

The West's Moral Hypocrisy on Yemen

Exclusive: The West's "humanitarian interventionists" howl over bloody conflicts when an adversary can be blamed but go silent when an ally is doing the killing, such as Saudi Arabia in Yemen, reports Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

Only a few months ago, interventionists were demanding a militant response by Washington to what George Soros branded "a humanitarian catastrophe of historic proportions" – the killing of "hundreds of people" by Russian and Syrian government bombing of rebel-held neighborhoods in the city of Aleppo.

Leon Wieseltier, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and former *New Republic* editor, was denouncing the Obama administration as "a bystander to the greatest atrocity of our time," asserting that its failure to "act against evil in Aleppo" was like tolerating "the evil in Auschwitz."

How strange, then, that so many of the same "humanitarian" voices have been so quiet of late about the continued killing of many more innocent people in Yemen, where tens of thousands of civilians have died and 12 million people face famine. More than a thousand children die each week from preventable diseases related to malnutrition and systematic attacks on the country's food infrastructure by a Saudi-led military coalition, which aims to impose a regime friendly to Riyadh over the whole country.

"The U.S. silence has been deafening," said Philippe Boloignon, deputy director for global advocacy at Human Rights Watch, last summer. "This blatant double standard deeply undermines U.S. efforts to address human rights violations whether in Syria or elsewhere in the world."

Official acquiescence – or worse – from Washington and other major capitals is encouraging the relentless killing of Yemen's civilians by warplanes from Saudi Arabia and its allies. Last week, their bombs struck a funeral gathering north of Sanaa, Yemen's capital, killing nine women and a child and injuring several dozen more people.

A day earlier, officials reported a deadly "double-tap" airstrike, first targeting women at a funeral in Sanaa, then aimed at medical responders who rushed in to save the wounded. A United Nations panel of experts condemned a similar double-tap attack by Saudi coalition forces in October, which killed or wounded hundreds of civilians, as a violation of international law.

The Tragedy of Mokha

On Feb. 12, an air strike on the Red Sea port city of Mokha killed all six members of a family headed by the director of a maternal and childhood center. Coalition ground forces had launched an attack on Mokha two weeks earlier.



Xinhua news agency reported, “the battles have since intensified and trapped thousands of civilian residents in the city, as well as hampered the humanitarian operation to import vital food and fuel supplies . . . The Geneva-based UN human rights office said that it received extremely worrying reports suggesting civilians and civilian objects have been targeted over the past two weeks in the southwestern port city . . . Reports received by UN also show that more than 200 houses have been either partially damaged or completely destroyed by air strikes in the past two weeks.”

The U.N.’s humanitarian coordinator further reported that “scores of civilians” had been killed or wounded by the bombing and shelling of Mokha, and that residents were stranded without water or other basic life-supporting services.

That could be Aleppo, minus only the tear-jerking photos of dead and wounded children on American television. However, unlike Syria, Yemen’s rebels don’t have well-financed public relations offices in Western capitals. They pay no lip service to the United States, democracy, or international human rights. Their foe Saudi Arabia is a friend of Washington, not a long-time adversary. In consequence, few American pundits summon any moral outrage at the Saudi-led coalition, despite findings by a United National Panel of Experts that many of its airstrikes violate international law and, in some cases, represent “war crimes.”

Aiding and Abetting

The United States hasn’t simply turned a blind eye to such crimes; it has aided them by selling Saudi Arabia the warplanes it flies and the munitions it drops

on Yemeni civilians. It has also siphoned 54 million pounds of jet fuel from U.S. tanker planes to refuel coalition aircraft on bombing runs. The pace of U.S. refueling operations has reportedly increased sharply in the last year.

The Obama administration initially supported the Saudi coalition in order to buy Riyadh's reluctant support for the Iran nuclear deal. Over time, Saudi Arabia joined with anti-Iran hawks to portray Yemen's rebels as pawns of Tehran to justify continued support for the war. Most experts – including U.S. intelligence officials – insist to the contrary that the rebels are a genuinely indigenous force that enjoys limited Iranian support at best.

