

Newly Elected Progressives Face Palestine Taboo

After they won their primaries, some young progressives curbed their pro-Palestine rhetoric. Now they are in Washington getting oriented. Next up: early test votes in the new year sponsored by the pro-Israel lobby, writes As`ad AbuKhalil.

Newly-Elected Progressives Confront AIPAC Test

By As`ad AbuKhalil

Special to Consortium News



People in the pro-Palestinian community worldwide will be watching to see if any of the new left-wing progressives elected in the midterms will dare speak out—and vote against—the wishes of the Israel lobby.

The answer will likely come early next year, in test votes sponsored by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, after the 116th Congress convenes. If the past is any guide, Democratic leaders will insist on strict subservience from newcomers to the party's foreign policy priorities, which include U.S. sponsorship and defense of the Israeli occupation and war crimes.

Some members-elect voiced remarkable criticism of Israel in

the primaries. Rashida Tlaib, from Michigan, may have gone the furthest, by calling for one state in Palestine. Ilhan Omar, from Minnesota, referred to Israel's "evil doings" and condemned apartheid in Israel. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, from New York, spoke against the occupation of Palestine.

After the primaries, however, Tlaib, Omar and Ocasio-Cortez softened their rhetoric. In a post-victory interview, Tlaib said that both sides (occupiers and occupied?) have "so much more in common." Ocasio-Cortez was quoted as favoring a two-state solution and believing "absolutely in Israel's right to exist" (as an apartheid occupation state?). She has expressed faith in U.S. legitimacy as "a force of good" in the world and shrugged off any serious understanding of the Middle East.

Antonio Delgado, who upset a GOP incumbent in upstate New York, caught heat during the general campaign for his positions on Israel. When he rejected the "democratic" label for Israel, his comment was widely described by news media as a regrettable gaffe.

The one Palestinian-American male candidate, Ammar Campa-Najjar, a Democrat who campaigned in San Diego, was the least critical of Israel and the only one who lost. He went to lengths to ingratiate himself with the Israel lobby, having changed his religion and name in the past. He even condemned his grandfather, Abu Yusuf An-Najjar, a PLO diplomat killed by Israeli terrorists in Beirut in 1973, as a "murderer."

The nature of U.S. public attitude towards Israel is changing. A few decades ago, isolationist conservative

Republicans were the most likely to be detractors. That role has shifted to liberals in big cities. These days, southern Baptists and conservative Republicans in rural America are providing Israel some of the staunchest support.

Automatic Support for Israel

But this change doesn't mean much in Congress. On Middle East issues, Democrats and Republicans remain ardent and automatic supporters of Israel.

Despite the War Powers Act of 1973, designed to check the president's power to commit the country to an armed conflict, the president retains quasi-imperial powers of foreign policy making. Given voters' worship of the military, representatives are often afraid to reject wars and interventions that presidents seek. To be accused of "failing to support the troops" is fatal to candidates from both parties. California Rep. Barbara Lee famously cast the lone vote against the authorization of military force following Sept. 11, 2001.

The two ruling parties, meanwhile, muzzle democratic discussion of their foreign policy agenda. Through the nominating process, the big wigs of the Democratic Party are able to sideline dissent. The Republican primaries, meanwhile, can seem like contests for the greatest show of fanaticism in supporting Israel. Even in local elections—for mayors and city council—defiance of AIPAC can kill off contenders' chances. Some members of the Congressional Black Caucus, dominated by Democrats, break with AIPAC influence on votes, but the caucus leadership is closely aligned with the pro-Israel lobby.

The internal Democratic split (between its leadership and the liberal base) on Israel is comparable with that of liberal European political parties. The Socialist Party of France, for instance, pursues a traditional pro-Israeli agenda despite pro-Palestine sympathy within its ranks. The same had been true of the Labour Party in the U.K., until the rise of Jeremy Corbyn as leader. The United States has come to insist on a pro-Israeli plank from its European allies. In the 1970s, European nations often held positions on the PLO and on Palestinian self-determination that broke with U.S. doctrine. Since then, however, European disagreement with the U.S. on the Arab-Israeli question has diminished.

