order to move into the new multi-billion dollar Islamic investments funds, which have emerged among the Arab Gulf States.

On the domestic front, it would seem that Baker and his Group are in a strong position to reorient US Middle East policy, by engaging Syria and Iran, Sunnis and Shia, and even Israel and Palestine in a “Grand Settlement”. Most US big business interests favor an approach which would limit Israeli-Zioncon influence over the use and abuse of US military power in the Middle East, facilitate US multi-national corporations’ (MNC) and banks’ (MNB) dealings with conservative Arab/Iranian rulers, widen and secure US access to oil, and expand US influence in the oil and gas rich former Soviet Republics in South and Central Asia.

Conditions and circumstances on the international front are even more favorable to the Baker Group. Iran has accepted a place at the negotiating table with the US, to discuss stabilizing Iraq. This is central to any settlement as Iran has ties and influence with sectors of the Shia leadership in Iraq.

Of course the *quid pro quo* for any agreement between the US and Iran would involve the US agreeing to end its confrontational policies and military threats directed at Teheran. As we will discuss shortly this is a point of intense contention within Washington, meeting intense resistance from the entire ‘Israel First’ power structure (Lobby-Congress-Mass Media-Democratic Party Donors). To facilitate the opening of a dialogue with the US, Iran offered the United Nations access to all its major nuclear installations in order to neutralize the hysterical warmongers among the formidable army of ‘Israel First’ ideologues. According to the BBC (November 23, 2006):

“Iran will give inspectors access to records and equipment from two of its nuclear sites, the head of the UN’s atomic agency, the IAEA has said. Mohamed El Baradei said he hoped Iran’s move would begin a series of measures that would clear suspicions over its nuclear program ... According to Mr. El Baradei, Iran has agreed to let ... the IAEA inspectors take environmental samples from the equipment at a former military site at Lavizan. Iran has also said it will give the UN access to records from a uranium enrichment plant in Natanz.”

These reports by the IAEA provide the Baker Group with ample justification for opening a dialogue with Iran and assuring the US public and members of Congress– at least those not under the thumb of the Lobby – that they are not “appeasing” a nuclear menace. Contrary to the claims of the Israeli warlords and their Lobby propagandists that Iran is an “*existential nuclear threat to the survival of Israel*”, a report by the IAEA issued on November 14, 2006 sent to the governor of the nuclear watchdog, confirmed that Iran is now principally using two ‘cascades’ of 164 centrifuges apiece to enrich uranium. (Financial Times Nov. 15, 2006, p. 8) This means that Iran “*still falls well short of the 3,000 or so centrifuges that would be needed to enrich uranium on an industrial scale*” (FT Nov. 15, 2006, p.8). Baker, if he so wished, could neutralize the

entire Israel chorus by pointing out that Iran has grossly insufficient weapon-grade enriched uranium for bomb making. He could point out that, in any case, enriching uranium is in total compliance with the Non-Proliferation Nuclear Treaty and that the IAEA has extended access to oversee Iran's nuclear projects.

Moreover, Baker could point to the on-going tacit working agreements between the US and Iran in opposing the Taliban, reconstructing Afghanistan and in pursuing Al Qaeda everywhere. In addition, Iran has intelligence-sharing agreements with the US puppet regime in Iraq. Even more important, Baker could point out that Iran supported the US overthrow of Saddam Hussein and has recognized the US puppet regime.

Syrian diplomatic moves, especially the restoration of relations with the US client regime in Iraq, certainly provides a positive setting for Baker to propose opening a dialogue with Damascus. Simultaneously, Iran met with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani. At a time when the US client regime in Iraq is losing control and the US military is increasingly incapable of sustaining it, the Iranian desire to stabilize it is a signal to Washington that it is willing to cooperate on a joint policy on Iraq. Syria's clear overture to the US was evident in its statement restoring ties: "*Syria accepted the Iraqi and UN formula about the presence of US troops in Iraq. Instead of demanding their immediate departure, Syria agreed that they should withdraw gradually when not needed.*" (BBC November 25, 2006)

Baker has the backing of the White House's major European ally, British Prime Minister Blair, who supports the idea of including Syria and Iran in a deal to stabilize Iraq. Blair argued for a 'general plan', which would include an international agreement to resolve the Palestine - Israel conflict. Given the mood of compromise, that leaves only Israel pitted against the entire European continent and Middle East in refusing to negotiate with Iran, Hamas and Syria.