As I have documented previously, all of the fighting in Yemen has damaged U.S. interests by creating anarchy conducive to the growth of Al Qaeda extremists. They have planned or inspired major acts of terrorism against the West, including an attempt to blow up a U.S. passenger plane in 2009 and a deadly attack on the Parisian newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015. The Saudis tolerate them as Sunni allies against the rebels, in the name of curbing Iran.

Though the Obama administration is gone, the Trump administration is flush with ideologues who are eager to take a stand against Tehran through Yemen and look tough on “terrorism.” Within days of taking office, President Trump approved a commando raid targeting an alleged Al Qaeda compound in central Yemen that went awry, killing an estimated 10 women and children. The administration has also diverted a U.S. destroyer to patrol Yemen's coast.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, to his credit, has cited “the urgent need for the unfettered delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout Yemen,” according to a department spokesman. But no amount of humanitarian aid will save Yemen's tormented people from the bombs made in America and dropped from U.S.-made warplanes, with little protest from Washington's so-called “humanitarian interventionists.”

Jonathan Marshall is author of many recent articles on arms issues, including “Obama's Unkept Promise on Nuclear War,” “How World War III Could Start,” “NATO's Provocative Anti-Russian Moves,” “Escalations in a New Cold War,” and “Ticking Closer to Midnight.”

Trump's One-State Openness on Israel

The ugly reality in Israel/Palestine is that the Zionist leaders are engaging in a slow-walk ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, a crime that can only be averted

now by a secular singular state, says ex-CIA official Graham E. Fuller.

By Graham E. Fuller

Just because Donald Trump said it doesn't mean it has to be wrong. During the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Washington, President Trump publicly stated he is not necessarily wedded to a "two-state solution" in Palestine.

He is the first U.S. president to commit the heresy of questioning that sacred article of faith in U.S.-Middle East policy. Indeed, a serious rethink is long overdue in recognizing the bankruptcy – indeed the cruel cynicism – of the defunct two-state scheme.

Many honorable people have dedicated the bulk of their professional lives to the tedious minutiae and sad diplomatic history of the Palestinian-Israeli morass. Sadly, none of those efforts have brought any resolution whatsoever to a gangrenous issue – in many respects the granddaddy of so many of the Middle East's contemporary ills.

Trouble is, apart from a few dedicated diplomats and scholars who had hopes of one day truly accomplishing something, the two-state solution in practice is by now revealed as essentially a fraud. Yes, a few wiser Israeli leaders in the past just possibly might have believed in that ideal, but for decades now the "two-state scheme" has simply been cynically exploited by newer Israeli leaders, especially by Bibi Netanyahu – the long-serving and most right-wing Prime Minister in Israel's history.

Netanyahu has been backed by a formidable and wealthy pro-Zionist cheering section in the U.S. The goal is to conceal their true agenda – the ultimate Israeli annexation of all of Palestine. They themselves have been subtly but systematically torpedoing the "two-state solution" behind the scenes to that end.

None of my observations here on the hoax of the two-state solution are new or original. Many liberal Israeli observers have been stating the self-evident for years now. But those voices never get heard in the U.S. where it constitutes an unmentionable. But there should be no doubt: the concept of a "two-state solution" – a Palestinian and an Israeli state sharing historical Palestine and living side by side in sovereignty and dignity – is dead. It is almost inconceivable that it can now ever be resuscitated: nearly all the operative forces within Israel are systematically working to prevent it from ever coming about.

Facts on the Ground

The harsh reality is that Israel, through a relentless process of “creating facts on the ground,” is now decades deep into the process of taking over illegally, step-by-step, the totality of Palestine. Israel has scant regard for any international law in this respect, and never has had.

