Kerry Grovels over Israeli ‘Apartheid’

**Exclusive:** Secretary of State Kerry gets to say whatever half-truth or fiction comes into his head about Syria, Russia or other “designated villains,” but when he cites the inconvenient truth of Israeli “apartheid,” he must scramble as fast as he can to retract and apologize, Robert Parry reports.

By Robert Parry

It is a mark of how upside-down Official Washington has become over facts and evidence that Secretary of State John Kerry, who has developed a reputation for making false and misleading statements about Syria and Russia, rushes to apologize when he speaks the truth about the danger from Israeli “apartheid.”

After public disclosure that he had said in a closed-door meeting of the Trilateral Commission last week that Israel risked becoming an “apartheid state,” Kerry hastily apologized for his transgression, expressing his undying support for Israel and engaging in self-flagellation over his word choice.

“For more than 30 years in the United States Senate, I didn’t just speak words in support of Israel,” Mr. Kerry said in his statement. “I walked the walk when it came time to vote and when it came time to fight.”

He then sought to clarify his position on the A-word: “First, Israel is a vibrant democracy and I do not believe, nor have I ever stated, publicly or privately, that Israel is an apartheid state or that it intends to become one. Anyone who knows anything about me knows that without a shred of doubt.”

Kerry added: “If I could rewind the tape, I would have chosen a different word to describe my firm belief that the only way in the long term to have a Jewish state and two nations and two peoples living side by side in peace and security is through a two state solution.”

Kerry scurried to make this apology after his remark was reported by The Daily Beast and condemned by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which said: “Any suggestion that Israel is, or is at risk of becoming, an apartheid state is offensive and inappropriate.”

The only problem with AIPAC’s umbrage and with Kerry’s groveling is that Israel has moved decisively in the direction of becoming an apartheid state in which Palestinians are isolated into circumscribed areas, often behind walls, and are tightly restricted in their movements, even as Israel continues to expand settlements into Palestinian territories.

Key members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud government have even
advocated annexing the West Bank and confining Palestinians there to small enclaves, similar to what’s already been done to the 1.6 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip where Israel tightly controls entrance of people and access to commodities, including building supplies.

In May 2011, Likud’s deputy speaker Danny Danon outlined the annexation plan in a New York Times op-ed. He warned that if the Palestinians sought United Nations recognition for their own state on the West Bank, Israel should annex the territory. “We could then extend full Israeli jurisdiction to the Jewish communities [i.e. the settlements] and uninhabited lands of the West Bank,” Danon wrote.

As for Palestinian towns, they would become mini-Gazas, cut off from the world and isolated as enclaves with no legal status. “Moreover, we would be well within our rights to assert, as we did in Gaza after our disengagement in 2005, that we are no longer responsible for the Palestinian residents of the West Bank, who would continue to live in their own, unannexed, towns,” Danon wrote.

By excluding these Palestinian ghettos, Jews would still maintain a majority in this Greater Israel. “These Palestinians would not have the option to become Israeli citizens, therefore averting the threat to the Jewish and democratic status of Israel by a growing Palestinian population,” Danon wrote.

In other words, the Israeli Right appears headed toward a full-scale apartheid, if not a form of ethnic cleansing by willfully making life so crushing for the Palestinians that they have no choice but to leave.

Just days after Danon’s op-ed, Netanyahu demonstrated his personal political dominance over the U.S. Congress by addressing a joint session at which Democrats and Republicans competed to see who could jump up fastest and applaud the loudest for everything coming out of the Israeli prime minister’s mouth.

Netanyahu got cheers when he alluded to the religious nationalism that cites Biblical authority for Israel’s right to possess the West Bank where millions of Palestinians now live. Calling the area by its Biblical names, Netanyahu declared, “in Judea and Samaria, the Jewish people are not foreign occupiers.”

Though Netanyahu insisted that he was prepared to make painful concessions for peace, including surrendering some of this “ancestral Jewish homeland,” his belligerent tone suggested that he was moving more down the route of annexation that Danon had charted. Now, with the predictable collapse of Kerry’s peace talks, that road to an expanded apartheid system appears even more likely.

But apartheid already is a feature of Israeli society. As former CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar wrote in 2012, “the Israeli version of apartheid is very similar
in important respects to the South African version, and that moral equivalence ought to follow from empirical equivalence. Both versions have included grand apartheid, meaning the denial of basic political rights, and petty apartheid, which is the maintaining of separate and very unequal facilities and opportunities in countless aspects of daily life.

“Some respects in which Israelis may contend their situation is different, such as facing a terrorist threat, do not really involve a difference. The African National Congress, which has been the ruling party in South Africa since the end of apartheid there, had significant involvement in terrorism when it was confronting the white National Party government. That government also saw the ANC as posing a communist threat.

“A fitting accompaniment to the similarities between the two apartheid systems is the historical fact that when the South African system still existed, Israel was one of South Africa’s very few international friends or partners. Israel was the only state besides South Africa itself that ever dealt with the South African bantustans as accepted entities. Israel cooperated with South Africa on military matters, possibly even to the extent of jointly conducting a secret test of a nuclear weapon in a remote part of the Indian Ocean in 1979.”

Yet, Official Washington can’t handle this truth, as the capital of the world’s leading superpower has become a grim version of Alice’s Wonderland in which speaking truth about the well-connected requires immediate apologies while telling half-truths and lies against “designated villains” makes you a proud member of the insider’s club.

When Kerry makes belligerent claims about Syria and Russia even when his statements are later shown to be baseless or false there is not an ounce of pressure on him to issue a correction or apology. [See “John Kerry’s Sad Circle to Deceit.”] Yet, when he says something that is palpably true about Israel indeed a pale version of the ugly truth he cannot run fast enough to issue a clarification and beg forgiveness.

While Kerry and other longtime inhabitants of Official Washington have become accustomed to this madness this politicized disdain for reality their overly militarized fantasyland has become a nightmare for the rest of the planet.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, America’s Stolen Narrative, either in print here or as an e-book (from Amazon and barnesandnoble.com). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only $34. The trilogy includes America’s Stolen Narrative. For details on
this offer, click here.