AIPAC, and its unofficial research arm, the [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#), have managed to establish themselves as the moral and authoritative sources of legislation and information on all matters related to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Middle East. The lobby has succeeded through intimidation, as detailed in "They Dare to Speak Out," a book by former Illinois Rep. Paul Findley, a Republican. One successful method has been conflating any criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. This tactic has been most effective in discouraging U.S. politicians from opposing Israel.

Not a 'Jewish Lobby'

It must be stressed that AIPAC is not a "Jewish lobby," but a pro-Israel lobby. Its champions are not exclusively Jewish. Anti-Semites wish to portray the lobby in classically bigoted terms, as a Jewish conspiracy. But some of its most ardent adherents have been non-Jewish U.S.

presidents, members of Congress and administration officials.

On Palestine, Congress has changed substantially over the years. In the early 1980s, a few lawmakers, from both parties, still dared to challenge AIPAC, which was founded in 1963. In his 1985 [book](#), former Congressman Paul Findley, now 97, describes some of them. Back then, a wing of the Republican Party even stood for “even-handedness” in the Middle East.

By the end of the 1980s, few of these moderating voices on Israel were left. They’d either retired or lost their seats.

Since the 1990s, dissent on Israel is virtually absent in the upper house of Congress. The late Robert Byrd, from West Virginia, who died in 2010, was the last senator who dared to vote against legislation favored by AIPAC.

Sens. Patrick Leahy of Vermont and Diane Feinstein of California, both in their 80s, are mildly critical of Israel, but still vote with AIPAC most of the time. (Feinstein only recently started criticizing Israel perhaps because support in her state is secure). “Social Democrat” Sen. Bernie Sanders [gets heralded for challenging Israel](#). But that only shows the depth of the general silence. In fact, Sanders usually criticizes Israel in the most restricted terms: (“I am not a fan of Netanyahu.”)

In the House, in recent years the number of members who—on rare occasions—vote to defy the Israeli agenda, has risen. But unlike in previous years, little is ever said about the rights of Palestinians or directly against AIPAC.

Dennis Kucinich, former member of Congress from Cleveland, and a former presidential candidate, may have been the last member to publicly champion the Palestinians. (He once told me that he made it a point to speak about Palestine weekly.) He lost his seat after redistricting in 2012.

The question now is whether some of those new faces in Congress, who carried the progressive torch in the campaigns, have the courage of a Kucinich on Israeli matters. Will any of them break the taboo against speaking for Palestine or against AIPAC? Their silence regarding the on-going Israeli assault on Gaza so far is deafening.

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Ten Commonsense Suggestions for Making

Peace, Not War

President Trump's first year in office brought an escalation of military aggression abroad as he built on the interventions of previous administrations, but there are steps America can take to move towards a more peaceful future, writes retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel William J. Astore at TomDispatch.

By William J. Astore

Whether the rationale is the need to wage a war on terror involving 76 countries or renewed preparations for a struggle against peer competitors Russia and China (as Defense Secretary James Mattis suggested recently while introducing America's new National Defense Strategy), the U.S. military is engaged globally.

A network of 800 military bases spread across 172 countries helps enable its wars and interventions. By the count of the Pentagon, at the end of the last fiscal year about 291,000 personnel (including reserves and Department of Defense civilians) were deployed in 183 countries worldwide, which is the functional definition of a military uncontained. Lady Liberty may temporarily close when the U.S. government grinds to a halt, but the country's foreign military commitments, especially its wars, just keep humming along.

As a student of history, I was warned to avoid the notion of inevitability.

Still, given such data points and others like them, is there anything more predictable in this country's future than incessant warfare without a true victory in sight? Indeed, the last clear-cut American victory, the last true "mission accomplished" moment in a war of any significance, came in 1945 with the end of World War II.

Yet the lack of clear victories since then seems to faze no one in Washington.