With regard to the Palestinian conflict, Hamas has implicitly endorsed a two state solution based on the 1967 borders, for all intents and purposes recognizing Israel. Hamas' offer forcefully puts the lie to Israel's claims that Hamas is a terrorist organization, which refuses to negotiate a two state solution or recognize Israel. Clearly, the ball is in Baker's corner. The question is whether he will seek to explore this window of opportunity presented by Hamas to substantially reduce tensions and conflicts in the Middle East. Most experts and Middle Eastern leaders (of the non-Zioncon variety) have repeatedly stressed the road to peace in Baghdad passes through Jerusalem.

Most important of all, the Bush strategy of "staying the course" in Iraq has been (with the sole exception of Israel Prime Minister Olmert – the war's only beneficiary) universally rejected -- by his own generals, "coalition" partners, the American people and the majority of the US combat soldiers in Iraq. The White House disaster in Iraq has even led some Zioncon propagandists and architects of the war to abandon and opportunistically attack Bush. In other words, Baker's proposals will be directed to an isolated President with a totally discredited policy, whose only clutch of supporters are economically and diplomatically insignificant but who possesses a powerful, wealthy and well-placed configuration of disciplined 'influentials' in the US known as the 'Jewish Lobby'.

With formidable domestic allies and an extremely favorable international environment, one would think that Baker's proposals for moving forward in a new direction in the Middle East would be a 'cakewalk.'

Unfortunately, that will not be the case at all. What most of the critics, commentators, self-styled investigative reporters, politicians and media pundits favorable to Baker forget to

mention is the great elephant in the parlor - the Israeli/Jewish Lobby and its extended reach in Congress, the Democratic Party, the media and other vehicles for shaping US Middle East policy.

The Jewish Lobby: Confronts the Baker Group

The American Jewish Lobby, at the behest and orders of the Israeli state, has been leading a large-scale, intensive and partially successful campaign to demonize Iran and Syria, successfully pushing the US to pressure the United Nations in favor of economic sanctions. Through their blustering political clone US Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, they pulled Washington closer to launching a military attack on Iran. An examination of AIPAC's agenda puts a new war against Iran on behalf of Israel at the top of its list of priorities. For the last 3 years, the publications, conferences and press releases of the Presidents of the Major American Jewish Organization (PMAJO) urge their members to go all out to fund and back candidates (mostly Democrats) who support Israel's 'military solution' to Iran's nuclear enrichment program.

Never a day goes by when the PMAJO publication– the Daily Alert - does not reproduce articles endorsing Israel's war crimes and civilian killings and fabricating tissue thin 'explanations' justifying each and every brutality. Whether it involves murdering a family of 10 at a beach outing in June 2006 or an extended family of 19 in their beds in Beit Hanoun or dropping one million anti-civilian cluster bomblets in Lebanon two days before the ceasefire, or the cold-blooded murder of American activist, Rachel Corrie, the Daily Alert is ready to cover-up for the Israeli State.

An army of 'Israel First, Last and Always' ideologues ('Resident Scholars' of some Washington institute or 'Middle East Experts' from a prestigious university) are churning out articles every day calling for the US to spill more of its soldiers blood for 'Greater Israel' by going to war with Iran. The brazen arrogance of these intellectual trollops defies the imagination. Here our country is still immersed in a losing war, which their cohorts in the Pentagon designed and executed, and which the 'Lobby' celebrated, and they argue, push and shove for us to engage in a bigger, bloodier and costlier war with Iran. Despite their disastrous policies, the 'American' Zionists have purchased a formidable bloc of Congress-people and Senators who are unconditional supporters of Israel and its political definition of Middle East policy.

The newly elected Democrats, Congressional leaders and Committee Chair-people dared not challenge the Israel Prime Minister Olmert when he endorsed Bush, his catastrophic war in Iraq, his policy of "staying the course" and his proposal to "put the military option on the table" with regard to Iran.

The Israeli-American head of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff has sworn enmity to the entire corpus of international law, the European Parliament and the United Nations, in large part because they argue against the White House and Israeli illegal pre-emptive military attacks on Middle Eastern adversaries (Reuters November 17, 2006). The Democrats, in tune with the Lobby, sidelined anti-war Congressman John Murtha from becoming House Majority leader in favor of Steny Hoyer, a pliable Congressman from Maryland obedient to 'Lobby advice'. Senator Harry Reid, the new leader of the Senate Democrats, has already been given a certificate of good conduct by the Nevada State Jewish Lobby. He can be counted on to limit the scope of any 'dialogue' with Iran or Syria. The same is true with Nancy Pelosi, Majority Speaker of the House, who has sworn unswerving allegiance to the State of Israel at every AIPAC convention she has ever attended.

