

Turkey Stands Up to Israel

Often in the application of international law, it's not what a country did but who its friends and who its enemies are that count. In that light, Israel, a close U.S. friend, got the blessings of a UN report for its attacks against Gaza-bound civilian ships on the high seas, a stamp of approval that Lawrence Davidson doubts less privileged nations would get.

By Lawrence Davidson

In the wake of the dubious United Nations investigative report which all but exonerated Israel for its May 31, 2010, attack on the Mavi Marmara an attack that killed eight Turkish citizens and one Turkish-American Turkey has downgraded its diplomatic relations with Israel and suspended all military cooperation.

Ankara had little choice in this matter. The Israeli attack was egregious. It took place in international waters against an unarmed civilian vessel and was carried out in defense of a barbaric and illegal policy of collective punishment against 1.5 million Palestinians bottled up in Gaza by an Israeli blockade.

For their part, the Israelis claim that they killed the Mavi Marmara Turks in self-defense, although it was the Turkish passengers who were in the process of defending themselves from a violent assault when they were gunned down by Israeli soldiers.

This scenario is a tragic parody of a century of Zionist action in the Middle East. Having come to the region in the baggage train of an imperial occupying power (Great Britain) and successfully establishing themselves by evicting the native population (a process that is ongoing), the Israelis define all acts of resistance to their aggression as attacks that require their self-defense.

The Mavi Marmara action fits neatly into this Zionist world of peculiar logic. In this sense, they turn the world upside down.

The Turkish government will have none of this and demanded the minimum of decency from the Israelis an apology and compensation. In so doing they stand for civilized behavior.

However, the Israelis refuse to apologize. After all, when you have turned the world upside down in the fashion described above, any admission of faulty reasoning in your outlook threatens to collapse your universe like a deck of cards.

So what can Ankara do? It can and has distanced itself from these crazy people and refuses any military affiliations. Why militarily assist the murderers of your own citizens?

In making the announcement Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu observed that the Israelis apparently see “themselves above international laws and human conscience.”

Actually, that is not the half of it. Not only do the Israelis disregard international law, be on the high seas, in the maintenance of the obscene ghetto of Gaza, or through their colonial impositions in the West Bank, but they assiduously seduce others to support their criminal behavior anywhere and everywhere they have lobbying influence.

Everywhere they go, the Israelis are the poor victims who need carte blanche to protect themselves. They are the victims who victimize others in the name of self-defense. Israel is taking us all back to a barbaric state of nature.

You can see this perverse influence in the way the UN investigative report on the Mavi Marmara assault was manipulated and distorted. Though headed by Geoffrey Palmer, a New Zealand lawyer and politician with a reputation for integrity and honesty, he was hemmed in by having to share the investigation with ex-Colombian president Alvaro Uribe a devoted follower of the Israeli line and ally of Washington.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, who is currently under attack by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight for weakening the moral integrity of the organization, also bowed to a combination of American and Israeli pressure.

As a result the panel restricted itself to “reviewing reports from Israel and Turkey, thus sidestepping any independent gathering of evidence or hearing of testimony from eyewitnesses.”

Ban Ki-Moon insisted that no report would be released unless Palmer and Uribe could reach consensus. That guaranteed equity for Israel’s perverse and lopsided logic.

Thus the best the investigation could do is come up with a report that has an Alice-in-Wonderland quality to it: Israeli assault troops acted in self-defense against civilians even though they (the Israelis) used excessive force that bordered on slaughter and mayhem. The investigative process was supposed to be “transparent” to avoid this sort of corruption, but Ban Ki-Moon refused to let that happen.

Turkey, of course, has rejected the UN report. Now you might say all of this is in vain. Israel's influence in the halls of power both in the U.S. and Europe is too great for Turkey's position to be anything but symbolic. Well, you never know.

The Turks do have some leverage. Israel dreams of the day when it can officially associate itself with NATO. Turkey is a member of NATO. Indeed, it has the second largest military force in that alliance and will soon host an extension of the organization's early warning system.

Under present circumstances hell will freeze over before Israel becomes a full member of NATO. Unfortunately, within the Zionist world of illogic, Turkey's position will just reinforce Israel's narcissistic sense of victimhood.

Yasir Arafat once said that Israel acts like a homicidal "big baby." He was right.

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Is Obama to Blame for America's Mess?

Exclusive: With the 2009 stimulus money running dry and with businesses unnerved by Washington's political gridlock and brinksmanship, America's weak "recovery" has stalled, prompting more criticism of President Barack Obama. Robert Parry explores whether these complaints are fair.

By Robert Parry

Across the political spectrum, commentators are debating why President Barack Obama failed to achieve the lofty goals of his 2008 campaign when he promised "change we can believe in" and a "new tone" in Washington. Friday's wretched jobs report showing no net increase in jobs in August and the acrimony around it underscore the point.