In this century, presidents have regularly boasted that the U.S. military is the finest fighting force in human history, while no less regularly demanding that the most powerful military in today's world be "rebuilt" and funded at ever more staggering levels. Indeed, while on the campaign trail, Donald Trump promised he'd invest so much in the military that it would become "so big and so strong and so great, and it will be so powerful that I don't think we're ever going to have to use it."

As soon as he took office, however, he promptly appointed a set of generals to key positions in his government, stored the mothballs, and went back to war.

Here, then, is a brief rundown of the first year of his presidency in war terms.

Trump's First Year of War-Making

In 2017, Afghanistan saw a mini-surge of roughly 4,000 additional U.S. troops (with more to come), a major spike in air strikes, and an onslaught of munitions of all sorts, including MOAB (the mother of all bombs), the never-before-used largest non-nuclear bomb in the U.S. arsenal, as well as precision weapons fired by B-52s against suspected Taliban drug laboratories. By the Air Force's own count, 4,361 weapons were "released" in Afghanistan in 2017 compared to 1,337 in 2016. Despite this commitment of warriors and weapons, the Afghan war remains – according to American commanders putting the best possible light on the situation – "stalemated," with that country's capital Kabul currently under siege.

How about Operation Inherent Resolve against the Islamic State? U.S.-led coalition forces have launched more than 10,000 airstrikes in Iraq and Syria since Donald Trump became president, unleashing 39,577 weapons in 2017. (The figure for 2016 was 30,743.) The "caliphate" is now gone and ISIS deflated but not defeated, since you can't extinguish an ideology solely with bombs.

Meanwhile, along the Syrian-Turkish border a new conflict seems to be heating up between American-backed Kurdish forces and NATO ally Turkey.

Yet another strife-riven country, Yemen, witnessed a sixfold increase in U.S. airstrikes against al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (from 21 in 2016 to more than 131 in 2017). In Somalia, which has also seen a rise in such strikes against al-Shabaab militants, U.S. forces on the ground have reached numbers not seen since the Black Hawk Down incident of 1993. In each of these countries, there are yet more ruins, yet more civilian casualties, and yet more displaced people.

Finally, we come to North Korea. Though no real shots have yet been fired, rhetorical shots by two less-than-stable leaders, "Little Rocket Man" Kim Jong-un and "dotard" Donald Trump, raise the possibility of a regional bloodbath.

Trump, seemingly favoring military solutions to North Korea's nuclear program even as his administration touts a new generation of more usable nuclear warheads, has been remarkably successful in moving the world's doomsday clock ever closer to midnight.

Clearly, his "great" and "powerful" military has hardly been standing idly on the sidelines looking "big" and "strong." More than ever, in fact, it seems to be lashing out across the Greater Middle East and Africa. Seventeen years after the 9/11 attacks began the Global War on Terror, all of this represents an eerily familiar attempt by the U.S. military to kill its way to victory, whether against the Taliban, ISIS, or other terrorist organizations.

This kinetic reality should surprise no one. Once you invest so much in your military – not just financially but also culturally (by continually celebrating it in a fashion which has come to seem like a quasi-faith) – it's natural to want to put it to use. This has been true of all recent administrations, Democratic and Republican alike, as reflected in the infamous question Madeleine Albright posed to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell in 1992: "What's the point of having this superb military you're always talking about if we can't use it?"

With the very word "peace" rarely in Washington's political vocabulary, America's never-ending version of war seems as inevitable as anything is likely to be in history. Significant contingents of U.S. troops and contractors remain an enduring presence in Iraq and there are now 2,000 U.S. Special Operations forces and other personnel in Syria for the long haul. They are ostensibly engaged in training and stability operations. In Washington, however, the urge for regime change in both Syria and Iran remains strong – in the case of Iran implacably so. If past is prologue, then considering previous regime-change operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, the future looks grim indeed.

Despite the dismal record of the last decade and a half, our civilian leaders continue to insist that this country must have a military not only second to none but globally dominant. And few here wonder what such a quest for total dominance, the desire for absolute power, could do to this country. Two centuries ago, however, writing to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams couldn't have been clearer on the subject. Power, he said, "must never be trusted without a check."

