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Washington's fair play: Israel and Iraq



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in which over 100 civilians, including two American boys from Michigan, were killed. Shielding Israel is an international embarrassment and places US citizens in danger around the world, including our own soil, as we recently experienced with the Pentagon and the WTC attack. Israel must begin taking responsibility for its actions, and erosion of our national prestige in order to protect Israel must stop.

Given the current conduct of the US policy, it appears unlikely that despite its strong economic base and lethal military power, the United States will be able to convert its power into authority. Unless power is deployed for legitimate and credible purposes it cannot be converted into authority; authority that commands influence and clout in peoples' minds. Authority is the intangible which prevents and promotes tangible actions

*Israel discriminates against the Christians and Muslims who live within its borders in numerous ways, most notably by forbidding them to buy, lease or rent 92 percent of the land in the country, which is earmarked for 'Jews only'. Israel must decide whether it wants to be a democracy, or a state in which only Jews have civil rights. If it is to be the former, it must offer all citizens equally before the law.

*The influence of Israel's lobby and its political action committees has turned Congress and the White House into 'yes men' for Israeli interests. Israel should get

out of our politics and stay out. The promiscuous use of the label 'anti-Semitic' to tar and feather any critic of Israel must also stop.

There is the constant reminder in Washington that Israel is a 'strategic asset' for the US. Once a former Senator James Abourezk pointed out, 'To call Israel a strategic asset in the Middle East is like thanking the arsonist for calling the fire department that put the fire out.'

Similarly, Donald Bergus, a former ambassador to Sudan and retired diplomat, once wrote: 'At the State Department we used to predict that if Israel's Prime Minister should announce that the world is flat, within 24 hours Congress would pass a resolution congratulating him on the discovery.'

Given the current conduct of the US policy, it appears unlikely that despite its strong economic base and lethal military power, the United States will be able to convert its power into authority. Unless power is deployed for legitimate and credible purposes it cannot be converted into authority; authority that commands influence and clout in peoples' minds. Authority is the intangible which prevents and promotes tangible actions. It is the political and spiritual authority that individuals like Nelson Mandela, Pope John Paul, Quaid-i-Azam and Mother Teresa have enjoyed over different sets of people and nations. The common thread running through these individuals was their commitment to a sense of justice and fair play. This is not so in the case of the United States.

Indeed a powerful section of the United States formulates policy almost completely drained of justice and fair play. Enamoured by tangible military power these policy-makers believe greater geographical deployment of additional military power is the best route to increased personal, territorial and economic security of United States citizens. While the battle cry of 'war on terrorism' dominates the international discourse on security matters, what dominates the hearts and minds of millions around the world, including some in the United States, is the blatant injustice that United States promotes. The anger that this generates is more lethal than any military weapon. For such anger often drains the human being of the fear of death. The destructive potential of the angry is limitless; and to prevent the birth of this destructive potential is the biggest challenge for the United States.

While the United States engages in force accumulation and deployment to increase its threat credibility, simultaneously its credibility is on decline in the context of the Middle East question. Washington's current handling of the two I's — Israel and Iraq — is a study of complete contrasts.

While in dealing with Iraq, the United States appears to be quoting chapters and provisions of laws on disarmament, but in Israel's case, it wants the world to forget about the law. The end to the Middle East conflict is not possible unless US can force Israel to abide by the international law. There are laws and resolutions that call for an end to Israeli occupation. Continued Israeli occupation of the Arab territory denies basic rights and freedoms to Palestinians. US continues to acquiesce to Israel's commitment to continued occupation of Palestinian lands. It supports the occupying state through regular military, political and financial aid, which leads to reinforcing Israel's occupational policies towards the Palestinians. Such unquestioned support also encourages Israel to sustain its belligerent position in the region.

What is Israel's 'occupation toolkit'; confiscation of Arab land in order to build more Jewish settlements, expulsion of Palestinians, their arrest and imprisonment, systematic torture in prisons, assassination of political leaders, total absence of legal process, demolition of homes, uprooting of thousands of olive trees, diversion to Israel of scarce water resources and often indiscriminate killing of men, women and especially children. So much for Washington's commitment to global human rights.

In US itself there is criticism of its Israel policy. The criticism is not widespread and certainly not at strategic policy junctures which can alter policy. Nevertheless it is scathing when it is honest. Recently in a website journal James J David, a retired brigadier general and a graduate of the US Army's Command and General Staff College and National Defence University, Washington DC, recounted the following main elements of United States Israel policy.

*Whenever Israel invades one of its neighbours or kills innocent civilians, the United States is prompt to veto any United Nations resolutions that criticise Israel. The US could not even bring itself to condemn the Qana Lebanese refugee camp massacre