Washington, apart from a few periodic pathetic bleats, has ended up functionally supporting this cynical scheme all the way, perhaps unwilling to confront the painful reality of what is really taking place, along with its dangerous political repercussions at home.

Israel is extending day-by-day its control – indeed ownership – of Palestinian lands through expansion of illegal Jewish settlements and the dispossession of the rightful owners of these Palestinian lands. Put simply, there is little left of Palestinian land out of which ever to fashion a “two-state solution.” That leaves us with only one alternative: the “one-state solution.” Indeed, Israel’s actions have already created the preconditions that make the “one-state solution” an unacknowledged but virtual fait accompli.

Honest observers know full well that the mantra of preserving “the peace process” for the two-state solution is now little more than a cover for full Israeli annexation of Palestinian lands. The sooner we all acknowledge this ugly reality, the better. That will then require Israel, the Palestinians, and the world to get on with dealing with the complex challenge of crafting the bi-national state – the one-state solution.

The calculations of the hard-line Zionists – who are now largely in control of Israeli state mechanisms – are unyielding.

1) Israel should functionally take over all of Palestinian territory and permit full Jewish settlement therein. 2) Israel should still play the “two-state solution” game with visiting foreign diplomats to reduce pressure on Israel, to play for time while it quietly establishes the irreversible facts on the ground that shut out any possible viable Palestinian state.

3) Make life harsh enough for Palestinians that, bit by bit, they will grow bitter and weary, give up and go elsewhere, leaving all the land for Zionist settlers. 4) If Palestinians “stubbornly” resist, predictable periodic military and security crises in Palestine over the longer run will enable Israel to rid Palestine of all Palestinians – a gradual process of ethnic cleansing that returns all the land promised by God to the Jews.

A Secular State?

Some liberal Israelis actually do accept the idea of a “one-state solution” in their own liberal vision of a future Israel – one in which Israelis and Palestinians live as equal citizens in a secular, democratic, binational, multi-cultural state enjoying equal rights, rather than the increasingly religiously dominated state that it is. And the liberal ideal makes sense: the country is already well on the way to becoming bi-lingual – and Hebrew and Arabic are closely-related languages. Both are Semitic peoples with ancient ties to the same land.

The problem is, ardent Zionists don’t want a binational Palestinian-Jewish state. They want a “Jewish state” and demand that the world accept that term. Yet, in today’s world isn’t the term “Jewish state” strikingly discordant? Who speaks of an “English” or “French” state? The world would freak out if tomorrow Berlin started calling itself “the German State.” Or Spain a “Christian state.”

So what do we make of a state that is dedicated solely to Jews and Judaism? Such concepts are remnants of Nineteenth Century movements that promoted the creation of ethnically and/or religiously pure states. Indeed it was precisely that kind of ugly religious and ethnic nationalism that caused Jews to flee from Eastern Europe in the first place to find their own homeland.

The true historical task of Israel, with the support of the world, is now to begin the challenging work of introducing the range of major reforms that will transform Israel into just such a multi-ethnic and bi-lingual state of equal citizens enjoying equal rights under secular law. It is not a question of “allowing Palestinians” into Israel, they are already there and have been for millennia, in far greater numbers than Jews. Palestinians now seek full legal equality of treatment under secular law in Israel.

So let’s acknowledge the useful truth that Trump has blundered onto. Let’s abandon the naive and cynical rhetoric about the “two-state solution” that will never come about – in any just and acceptable form. Half of Israel never believed in it in the first place. It has served only as a cover for building an apartheid Jewish state – a term used frequently by liberal Israeli commentators.

Netanyahu and the right-wing Zionists clearly want all of Palestine. But they’re not ready yet to admit it. They want all the land, but without any of its people. But despite Zionist hopes, the Palestinians aren’t going to abandon their lands. And so the logical outcome of Israel’s take-over all of Palestine leads by definition to an ultimate single binational state.

