



Who is Holding Peace Hostage?

(Text of a CNI Foundation ad that appeared in the New York Times on November 5th, 2006)

The Israel Lobby Is Trying to Sell Another War

It is widely believed that one of the major reasons we chose to put a priority on toppling Saddam Hussein was due to the lobbying efforts for Israel in Washington. In a Zogby International poll commissioned by the CNI Foundation, 39 percent of American likely voters believe that “the work of the Israel Lobby on Congress and the Bush administration has been a key factor for going to war in Iraq and now confronting Iran.” (More details on the poll can be found at our website, www.cnionline.org.)

The overcommitment of American forces to a senseless and lethal occupation of Iraq has led to unexpected consequences that will be with us for decades. One of them is a possible military confrontation with Iran, now being openly discussed in Washington. This ignores the limits of American power and the potential for disastrous effects for our friends in the Middle East, including Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Israel itself.

Many in Washington are proposing a “grand bargain”: the U.S. would no longer seek a regime change in Tehran, and Iran would give up its nuclear weapons ambitions. But a wiser and far more credible use of American power would be to renegotiate the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty), as billionaire peace activist George Soros argues, in order to bring all nations under a global system of control of nuclear weapons. Israel is not a signatory of the present NPT, and the Lobby can be expected to oppose any effort that acknowledges Israel’s own estimated 250 to 300 nuclear weapons.

“A U.S. return to proactive diplomacy, realism and multilateralism, with sustained and hard engagement that delivers concrete progress, would best serve its own, Israeli and regional interests.”

– Daniel Levy, former senior Israeli adviser

The Lobby at Work: The Destruction of Lebanon

By its refusal to deal with Hezbollah as an insurgency that has converted to governance in Lebanon, the United States gave a blank check to Israel, allowing her to attack Lebanon for 34 days and destroy much of the rebuilding that had occurred in the last ten years. The absence of dialogue with emerging Islamic nationalist movements continues to erode our credibility in the region. Congress, under the encouragement of the Lobby, supports the muzzling of sensible diplomacy in favor of confrontation in Lebanon, in Palestine, and with regard to Iran.

Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT) tried to pass an amendment banning the export of cluster bombs to countries that have used them in civilian areas, such as Israel in Lebanon. It was defeated by a vote of 70 to 30, including every senator listed in the box at right, another sign of members of Congress being in thrall to the Israel Lobby.

Members of Congress responsible for making important decisions on our behalf are shamefully accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars to assure their re-election.

The Agony of Palestine Continues

While Lebanon burned, so did Gaza and the West Bank. Following the war, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert immediately announced plans to expand the largest settlement in the West Bank and canceled plans to withdraw from smaller settlements. The U.S. made ineffective efforts to persuade him to delay the construction announcement. We are doing even less to promote a real peace process in the Middle East. While Palestine collapses into chaos and civil war, neither we nor the Israelis have a policy that leads to defining Israel’s final borders and ending the vindictive and humiliating occupation.

Freeing the four million Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza so they can have a normal life with free access to the outside world is clearly now a necessity for American interests in the Middle East.

A Congress in Thrall to the Israel Lobby

In addition to lobbying the House and Senate, pro-Israel groups have formed political action committees (PACs) that have donated more than \$2.4 million to Congressional candidates, Republican and Democrat, this election cycle (2005-2006). The following members of Congress have consistently voted for the most extreme measures supporting the right wing in Israel (opposing Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, supporting draconian sanctions on the Palestinians and Iran), while taking massive campaign contributions from pro-Israel PACs.

Pro-Israel Campaign Contributions to U.S. Candidates

Representatives	Current Cycle	Career Total	Senators	Current Cycle	Career Total
Shelley Berkley (D-NV)	\$43,250	\$250,205	George Allen (R-VA)	\$25,500	\$35,900
Joseph Crowley (D-NY)	\$24,000	\$76,157	Sam Brownback (R-KS)	-\$3,000	\$102,850
Mark Kirk (R-IL)	\$79,664	\$132,982	Hillary Clinton (D-NY)	\$35,618	\$54,618
Patrick McHenry (R-NC)	\$24,500	\$25,000	Jon Kyl (R-AZ)	\$85,500	\$164,025
Mike Pence (R-IN)	\$14,000	\$25,250	Bill Nelson (D-FL)	\$87,861	\$125,221
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)	\$33,000	\$117,490	Rick Santorum (R-PA)	\$64,000	\$111,750

Sources: *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, *Center for Responsive Politics* (openSecrets.org)

Why are they selling their vote and undermining peace for Israel and her neighbors?

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