Pelosi selected Reva Price as a key adviser on foreign policy, the Middle East and 'Jewish interests', with particular attention to affluent Lobby contributors to the Democratic

Party. As Mathew Berger (friend of the Lobby) writes in the Congressional Quarterly (November 24, 2006):

Democratic lawmakers are sporting their pro-Israel credentials...the Jewish donors who come to Washington for intimate meeting just like this one, are eating it up word for word. In the back stands Reva Price...the policy matchmaker between the Jewish community and Democratic lawmakers – and her role as an adviser to Rep. Nancy Pelosi...Now with Pelosi set to become the next Speaker of the House, Price has the chance to bring the Jewish Community's hot topics to the ear of true power... ”.

Reva Price was the leader of the ultra-Zionist Jewish Council for Public Affairs prior to becoming Pelosi's key adviser on hot topics in the Middle East of special interest to the 'Lobby'. As Berger points out, in the run-up to the election Price “*worked hard to counter that perception that some Democratic lawmakers (including a few who are now likely to chair committees) want to pressure Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians...for this election...Jewish lawmakers made clear that the Democratic caucus would support Israel, and those members who were not supportive would not have influence on foreign affairs*”. Pelosi demonstrated her obedience to the Price-Lobby line by viciously attacking Israel critic, former President Jimmy Carter, stating, “*Carter does not speak for the Democratic Party or for Israel*”. Amy Friedkin, a former president of AIPAC and a friend of Pelosi for over 25 years, wrote: “*I've heard her say numerous times that the single greatest achievement of the 20th century was the founding of the modern state of Israel. She has been a great friend of the US-Israel relationship during her entire time in Congress and is deeply committed to strengthening that relationship*” (Jewishjournal.com November 30, 2006).

Numerous articles and opinion pieces have appeared in the Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal and The New York Times written by 'Israel First' writers, which attack any attempt by Baker to change US's confrontational policy towards Iran, not to mention a proposal calling for an international conference to resolve the Palestine-Israel conflict.

The Jewish Lobby has formidable allies not only in Congress and the majority Democratic Party but powerful representatives in the executive branch, including key operators like Vice President Cheney, National Security Coordinator of the Middle East Elliot Abrams, Presidential Spokesperson Joshua Bolton and Vice Presidential Adviser David Wurmser and a pack of other long-serving 'Israel Firsters'. The Zionist-influenced Congress could dredge up Gates' previous involvement in Iran-Contra scandal to if he decided to ally with Baker, just as they sabotaged Murtha by digging up a 30-year old caper to undercut his quest for House Majority Leader.

Conclusion

The Baker Group, despite the advantageous international situation and broad domestic support, faces the enormous power and opposition of the Jewish Lobby, in its quest to break new ground in US Middle East Policy. Each and every proposal will pass the scrutiny of an army of 'Israel First' Lobbyists, their compliant Congress members and staff, and have to withstand the hostility of members of the Executive, including George W. Bush, aligned with the Jewish state. One of the first major battlefields will revolve around the question whether the US should engage in a dialogue and seek the cooperation with a willing Iran and Syria in stabilizing the situation in Iraq or whether the US should pursue a confrontational approach including sanctions and the military option. The first line of attack by the pro-Israel power configuration is to reject outright any openings to the two Middle East countries. The usual froth, damnation and demonization, fabrication and mistranslation of quotes will be trotted out to preclude any meetings with the Iranian president. If Baker's proposal makes any headway, the Jewish power bloc in Congress

and the Executive can be expected to impose a political straightjacket, which precludes any effective and meaningful exchange. This means that they will propose the White House follow a ‘two track’ approach: vigorously continue to pursue economic sanctions and military threats on one track while, on the other, approaching Iran to intervene and stabilize the US client regime in Iraq. The Zionists and their followers know that a two-track approach is a non-starter. Iran is not about to lend its political leverage to stabilize Iraq in order to free up US military power to blow up Iranian cities as well as its nuclear facilities, ports, refineries and other vital infrastructure. Not even Baker’s much vaunted diplomatic skills will convince Iran to make one-sided strategic concessions to the White House in exchange for nothing – not even an elementary security or non-aggression agreement.