The challenge to Israelis and Palestinians is huge. It entails a deep Palestinian rethink of their options and their future destiny in a new order, and the need to fight for those democratic rights in a binational state. It

involves Israeli evolution away from “God-given rights” in a state solely for Jews and Judaism that can only be forever oppressive and undemocratic as it now stands. The process will be a slow and difficult one. But it also represents an evolution consonant with emerging contemporary global values.

We expect a democratic multi-cultural state from Germany and France, or from Britain, Canada and the United States – why not from Israel?

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Towards a New Trade Policy

International trade deals have lost their consensus support as more workers view them as anathema to good-paying jobs, requiring the U.S. politicians to rethink these strategies, writes Andrew Spannaus.

By Andrew Spannaus

On Jan. 23, President Donald Trump signed an order directing the U.S. Trade Representative to withdraw the country from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the trade deal that the previous administration had spent years negotiating with eleven other nations around the Pacific Rim. This executive action represents a first step towards a controversial new direction in trade policy.

The TPP was already on life support, as the 2016 election campaign made it toxic with the majority of American voters. Bernie Sanders, Ted Cruz and Donald Trump all focused great energy on the trade pact as an example of the failed economic policies of recent decades. Even Hillary Clinton, despite her previous public support for the TPP and other trade agreements, was forced to come out against it, to fight off criticism from Sanders in the primaries, and Trump in the general election.

Trump’s broadsides against international free trade deals have provoked a response bordering on horror from much of the political and academic world. The dreaded policies of “protectionism”, which economists left and right assure are a recipe for disaster, seem to be on the march, threatening to return the world to a terrible past when governments intervened too much in economic policy.

More sophisticated commentators prefer to focus on the strategic ramifications

of abandoning the TPP. Indeed it is no secret that the principal goal of the pact was geopolitical, to strengthen ties with Western allies around the world and prevent other countries from falling under China's sphere of influence.

Former President Barack Obama often repeated that the TPP would ensure that "we write the rules of the road for trade in the 21st century." The American population was not convinced.

This should have come as no surprise to the nation's political institutions, but the assumption apparently was that, as has generally happened in the past, the politicians of both parties would come together to move forward the "Washington Consensus" that had dominated economic policy-making for decades.

Yet opposition was strong, from unions and progressives in particular. This forced Democratic leaders to come up with justifications for yet another deal suspected of favoring outsourcing to low-cost countries, and protecting the profits of multinational corporations at the expense of the American worker.

The Obama administration made assurances that the TPP had "the toughest labor and environmental standards that have ever been included in a trade deal." And despite later attempts to walk back her praise, in 2012 then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton famously said, "This TPP sets the gold standard in trade agreements to open free, transparent, fair trade."

Jobs, Trade and Technology

Few people believed this rhetoric: not progressives, not conservatives, not workers whether on the left or right. And why should they have? Total U.S. manufacturing employment has dropped by more than seven million jobs since 1980, even as total population has grown by almost 100 million individuals. In percentage terms, manufacturing employees now make up only 8 percent of the workforce, about one-third of their weight in 1970. It is well known that most of these workers now find themselves with jobs that pay less in real terms and provide less stability, if they have not fallen out of the workforce altogether.

One response to this phenomenon increasingly heard from experts is that the loss of industrial jobs is due not to trade, but technology. Automation is accelerating and promises to do so even more with the digital revolution. The trend towards producing more with fewer workers is irreversible. However, for high-technology goods in particular, this can actually favor reshoring, as cost of labor becomes less important, while worker skills and a climate of innovation represent strategic advantages.

As for more labor-intensive goods, the argument seems specious when used to justify free trade agreements. Why is it that most of the consumer products

bought, both in the U.S. and Europe, are produced in countries like China, Bangladesh, Mexico or Guatemala? Technology doesn't provide the answer; low wages and operating costs do.