On the Right, the explanation is simple: socialist Obama relied on "big government" solutions, such as an early \$787 billion stimulus package, when he should have slashed federal spending, eliminated regulations and trusted the "free market" to straighten things out. The answer is to elect someone like

Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who would also appeal for divine intervention.

On the Left, the argument is almost the polar opposite, faulting Obama for applying timid solutions to grave problems (like agreeing to water down his stimulus plan with tax cuts to get a couple of GOP votes). He also is disparaged for bending over backwards to Republicans in the unrealistic hope that they would reciprocate with some measure of bipartisanship.

These Left critics say Obama should have used his "bully pulpit" aggressively to fight for his positions, whether his larger stimulus plan or a "public option" in his health-care bill, and he should have held George W. Bush and his aides accountable for war-crimes, from torturing detainees in the "war on terror" to waging aggressive war against Iraq.

Facing this barrage of criticism from all sides, Obama's shrinking army of defenders points to the unfairness of it all. America's first black president inherited the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and was burdened with a federal deficit of more than \$1 trillion (while Bush started with a robust economy and a budget surplus).

Obama was stuck, too, with Bush's two unresolved wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

These defenders also note that Obama faced immediate and unrelenting Republican opposition in Congress with an unprecedented use of filibusters requiring 60 Senate votes to accomplish almost anything, despite the nation's economic crisis. On vote after vote, Republicans stayed unified while conservative Democrats often peeled away.

The defenders says the refrain from many on the Left that Obama should have done more when he had a 60-vote Senate majority ignores the fact that Republicans contested Sen. Al Franken's victory in Minnesota for months and that two key senators, Edward Kennedy and Robert Byrd, died and had to be replaced in special elections. The 60-vote majority was fleeting, they note.

While Obama's defenders certainly have a point that the young President faced a near-impossible task and had very few good options they shy away from another explanation for his failures, perhaps because it suggests the true enormity of the problem: the overall U.S. political system has become dysfunctional,

The dysfunction is not simply the Republicans and the Democrats, as some centrist pundits like to pontificate. It is the entirety of the system, including the pundits themselves, the national news media and the think-tank structure. It is the Right's splurging on what amounts to information warfare and the Left's skimping when it comes to building a counter-media infrastructure.

It is also a population that is too lazy (or too distracted) to wade through all the half-truths and disinformation to find something approximating the truth on a wide variety of topics. Many Americans either believe falsehoods or are profoundly confused by all the noise.

Class War

Another remarkable part of the American dysfunction is that at a time when as billionaire Warren Buffett says the rich are winning the class war, the nation's top "populist" movement is the Tea Party, which is fighting to give the rich more money and to grant their corporations more power.

Tea Party favorites, such as Rep. Michele Bachman, actually favor taxing the working class more (by making everyone pay some income taxes) so the top income tax rates on the rich can be lowered again.

Given this broad-based mess, it does seem unfair to expect that Barack Obama, as a novice president, would be able to fix this dysfunction in his first two years. And, then with some elements of the Left sitting out Election 2010 in disgust, the Republicans won in a landslide, reclaiming the House and coming close in the Senate.

That new reality guaranteed Obama would accomplish even less and the Republicans would be encouraged to step up their obstructionism. In a sense, the election enabled the Republicans to take the economy hostage (as was shown in the debt-limit fight) and keep torturing it until the American voters give the GOP full control of the government again in 2012. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Making the US Economy Scream.](#)"]

Not that restored Republican rule would ease the pain of the American people. Indeed, it would likely make things much worse for many, especially if Republicans go through with their plans to privatize Medicare and end the "Ponzi scheme" that Perry calls Social Security.

But at least the Republican Party would be happy, and the Democrats wouldn't raise too much of a fuss because they always want to be seen as the "reasonable" ones in the room. Remember how they and the U.S. news media responded to Bush's seizure of the White House in Election 2000 by urging Americans to accept his "legitimacy." [For details, see [Neck Deep.](#)]

So, if the American voters acquiesce to the GOP hostage-taking and give control of the White House back to the Republicans there likely would be a surface calm, at least among the politico/pundit class of Washington.

There also would be some derision directed at "loser" Obama, maybe some stories

about his quirky personal behavior like those articles about Al Gore growing a beard after his “defeat” to Bush, all to reinforce how thankful Americans should be that another straight-shooter like Rick Perry is in the White House.

As with Bush’s presidency, Americans could expect an enforced public unity with dissidents being rhetorically tarred and feathered as “unpatriotic” or “treasonous.” From brandishing guns against Obama and waving “Don’t Tread on Me” banners, the Tea Party would redeploy itself as a paramilitary defense perimeter for President Perry.