The question today for the American people: How is the dominant military power of which U.S. leaders so casually boast to be checked? How is the country's almost total reliance on the military in foreign affairs to be reined in? How can the plans of the profiteers and arms makers to keep the good times rolling be brought under control?

As a start, consider one of Donald Trump's favorite generals, Douglas MacArthur, speaking to the Sperry Rand Corporation in 1957:

"Our swollen budgets constantly have been misrepresented to the public. Our government has kept us in a perpetual state of fear – kept us in a continuous stampede of patriotic fervor – with the cry of grave national emergency. Always there has been some terrible evil at home or some monstrous foreign power that was going to gobble us up if we did not blindly rally behind it by furnishing the exorbitant funds demanded. Yet, in retrospect, these disasters seem never to have happened, seem never to have been quite real."

No peacenik MacArthur. Other famed generals like Smedley Butler and Dwight D. Eisenhower spoke out with far more vigor against the corruptions of war and the perils to a democracy of an ever more powerful military, though such sentiments are seldom heard in this country today. Instead, America's leaders insist that other people judge us by our words, our stated good intentions, not our murderous deeds and their results.

Perpetual Warfare Whistles Through Washington

Whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere in the war on terror, the U.S. is now engaged in generational conflicts that are costing us trillions of dollars, driving up the national debt while weakening the underpinnings of our democracy. They have led to foreign casualties by the hundreds of thousands and created refugees in the millions, while turning cities like Iraq's Mosul into wastelands.

In today's climate of budget-busting "defense" appropriations, isn't it finally time for Americans to apply a little commonsense to our disastrous pattern of war-making? To prime the pump for such a conversation, here are 10 suggestions for ways to focus on, limit, or possibly change Washington's now eternal war-making and profligate war spending:

1. Abandon the notion of perfect security. You can't have it. It doesn't exist. And abandon as well the idea that a huge military establishment translates into national safety. James Madison didn't think so and neither did Dwight D. Eisenhower.
2. Who could have anything against calling the Pentagon a "defense" department, if defense were truly its focus? But let's face it: the Pentagon is actually a war department. So let's label it what it really is. After all, how can you deal with a problem if you can't even name it accurately?
3. Isn't it about time to start following the Constitution when it comes to our "wars"? Isn't it time for Congress to finally step up to its constitutional duties? Whatever the Pentagon is called, this country should no longer be able to pursue its many conflicts without a formal congressional declaration of war. If we had followed that rule, the U.S. wouldn't have fought any of its wars since the end of World War II.
4. Generational wars – ones, that is, that never end – should not be considered a measure of American resolve, but of American stupidity. If you wage war long, you wage it wrong, especially if you want to protect democratic institutions in this country.
5. Generals generally like to wage war. Don't blame them. It's their profession. But for heaven's sake, don't put them in charge of the

Department of "Defense" (James Mattis) or the National Security Council (H.R. McMaster) either – and above all, don't let one of them (John Kelly) become the gatekeeper for a volatile, vain president. In our country, civilians should be in charge of the war makers, end of story.

6. You can't win wars you never should have begun in the first place.
America's leaders failed to learn that lesson from Vietnam. Since then they have continued to wage wars for less-than-vital interests with predictably dismal results. Following the Vietnam example, America will only truly win its Afghan War when it chooses to rein in its pride and vanity – and leave.
7. The serious people in Washington snickered when, as a presidential candidate in 2004 and 2008, Congressman Dennis Kucinich called for a Department of Peace. Remind me, though, 17 years into our latest set of wars, what was so funny about that suggestion? Isn't it better to wage peace than war? If you don't believe me, ask a wounded veteran or a Gold Star family.
8. Want to invest in American jobs? Good idea! But stop making the military-industrial complex the preferred path to job creation. That's a loser of a way to go. It's proven that investments in "butter" create double or triple the number of jobs as those in "guns." In other words, invest in education, health care, and civilian infrastructure, not more weaponry.
9. Get rid of the very idea behind the infamous Pottery Barn rule – the warning Secretary of State Colin Powell offered George W. Bush before the invasion of Iraq that if the U.S. military "breaks" a country, somehow we've "bought" it and so have to take ownership of the resulting mess. Whether stated or not, it's continued to be the basis for this century's unending wars. Honestly, if somebody broke something valuable you owned, would you trust that person to put it back together? Folly doesn't decrease by persisting in it.
10. I was an officer in the Air Force. When I entered that service, the ideal of the citizen-soldier still held sway. But during my career I witnessed a slow, insidious change. A citizen-soldier military morphed into a professional ethos of "warriors" and "warfighters," a military that saw itself as better than the rest of us. It's time to think about how to return to that citizen-soldier tradition, which made it harder to fight those generational wars.