A more coherent argument is that regarding prices. It is said that in many sectors labor-intensive production processes are simply too costly to remain in more advanced countries, and thus free trade keeps prices down. What would consumers at the bottom of the economic ladder say if they could not get cheap goods at Wal-Mart?

This is a real problem, which raises complex issues about how to reverse the race to the bottom based on low costs, but the perspective can be shifted quickly by taking a more long-term view: why is it that the (working) poor in the U.S. cannot afford higher-priced goods? Does it not have something to do precisely with the loss of good-paying jobs due to the search for cheap labor? A quick glance around the world shows the weakness of the argument for low costs as essential for economic well-being. The wealthiest economies are not characterized by low costs; quite the opposite.

Proponents of pro-free trade policies propose various arguments to counter the opposition to outsourced production. Again though, the population is unlikely to believe them. And again, why should they? The contradictions are all too apparent.

By way of example, consider the arguments presented by Mireya Solís in her article "The case for trade and the Trans-Pacific Partnership" published by the Brookings Institute in October 2016 as part of the "Brookings Big Ideas for America" initiative. [Solís, Mireya, The case for trade and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Brookings Big Ideas for America, October 4, 2016.]

Solís is up front when she asserts the importance of the TPP as an instrument to counter China's weight in Asia. When it comes to jobs though, she runs into a blatant contradiction in her attempt to claim that on the whole, the new trade deal will be good for America. After admitting that trade competition with China "is estimated by some to have cost 985,000 manufacturing jobs between 1999 and 2011," she moves quickly to stress other factors (technology, exports, low prices) to downplay the importance of this loss. One paragraph later, though, Solís is glad to tell us that the International Trade Commission has estimated that the TPP would create 128,000 jobs in the U.S.

Not a very strong argument, at least in mathematical terms.

Difficulties Recognized

Recognition is in fact growing in the academic world of the difficulties for the

optimistic view that losses due to low-cost competition are generally outweighed by positive factors in advanced countries. An example is the in-depth study, "The China Shock: Learning from Labor-Market Adjustment to Large Changes in Trade," by Autor, Dorn and Hanson. [Autor, David H., Dorn, David, Hanson, Gordon H., The China Shock: Learning from Labor-Market Adjustment to Large Changes in Trade. Annual Review of Economics, 2016. 8:205–40.]

The authors note that in the 1990s and early 2000s, a consensus had been reached, for example, that "Trade had not in recent decades been a major contributor to declining manufacturing employment or rising wage inequality in developed countries." Technological change was viewed as the primary factor at work, while the fluid and flexible U.S. labor markets were expected to absorb the shocks from trade with China and produce increases in employment in other industries.

Yet new studies are showing that the anticipated adjustment is not offsetting negative effects on jobs and income; the positive gains posited by neoclassical theory "have yet to materialize". In fact, the authors conclude, the effects produced by growth of imports may even have been underestimated. While positive employment effects are "plausible in theory", evidence in academic literature is scarce.

In 1851, American economist Henry Carey wrote his seminal work, "The Harmony of Interests." Carey's ideas would form the basis for the economic program of the newly-founded Republican Party led by Abraham Lincoln, and the global expansion of what became known as the "American System", based on protection, investment in industry, infrastructure and workers.

In his book, Carey expressed a view that is still relevant today: in the long run either the condition of the exploited laborers throughout the world would be raised and move towards that of the more developed nations, or the American worker would ultimately be brought down to the level of the laborer under the imperial system.

Carey's central premise is that "every man is a consumer to the whole extent of his production," meaning that if you produce something, you will have the income necessary to consume as well, which will actually increase trade. This idea would undoubtedly be considered terribly outdated by most economists today. Yet for American and European workers who have lived through the recent phase of globalization, it is all too accurate.

However, few seem able to translate their recognition of the negative effects on American workers into a new set of policies, something that can replace the free trade, globalization mindset of the past 30-plus years. Both the Left and Right

have cheered campaigns against global trade pacts, but for many the word “protectionism” still seems a bridge too far.

