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Israel's 'friends' also to blame

By Mark Levine



Americans protest against the attack on the Gaza aid flotilla [AFP]

Perhaps now Americans will understand the true nature of the Israeli occupation.

It has never been about security. Not for one day. It has been about land and power. And this is where it has led. And we have made it possible.

Since at least the mid-1970s, only one country has had the power to force Israel to give up its dreams of permanent occupation of the West Bank: The US.

After the success against Soviet-backed Arab forces in 1967, Israel suddenly became a "strategic asset" - a useful proxy in the global great game against Communism.

For three decades the US and its political class have feigned concern, affection and even love for Israel; the reality is that Israel has always been a tool to advance US strategic goals and power, and nothing more.

All the while, thoughtful Israelis - not to mention Palestinians and the rest of the world - have begged the US to intervene, to stop the insanity before it created an abscess that threatened not just the Jewish state, but the whole region, and even global peace.

But the US goal was never to "protect" or "support" Israel.

Facilitators

We have pretended to be its friend, but we are the friend in the way your drug dealer is your friend, sitting with you late at night listening to your problems while hooking you up with your next fix - only in strange twist, the American people rather than the Israelis are paying for the habit their government and corporate elites grow richer sustaining.



The US' goal was never to protect or support its 'friend' Israel [AFP]

We are the ultimate facilitators of this insane and immoral arrangement, which is part of our larger addiction to war that now reaches \$1 trillion per year.

We cannot see Israel and the occupation for what they are, because to do so would be to look into the most uncomfortable mirror imaginable.

We are like the local arms dealer - Nicholas Cage's character in the chilling film *Lord of War*, only real, and 300,000,000 strong.

We tell Israel everything is okay when it is disastrously wrong. We reinforce every bad habit while declaring its behaviour largely above reproach.

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We "defend" Israel from every criticism - "No! It doesn't have a problem!" "It's the only democracy in the region!" "We stand with Israel!" - really, we stand beside Israel, give it some more "brown-brown" (cocaine mixed with gun powder) to snort, hand it some new weapons and send it out to kill and oppress some more, in our name.

Some friend.

Politicide

The occupation has been an act of sheer brutality for decades. What has happened in Gaza - what the US and the world community have allowed to happen, for we could always stop it with a simple phone call from the US president to the Israeli prime minister - is sheer madness.

It is politicide. It is slow starvation, of the soul and mind as much as the body. Not the kind that produces pictures of distended bellies, blank eyes and ragged clothes, but that slowly eats away at the personality, the will to fight, the ability to overcome, that produces medical problems that will haunt a million people for life.

And because the US and other so-called "great powers" would do nothing and Palestinians have little power left to effectively resist, people around the world, average people, from Palestinians to Holocaust survivors, have felt compelled to act.

They have sent ships now numerous times to break the siege of Gaza. Israel could not allow the siege to be broken because if the world saw what Gaza has become, not merely a prison but something far worse and hard to speak of, even its vaunted "hasbara" or propaganda machine, would not be able to spin it.

And the worse it gets, the more Israel's backers, like the US, cannot afford the world to see it because we have made it happen.

Moral turpitude

And now at least 10 people are dead because of the shame, because of the inability of Israel's best friends to look it in the eye and say: "Stop this insanity. Treat Palestinians like humans before you destroy not only them, but you."

We cannot say that because we are guilty as well, and the US has proved singularly unable to come to grips with our own culpability in occupations from Iraq and Afghanistan to Gaza and, of course, our own original sin, which demanded millions of dead native Americans to ensure the creation of the very country that now supplies Israel with its weapons and tells it everything is going to be okay.

Some day you can let the Palestinians have casinos and they will thank you.

It is tragically fitting that this disaster should happen on Memorial Day in the US.



Israel's backers cannot allow the world see the result of the siege they have let happen [AFP]

The martyrs of the ships are heroes, they are warriors every bit as deserving of our tears and support as the soldiers of American wars past and present.

They are, in fact, the soldiers of the future - the only ones who can help us get out of the disastrous slide to moral turpitude that we, as much as Israel, have descended as a country.

Let us hope that the deaths of the Gaza flotilla activists will not be as in vain as those of the 5,000 American soldiers who have died in our own illegal and useless wars in the last decade.

Mark LeVine is a professor of history at UC Irvine and senior visiting researcher at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University in Sweden. His most recent books are *Heavy Metal Islam* (Random House) and *Impossible Peace: Israel/Palestine Since 1989* (Zed Books).

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial policy.

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