Consider retired General John Kelly, who, while defending the president in a controversy over the president's words to the mother of a dead Green Beret, refused to take questions from reporters unless they had a personal connection to fallen troops or to a Gold Star family. Consider as well the way that U.S. politicians like Vice President Mike Pence are always so keen to exalt those in

uniform, to speak of them as above the citizenry. (“You are the best of us.”)

Isn't it time to stop praising our troops to the rooftops and thanking them endlessly for what they've done for us – for fighting those wars without end – and to start listening to them instead? Isn't it time to try to understand them not as “heroes” in another universe, but as people like us in all their frailty and complexity? We're never encouraged to see them as our neighbors, or as teenagers who struggled through high school, or as harried moms and dads.

Our troops are, of course, human and vulnerable and imperfect. We don't help them when we put them on pedestals, give them flags to hold in the breeze, and salute them as icons of a feel-good brand of patriotism. Talk of warrior-heroes is worse than cheap: it enables our state of permanent war, elevates the Pentagon, ennobles the national security state, and silences dissent. That's why it's both dangerous and universally supported in rare bipartisan fashion by politicians in Washington.

So here's my final point. Think of it as a bonus 11th suggestion: don't make our troops into heroes, even when they're in harm's way. It would be so much better to make ourselves into heroes by getting them out of harm's way.

Be exceptional, America. Make peace, not war.

William Astore, a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF) and history professor, is a TomDispatch regular. He blogs at Bracing Views. [This article originally appeared at TomDispatch.com and is republished with permission.]

The Risks of Clinton's Syrian 'No-Fly Zone'

Hillary Clinton's scheme for a “no-fly zone” – if implemented without the Syrian government's approval – would be an act of war and a risk of a nuclear showdown with Russia, says ex-Congressman Dennis Kucinich.

By Dennis Kucinich

The most consequential statement by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Wednesday night's debate was her pronouncement that a no-fly zone over Syria could “save lives and hasten the end of the conflict,” that a no-fly zone would provide “safe zones on the ground” was in “the best interests of the people on the ground in Syria” and would “help us with our fight against ISIS.”

It would do none of the above. A U.S. attempt to impose a no-fly zone in Syria would, as Secretary Clinton once cautioned a Goldman Sachs audience, “kill a lot of Syrians,” and, according to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Dunford, lead to a war with Russia. If the U.S. has not been invited into a country to establish a “no-fly zone” such an action is, in fact, an invasion, an act of war.

It is abundantly clear from our dark alliance with Saudi Arabia and our conduct in support of jihadists in Syria that our current leaders have learned nothing from Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya as we prepare to plunge head-long into the abyss of a world war.

Our international relations are built upon lies to promote regime changes, the fantasy of a unipolar world ruled by America, and a blank check for the national security state.

As others prepare for war, we must prepare for peace. We must answer the mindless call to arms with a thoughtful, soulful call to resist the coming build-up for war. A new, resolute peace movement must arise, become visible and challenge those who would make war inevitable.

We must not wait until the Inauguration to begin to build a new peace movement in America.

Dennis Kucinich is a former congressman from Ohio and a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2004 and 2008. [This commentary originally appeared at <http://worldbeyondwar.org/dennis-kucinich-war-peace/>]

In Case You Missed...