Need for New Theory

A new approach to trade policy is needed, to begin the fundamental shift away from the low-cost, anti-production policies of recent decades. Below are some specific measures that could be taken to start the change, drawing on concepts already present in the political debate that, however, represent a move away from the current system.

First of all, let us consider tariffs. Tariffs and duties are currently used by many countries, justified in the West, for example, as measures to counteract dumping. This practice is generally defined as selling below the “normal price”, i.e. below cost or below the price in the home market.

The first order of business for countries with developed economies and social welfare systems is to define clear rules concerning *social* dumping – the broader definition of production practices taking advantage of cheap labor – and protections to avoid it.

President Trump and some of his advisors have suggested imposing significant tariffs on goods from other countries, starting with Mexico. The notion of a “border tax” for American companies that outsource their production and then re-import finished products makes sense, but needs to be implemented with clear standards. Here are some suggestions for how it could work.

First, the obvious target is companies that move production abroad but at the same time receive tax breaks and other incentives from the federal and local governments.

The infamous case of Carrier in Indiana is quite clear: a company that received more than \$500,000 in grants from the state, and applied for more than \$5 million in federal tax breaks, but then decided to move its production to take advantage of cheap labor elsewhere. Public pressure forced Carrier to claim it would not take the federal incentives, but laws could be passed to prevent companies that outsource production from benefitting from public funds.

Second, the type of standards included in previous free trade agreements, but rarely implemented, should be strengthened, adopted as national policy and enforced unilaterally where possible.

Under NAFTA, for example, the protection of labor standards is governed by the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC) that entered into force along with NAFTA itself. The NAALC covers areas such as the prohibition of

forced labor, minimum employment standards, prevention of occupational injuries, and the elimination of employment discrimination. Yet the agreement is widely viewed as having been ineffective, due to lack of enforcement. [Bieszczat, Frank H., Labor Provisions in Trade Agreements: From the NAALC to Now. Chicago-Kent Law Review, Volume 83, June 2008.]

The end-result of petitions filed through the NAALC process, for the few that actually move forward, is the creation of a committee that in the best of cases has led to public awareness campaigns, rather than hard sanctions or policy responses.

Subsequent trade pacts have also contained labor-protection provisions, and as noted, the proponents of the TPP have spoken glowingly about its labor and environmental protections. If this is truly among the aims of free trade agreements, then there should be no opposition to such provisions becoming an integral part of U.S. trade laws, and being included in any bilateral agreements concluded in the future.

The goal is not to close borders and restrict trade, but to ensure that trade takes place without undermining the social and living standards of developed countries. Regulations need to be drawn up to certify whether companies, or entire countries, comply with certain standards. Some examples include rules on workplace safety, child labor and pollution, which can be enforced through both tariffs and in some cases outright bans.

Selective targeting of low-quality production will be complex at times, in part due to the existence of global supply chains, which exploit comparative advantages in terms of not only labor costs, but also logistics and infrastructure.

Yet the complexity of these issues is no excuse for ignoring the enforcement of provisions that are essential to protect economic well-being. Politicians and economists constantly make assurances that such standards are integral to the notion of free trade, yet on the list of priorities they seem to be squarely at the bottom.

The current political situation offers an opportunity to chart a new course, not of isolationism, but of setting clear rules for trade between countries aiming for high living standards.

The TPP is dead, as is the TTIP between the United States and Europe. However, there will likely be a move to pursue the key objectives of those pacts, such as strategic positioning towards China and protection of intellectual property rights, through bilateral agreements with a number of countries. Such agreements

would be an excellent place to show that the U.S. is now ready to enforce standards consistent with the living conditions in advanced economies, while still pursuing mutually beneficial trade.

The practical effect could be that the key parameters of trade will shift from low costs, to high quality; precisely what is needed to respond to the race to the bottom that has so negatively affected the middle class in the advanced economies of the West.

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