The Washington press corps, which has grown accustomed to going “on bended knee” for Republican presidents since Ronald Reagan, would be comfortable in its subservient position again. Remember how the mainstream media bowed to Bush for at least the first six years of his presidency, including helping him make his false case for invading Iraq.

A Rick Perry Presidency

The real question about a Rick Perry presidency is how far could the American people be pushed before they collectively realize their backs are against the abyss. Surely, more scapegoats would be presented Muslims, socialists, atheists, Iran but what happens if millions of Americans catch on to Buffett’s insight about the rich winning the class war.

As their dreams are crushed, will Americans continue to embrace the “government is the problem” orthodoxy of Ronald Reagan and the “free market” fantasies of Ayn Rand? Will they accept their gradual reduction to economic serfdom (in the form of joblessness and homelessness) under the boot of all-powerful corporations?

The answer to those questions could play out painfully over the next few decades or they could be addressed right now with Americans acting both foresightedly and practically. There is still time to build a movement for rationality and common-sense solutions to problems.

And, while America’s political problem is indeed bigger than Barack Obama, he certainly could play an important role by finally engaging in that debate he keeps promising about what an effective government can do for the people.

Arguably, one of Obama’s early mistakes was in surrounding himself with advisers who were committed to making today’s broken-down system work, rather than undertaking a dramatic overhaul of the entire process.

Many top aides were recycled officials from the Clinton administration, including White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel and Secretary of State Hillary

Clinton. Some were longtime Republican operatives, like Defense Secretary Robert Gates, or bureaucrats closely tied to Wall Street, like Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner.

Together, their limited vision was confined to simply patching up the old system both domestically and globally achieving more “continuity” than “change” from the Bush administration. While that might have been understandable given the economic crisis and the two wars, their approach shut out any serious structural reform.

So, instead of subjecting the gambling banks to the shock of short-term nationalization and stringent new rules, Obama continued a policy of stabilizing them with taxpayers’ money. Instead of terminating the stalemated wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, he kept them going with promises of gradual withdrawals.

Instead of demonstrating that the United States really meant what it has said regarding international law and human rights, Obama let Bush and his subordinates off the hook on torture and other war crimes. He didn’t even authorize a serious public inquiry into these abuses.

Howling Protests

Granted, to have taken these actions would have risked a major disruption to the system as it now exists. You would have heard howling from the trading floors of Wall Street to the editorial-page offices of the Washington Post. Obama would have been called an angry black man, an out-of-the-closet socialist. Conservative Democrats and independents might have bolted.

It’s also not clear that a more aggressive strategy toward the immediate national problems would have worked. Indeed, such an approach might have made conditions worse.

If the “too-big-to-fail” banks rebelled, the economy might have toppled into a depression for which Obama would have gotten the blame. Powerful institutions, like the Pentagon and the CIA, might have turned their political guns on the new president. The mainstream media would have joined in the uprising against him. His public popularity likely would have sunk even faster than it has.

Plus, the Left is extremely weak in the United States. At times when I’ve noted the Left’s tendency to criticize but not do much, I’ve been told bluntly by progressives that “there is no American Left.” But whose fault is that? And how do people on the Left expect politicians to make these fights without a political movement behind them?

The bottom line is that whether Obama can summon up the nerve to make bold job

proposals or not, they won't happen unless the American people can demonstrate that they understand the lessons of the New Deal, that only effective action by a democratized federal government can counter the recklessness of Wall Street and reduce the suffering of the unemployed.

It's hard to understand why supporters of Social Security and Medicare can't be as potent a political force as the Tea Partiers who want to dismantle these government programs. There may be rich right-wingers, like the oilman Koch brothers and media mogul Rupert Murdoch, funding the Tea Party, but there are wealthy progressives, too.

This movement could make the reasonable argument that many of the fortunes of America's super-rich were not simply the result of their own industriousness, but rather their ability to piggyback onto major advancements paid for by the taxpayers, from the Interstate Highway system to miniaturized computers built for the space program, from microbiology to the Internet.

Yet, instead of paying back the country generously for making their fortunes possible, the rich hire lobbyists and accountants to help them avoid reimbursing the taxpayers and starving the government so it can't finance other technological breakthroughs that could help future generations of Americans.

If the responsible rich like Warren Buffett really do recognize how much the country has done for them and how they should reinvest more of their money in the country why can't they build the sort of political/media infrastructure that the greedy rich have? Or why can't middle-income progressives at least do more to support some worthy projects taking on these tasks?

It's not enough simply to criticize President Obama for not making all the right moves. The problem is much bigger than Obama.

The mess in America recalls the famous line in the Pogo comic strip, "we have met the enemy and he is us."

[For more on these topics, see Robert Parry's *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a two-book set for the discount price of only \$19. For details, [click here](#).]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com. His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there.