Some of our special stories in July focused on the ongoing crisis in Ukraine (especially the shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17), the Israeli war on Gaza, and the real history of Thomas Jefferson.

[“The Risk of a Ukraine Bloodbath”](#) by Ray McGovern, July 2, 2014

[“Itching for a Genocide”](#) by Robert Parry, July 3, 2014

[“Thomas Jefferson: America’s Founding Sociopath”](#) by Robert Parry, July 4, 2014

[“An Insider’s View of Nixon’s ‘Treason’”](#) by Robert Parry, July 5, 2014

[“NYT Dishes More Ukraine Propaganda”](#) by Robert Parry, July 6, 2014

["Escalating Domestic Warfare"](#) by Brian J. Trautman, July 8, 2014

["Plunging toward Armageddon in Israel"](#) by William R. Polk, July 9, 2014

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["The US Persecution of Sami al-Arian"](#) by Lawrence Davidson, July 10, 2014

["The Brutal Failure of Zionism"](#) by John V. Whitbeck, July 11, 2014

["No Lessons Learned at the NYT"](#) by Robert Parry, July 11, 2014

["The Back Story of 'Citizen Koch'"](#) by Jim DiEugenio, July 14, 2014

["The Human Price of Neocon Havoc"](#) by Robert Parry, July 17, 2014

["What Is Israel's End Game in Gaza?"](#) by Dennis Kucinich, July 18, 2014

["Facts Needed on Malaysian Plane Shoot-down"](#) by Ray McGovern, July 18, 2014

["Airline Horror Spurs New Rush to Judgment"](#) by Robert Parry, July 19, 2014

["What Did Spy Satellites See in Ukraine?"](#) by Robert Parry, July 20, 2014

["Kerry's Latest Reckless Rush to Judgment"](#) by Robert Parry, July 21, 2014

["Kerry's Poor Record for Veracity"](#) by Ray McGovern, July 22, 2014

["The Kurds Eye Long-Desired State"](#) by Andres Cala, July 22, 2014

["The Mystery of a Ukrainian Army 'Defector'"](#) by Robert Parry, July 22, 2014

["Hiding War Crimes Behind a Question"](#) by Daniel C. Maguire, July 24, 2014

["US Complicity in Israeli War Crimes"](#) by Paul Findley, July 25, 2014

["Blaming Russia as Flat Fact"](#) by Robert Parry, July 27, 2014

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What Is Israel's End Game in Gaza?

By invading Gaza, Israel claims to be addressing short-term security concerns but it is also damaging what remains of the peace process – and the offensive raises troubling questions about the future of the Palestinians trapped in Gaza, writes former Congressman Dennis Kucinich.

By Dennis Kucinich

Israel invades Gaza because it can. Gazans, in the face of an invasion, have no ability to strike back, while Israel strikes forward. Israel has total military superiority, an air force which can knock and then bomb, a navy which can shell Gazans from miles off shore, an army which can roll tanks into Gaza nonstop. Gazans have no army, navy, air force with which to defend. Israel, as any nation, has a right to defend itself, but it confuses offense with defense. It is on the offensive in Gaza.

Israel with its overwhelming military strength is attacking and invading Gaza in violation of international and U.S. law. Its construction of settlements violates the Oslo agreement. Its Central Bank dries up the Gaza economy and blocks payments to Gaza civil servants. Its total control brings the Palestinians to utter subjection and total despair.

Israel can kill, injure, humiliate Palestinians at will, with impunity, which is exactly what gave rise to Hamas and strengthens Hamas' hold in Gaza, even as the IDF advances. Israel will go door to door in Gaza in the hunt for Hamas, which comprises the government of the Palestinians and is therefore a necessary party to any peace talks. It is axiomatic that if you kill your partner for peace you will have no partner for peace.