Great Britain’s Defense Minister Des Browne announced a sharp reduction of troops at least by half in Iraq for 2007 (Al Jazeera November 26, 2006). Baker will be under even greater pressure to propose a timetable for the reduction of US troops – a position however, which apparently has divided his group. (NY Times November 27, 2006)

A proposal to gradually reduce US troops in Iraq and reposition them to military bases is not likely to meet stiff opposition from the Jewish state or its representatives in the US – unless the White Office offers stiff resistance. For Israel and its Lobby, the US invasion and occupation has already accomplished its primary mission of destroying the Iraqi state: fragmenting Iraqi society into warring ethno-religious-tribal divisions and eliminating a strong secular republic opposed to the Jewish state’s ethnic cleansing of Palestine. For Israel and its US Lobby, it is now time to move on to eliminating other adversaries to Israeli Middle East dominance – namely Iran and Syria. That is why the Lobby is spending more resources and exerting greater pressure on the White House and the Congress to escalate the confrontation with those two countries. And that is why the Lobby has already launched a full-scale propaganda campaign to block any openings to Iran, which might lead to some sort of security accommodation.

Will Baker be able to ‘con’ the Iranian and Syrian leaders into believing that their political support of the US in Iraq will be rewarded later? That aiding the US in Iraq will create ‘confidence’ of their good will in Washington and enhance Iran’s image as a “responsible” Middle East power? Baker may argue that their co-operation strengthens the ‘good guy realists’ in Washington, weakens the ‘bad guy Zioncons’ and leads to an end of the confrontational military blackmail. No doubt there are Iranian politicians and diplomats among the competing forces who are eager to cooperate with the US at almost any price, but even they cannot publicly embrace the restrictive terms, which the Lobby-White House will propose. A dialog is impossible if the White House and Israel continue to threaten a pre-emptive attack. It is highly unlikely that Baker’s Group will dare confront the powerful Jewish lobby by raising the issue of restricting Israel’s militarist posture or even diplomatically asking the Jewish State to refrain from setting ‘deadlines’ for an air assault against Iran.

Despite the otherwise universal consensus (Israel and the Jewish Lobby excluded) that the Palestine-Israel conflict is at the center of Middle East discord and the public and private acknowledgement that Israeli land grabbing and ethnic cleansing is the major factor in the conflict, despite the fact that James Baker publicly acknowledged as much when he served as Secretary of State in Bush Sr.’s government, it is highly unlikely that the Baker group will advance a proposal convoking an international conference to deal with the Palestinian issue. He knows in advance that it will provoke a firewall of opposition in a Lobby-controlled Congress and denunciations of ‘anti-Semitism’ from the fanatic Zionist Middle East ‘experts’, pundits and Ivy League ‘academics in uniform’.

Baker's Iraq Study Group proposes an alternative way of defending and enhancing the US Empire. More specifically the Group seeks to 'stabilize' Iraq in order to open the Middle East for US financial investors and petroleum companies. This strategy is severely constrained by a formidable bloc led by the Jewish Lobby with far reaching influence in the mass media, the Congress and Senate and their committee chairpersons especially in the Democratic Party.

While neither the Baker Group nor the 'Israel Firsters' represent a pro-democracy alternative to empire building, it is important to note one significant difference. The Jewish Lobby is acting directly and consistently for a foreign colonial power, which is beyond the reach of American voters, the constraints of the US Constitution, international law. Equally important, Israel and its US Lobby is largely unmoved by the death and injury of US soldiers in Iraq and the squandering of the US taxpayers' money. This is reinforced by the fact that less than 2/10 of 1 percent (0.2%) of the US soldiers in Iraq are Jewish (predominantly immigrants from Eastern Europe) and probably very few of those are on the front lines. Far more young American Jews volunteer to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces. The hard data on the composition of the combat soldiers shows that they are overwhelmingly lower class, rural or urban poor, Christians and without relatives in the Lobby or among brokers on Wall Street. Hence there are no personal links between the Lobby and the war in Iraq and no pressure from within the Lobby for a reconsideration of its Middle East war campaigns. Middle East wars are a poor person's fight and a wealthy Lobby's war.

The Baker Group, in contrast, has a very heterogeneous group of supporters – including a few anti-war democrats, military officials offended by Zionist-Pentagon manipulation, sectors of the media, several petrol and financial moguls, and sectors of the electorate. While the Bush Administration has shredded the Constitution and corrupted the electoral system, we still have space and voice to articulate our opposition to the White House and the Jewish Lobby, as opposed to our incapacity to influence the Israeli state. In so far as the Baker proposals advance toward a rapprochement with Iran and Syria it weakens the capacity of Israel and its Lobby to plunge us into another Middle East war, at least temporarily. Insofar as the Baker proposals move toward a timetable for withdrawing US troops, it opens space for accelerating and deepening the troop reduction. The almost total absence of the Left and "progressives" from this impending power struggle, given its world-historic significance and consequence, is in large part attributable to the influence which Jewish progressives exercise on the anti-war movement. Their refusal to recognize the Jewish Lobby as the prime obstacle and major opponent of a new US Mid East policy cripples any effective public protest.

