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Europe and the US: Dawn of an Era of Mutual Indignation

On Dec. 21, 2017 the United Nations General Assembly rejected the Trump administration's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital by a 128-9 vote. The only countries to side with Israel and the U.S. were Guatemala, Honduras, Marshall islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, and for good balance, Togo. (The West African country's President Gnassingbe benefiting from Israeli aid gushes about "Israel coming back to Africa, and Africa coming back to Israel.")

Recall that the UNGA resolution that was passed in 1947, proposing the partition of Palestine, which (with a lot of terror) led to the establishment of the state of Israel, posited Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum*. Not just the status of East Jerusalem but that of the whole city remains in dispute. The city is the third holiest in the Islamic worldview, behind Mecca and Medina. The Prophet supposedly in a miraculous night visit on a sacred horse, alighted the site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in what is now the occupied Old City. (I don't believe that, any more than I believe the Old Testament myth about God causing the sun to remain stationary in the sky to give Joshua more time to conquer Jerusalem from the evil Canaanites—as depicted in Joshua 10:12. But myths are powerful.)

In any case, from the second century to the twentieth the city was overwhelming Christian or Muslim, a large percentage of its inhabitants probably descendants of pre-diaspora Judeans who over time converted to these religions. The proposition that Jerusalem is the "eternal Jewish capital" is a religious, literary and romantic one unjustified by actual history. It was emphatically *not* the Jewish capital between 70 CE, when Titus destroyed

the city (reconstructing it as a pagan one with amphitheaters and baths); or after the Roman emperor Hadrian expelled Judeans from the city in 115; not until 1948 when west Jerusalem was taken by force. It was the headquarters of a Jewish monarch of some sort, often under foreign (Assyrian, Persian, Hellenistic) influence, for at best a thousand years before it became a pagan city, then a Christian city, then a mixed Muslim-Christian city with a small Jewish minority as of the early twentieth century.

Virtually all European allies of the U.S. voted for the resolution condemning Washington for its decision. The stance of major NATO allies UK, France, and Germany was particularly painful.

An injured UN ambassador Nikki Haley declaimed in front of the assembly: “The United States will remember this day in which it was singled out for attack in the General Assembly for the very act of exercising our right as a sovereign nation. We will remember it when we are called upon to once again make the world’s largest contribution to the United Nations. And we will remember it when so many countries come calling on us, as they so often do, to pay even more and to use our influence for their benefit.”

What a total disconnect. She’s saying: We pay you to support us, no matter what we do, even if it’s something as inflammatory as moving our embassy to territory the UN considers disputed. (That goes for both the western part occupied in 1948 and the eastern part occupied since 1967.) We have the right to place our embassy wherever we want even if no other country agrees with us, except maybe a few small ones we’ve bought. And if you don’t like it we’ll remember your dislike the next time you need us for something.

She’s saying this not to the Third World so much as to Europe. Those ungrateful allies.

This ignorant, haughty, undiplomatic woman is the perfect Trump representative in the UN. She blames Hamas for the deaths of 92 people in Gaza, and depicts their deaths as an expression of Israel’s right to “defend itself” against peaceful demonstrators and some guys with sling-shots, like David used (see 1 Samuel 17:40).

“I ask my colleagues here in the Security Council,” Haley declaimed on May 15, “Who among us would accept this type of activity on your border? No one would. No country in this chamber would act with more restraint than Israel has.” (*What?* When did Danish border guards last kill 92 unarmed people?) This is like saying that the Trump inaugural was the largest in history. Or that he’s the healthiest man who’s ever been president, or has the finest genes. It’s more than a lie; it’s a laughable, ridiculous lie in the face of the world, delivered by a political lightweight with no knowledge of history or experience in foreign affairs.

Europe in general doesn't buy these lies. Nor does it accept the demand from Secretary of State (Minister of War?) Mike Pompeo that it abandon its growing Iran ties at U.S. diktat in order to facilitate the next cataclysmic war—in a zone 3000 km from Italy but 10,000 km from Washington. The Italians have accepted tens of thousands of Syrian and Libyan refugees and are probably not anxious to greet Iranian ones too. They've seen the results of U.S.-sponsored regime change in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, and attempted regime changes in Syria and Yemen.

An alliance of the Five Star Movement and Northern League in Italy may be taking power. Beppe Grillo, head of the former, is married to a Muslim Iranian woman. The Northern League calls U.S. accusations of Syrian use of WMD “fake news.” Both parties want closer Russian ties. Last year only 57% of Italians polled had a favorable view of NATO (higher than Spain's 45% or Greece's 33% but historically low).

Last January Italy and Iran signed a credit agreement worth 5.0 billion euros whereby Rome will help Italian companies invest in Iran. It was signed by Invitalia Global Investment and two Iranian banks. Is Pompeo going to stop that? In order to better “crush” Iran? Can the U.S. still so cow its traditionally closest allies?

The appointments of John Bolton and Pompeo to key positions around the unhinged, impulsive commander-in-chief mean that the policy gap between Washington and Brussels grows, as a matter of sheer idiocy (John Kelly) versus pragmatic capitalism. As appropriate disdain swells in Europe, may the U.S. recede, or hit its imperial peak then shrivel like the Spanish empire did two centuries ago. And may new silk roads link Persia and Europe as they once did, untroubled by banditry or bombs.