There will be no peace, for now, as Gaza is turned into an abattoir, to collectively punish Gazans for supporting Hamas. Israel, in its attempt to divide Hamas from the Gazans, will actually multiply Hamas' strength in Gaza and elsewhere. Israel may indeed find and kill Hamas officials. But It is not the current individuals who make up Hamas who constitute Israel's deep dilemma which threatens its long-term security, it is Israel's policies which gave rise to Hamas and which, if left unaltered, will spawn increased resistance no matter how many members of Hamas Israel is successful in apprehending or killing.

What is the end game? To cast Gazans to the sea, where they will be met by the Israeli Navy? To push Gazans into Egypt? To eject all Palestinians to ... where? This is a question relevant not only to Israelis and Palestinians, but to the entire world.

There will be consequences for this invasion. The cycle of violence will widen. It will draw in friends of the Palestinians and will affect Israel's allies. In the U.S., as our great friend presses the attack in Gaza, there will be increasing questions among the American people as to whether the \$3 billion we give Israel annually is being used to defend our great friend, or is buying the U.S. billions of dollars worth of problems because of the manner in which our friend "defends" itself.

Since the U.S. is helping to pay Israel's bills, we cannot avoid the consequences of paying the price for Israel's actions against the Palestinians.

Dennis Kucinich is a former congressman from Ohio and a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2004 and 2008.

Gerrymandering Threatens Kucinich

Ohio's Republican-controlled government gerrymandered a new congressional district across a northern strip of the state to pit two progressive Democrats Dennis Kucinich and Marcy Kaptur against each other in Tuesday's primary. Steve Cobble laments this and recalls some of Kucinich's brave stands.

By Steve Cobble

When Congressman Dennis Kucinich sat down in Los Angeles one night just over 10 years ago to write the prophetic speech that became known as "A Prayer for America," the invasion of Iraq was still just an evil gleam in the eyes of George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and Tony Blair. Yet Kucinich had the political courage to stand up by himself, and declare his opposition to the neocon plans:

"Because we did not authorize the invasion of Iraq. We did not authorize the invasion of Iran... We did not authorize war without end. We did not authorize a permanent war economy." But that courageous stand was far from all that Kucinich has done in his congressional career which began in 1997.

On Feb. 15, 2003, the day the world stood up in opposition to war with Iraq, Kucinich rallied with half a million activists in New York City. On Oct. 24, 2001, Kucinich was one of the few who voted against the Patriot Act. Kucinich co-authored, with Rep. John Conyers, the single-payer health-care-for-all bill. Four years ago, Kucinich offered 35 articles of impeachment regarding the Bush/Cheney administration's crimes against the Constitution.

When the time came to officially certify the 2004 Bush versus Kerry presidential votes in Ohio, Kucinich was one of the handful of progressive House members who joined Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-California, to oppose that certification and force a public debate about the electoral irregularities.

Kucinich also is one of the very few members of Congress who has voted to end the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan by cutting off the funding for those wars, the same way the Congress acted to end the Vietnam War in the 1970s.

Dennis Kucinich supports full equality for gays and lesbians. He opposes the Keystone Pipeline project to exploit Canada's Tar Sands, opposes increasing the retirement age for working people, and fiercely opposes cuts in Social Security and Medicare. He supports the Dream Act (to grant permanent residency to some young non-citizens who were brought to the United States as children), favors significant cuts in the military budget, and has long supported fair trade.

All in all, it is hard to think of anyone who has fought as hard for progressive issues year after year after year as Kucinich has.

So take a second and think – wouldn't you have missed Dennis Kucinich if he had not been there standing up for these progressive values? And won't you miss him if he's not there to carry on the fight next year?

Kucinich is now caught up in a tough primary battle with Rep. Marcy Kaptur because the two Democrats have been pitted against each other by the creation of a gerrymandered district in northern Ohio. The primary vote is on Tuesday.

(If you wish to thank Kucinich for his often lonely work on behalf of progressive causes and peace, his Web site is www.kucinich.us.)

Steve Cobble worked on the presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson and Dennis Kucinich, helped found AfterDowningStreet.org and Progressive Democrats of America, and currently works on the fight to roll back the *Citizens United* Supreme Court ruling.