A prime example is the writing of investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, who is a constant reference for the progressives. In his latest article (New Yorker 11/27/06) Hersh excludes any mention of the Jewish Lobby and its powerful role as the only major national organization in support of a war with Iran. In his earlier texts on the Iraq war planning and execution, he pointedly omitted identifying the long-standing and deep ties of top Pentagon policymakers (Wolfowitz, Feith, Rubin, Perle, Shumsky, et. al.) with the Israeli state. By systematically omitting mention of the Zionist power configuration in pushing US policy toward a war with Iran, he undermines any effort by his readers in the peace movement to act against the principal architects of a pre-emptive war on Iran. Even worse, in his article, Hersh repeats Israeli (and Lobby) fabricated propaganda about Iran's imminent nuclear bomb threat together with his reportage on a CIA detailed study discounting those very claims. In a word, Hersh gives legitimacy and credibility to Israeli-Lobby war propaganda, while sowing doubts about serious studies by the UN-sponsored International Atomic Energy Agency, which refutes Israeli claims. What is laughable about Hersh's 'investigative' reporting is his breathless references to 'anonymous high placed sources' who provide 'highly confidential' information, which has already been public knowledge for weeks and sometimes months and reported on web-sites, in

public documents and even by news services. Whatever ‘inside dope’ that Hersh cites which has not been public is based on anonymous sources which can never be double checked or verified and whose analysis incidentally coincides with Hersh’s peculiar penchant for blaming the Gentiles (WASPS) and exonerating the brethren.

Because of the refusal of the peace movement to take a stand and confront the Zionist Lobby, it is condemned to playing a passive ‘spectator role’ in the ‘Baker versus-Lobby’ battle for control over US Middle East policy. No doubt some leftists will adopt a ‘pox in both your houses’ posture; while others will welcome some of Baker initiatives for an open dialogue while refusing to recognize that those proposals will go nowhere unless the Zionist power configuration in Congress and the White House is defeated. Hopefully as the ‘heavyweights’ at the top joust and clamor, space will open for a real debate from below, which will supersede their debate on the ‘best way to manage the war and the empire’ and propose the immediate withdrawal of troops as part of ‘a grand settlement’ among democratic people. Real peace in the Middle East can only come about with the closing of foreign military bases, the ending of Israel’s colonial occupation and public control or nationalization of energy resources and the separation of church/synagogue/mosque and state.

In the end the Baker Iraq Study Group will recommend a long-term, large-scale US military presence in Iraq, in the Gulf States and in adjoining Arab states. The ‘redeployment’ strategy, which Baker proposes, means keeping seventy to eighty thousand US armed advisers, trainers and special operation forces ‘embedded’ with the Iraqi puppet army for the foreseeable future. The open-ended nature of the Baker proposals, without specific time, date and place for withdrawal and/or deployment, allows the White House a ‘free hand’ over the next two years to ‘stay the course’, continue the war and occupation, escalate the number of troops, deceive the public, incur more deaths of US troops and perpetuate the slaughter of the Iraqi people. With those proposals, Baker’s call for a broader dialogue involving Iran and Syria is dead in the water. Iran conditions negotiations on a timetable for US withdrawal and a less bellicose policy to itself. Syria under severe pressure from the White House is unlikely to embrace an agenda based on an extended US military presence, especially one that increases US firepower in neighboring countries and ignores Israel’s control over the Golan Heights and its bloody overt and covert operations in Lebanon to destroy Hezbollah. In the end, the Baker Iraq Study Group has raised false expectations about new directions by its unwillingness or impotence in the face of Bush’s pre-emptive cries to ‘carry on’ with ‘war as usual’. Baker’s one ‘contribution’ to the Bush regime, Robert Gates as Secretary of Defense, has given every indication of following Rumsfeld’s policies, a blue-blooded ‘Yes Man’, as the leading lights of the Jewish Lobby predicted.

Note: James Petras’ latest book: The Power of Israel in the United States (Clarity Press 2006) can be obtained at amazon.com