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What Drives US Policy Toward Israel?

By *Lawrence Davidson*

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In early March Professor Richard Falk, former United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, wrote an essay explaining that American foreign policy generated by Democratic Party presidents has been much to blame for the disastrous fate of the Palestinians. The Democrats have allowed themselves to be suborned by Zionist special interests for reasons we will explore below. It is Democratic officials who also verbally attack any American who stands up for the rights of Palestinians, and do so, if anything, more strongly than their Republican competitors.

Falk worked tirelessly from 2008 to 2014 to bring about justice for the Palestinian people – something that, if achieved, would have raised the esteem of both the U.N. and the U.S. among millions of Arabs. Officials appointed by Democratic President Barack Obama, including national security advisor Susan Rice and current U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Samantha Power, repaid Falk for his efforts with insulting ad hominem attacks. For instance, Power celebrated Falk's departure from his post by asserting that, "his publication of bizarre and insulting material has tarnished the U.N.'s reputation and undermined the effectiveness of the Human Rights Council. The United States welcomes Mr. Falk's departure, which is long overdue." It is to be noted that at no time did Professor Falk issue a report, or even make a public statement, that was not based on documented fact and a clear understanding of international law. One suspects that Ambassador Power knew this to be so and that her vitriol against Falk was the act of an amoral political agent of an amoral government.

Professor Falk sees much of the U.S. government's policy in the Middle East as a consequence of a State Department long populated by Zionists along with the power and influence of an Israeli-directed bloc of special interests. President Obama's own efforts at Middle East policy formulation began, according to Falk, with the rhetorical assertion that the United States is "different because we adhere to the rule of law and act in accord with our values in foreign policy." Yet this claim to has always been false, and very quickly, the president's words lost meaning as lobby pressure bent policy (with the singular exception of the Iran nuclear deal) to the will of the Zionist cause.

Watching the distressing kowtowing this past week to that same lobby by Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton has proven Richard Falk undeniably correct.

In her speech to the America Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), an organization which, in truth, functions in the U.S. as the agent of a foreign power (Israel), Clinton proclaimed the following:

*That as president she will take the U.S.- Israeli relationship "to the next level," which entails lavishing on that state most of America's latest defensive and offensive weaponry and the negotiating of yet another defense treaty – a "ten-year defense memorandum of understanding."

*This is allegedly necessary because, Israel "faces three evolving threats – Iran's continued aggression, a rising tide of extremism across a wide arc of instability, and the growing effort to delegitimize Israel on the world stage." Here she refers to the boycott or BDS movement. These threats make "the U.S.-Israel alliance more indispensable than ever." Juan Cole's rebuttal to Clinton's assertions is particularly good. He points out that when the situation is looked at soberly, Israel has no conventional security threats, including from Iran, that necessitates billions of dollars of American weapons and a binding defense memorandum. Cole accurately points out that the "rising tide of extremism" is, to a good extent, a function of the U.S. invasion of Iraq (which both Clinton and the Israelis supported), and the dissolution of Syria (which has become a national security goal of Israel). Finally, by describing BDS as a movement that must be suppressed, she is endangering U.S. constitutional rights.

*Clinton extols the U.S.-Israel alliance as one of “shared values.” She describes Israel as “a bastion of liberty.” This is de rigueur propaganda and, for the Palestinians, has no convincing connection to reality. Clinton then qualifies her dubious assertion by asking, “will we, as Americans and as Israelis, stay true to the shared democratic values that have always been at the heart of our relationship.” She is no doubt including “America” in this question as a reference to the problematic behavior of Donald Trump and his supporters. However, her question, as it applies to Israel, has already been answered.

The well-known Israeli journalist Gideon Levy was in Washington, D.C. last week and had an interview with Max Blumenthal. In it he warned of just how far Israel has drifted from “democratic values” as well as how complicit American liberals, such as Hillary Clinton, are in the process of Israeli moral and political corruption.

Levy tells us that “American liberals should know ... that they are supporting the first sign of fascism in Israel. I don’t call it yet fascism, but [the] first signs [are] very clear. ... And America keeps financing it. This should be known and should be recognized by any American, mainly the liberals, who care where their taxpayer money goes, and so much of it.

“I mean, there is no source of hope right now. There’s no alternative to Netanyahu. ...The atmosphere, as I said, is becoming less and less tolerant, and the standing of democracy is minimal and many times very twisted.”

Levy then takes particular aim at the substantial, if unofficial, U.S. support for Israel’s illegal occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and Golan Heights. “Occupation is American values? Occupation serves the American interest? Doesn’t America see that it pays a hell of a price for this automatic and blind support of Israel and of the occupation project? Is it reasonable that in the 21st century, the United States will finance an apartheid regime in the occupied territories? All those questions should be raised.”

Levy is by no means alone at raising the alarm about where Zionism has led Israeli society. For a more detailed treatment of the intolerance and nascent fascism showing its face, the reader can take a look at Israeli Professor David Schulman’s “Israel: The Broken Silence,” a review of six exposés on Israeli society and behavior. This has just been published in the 7 April 2016 edition of *New York Review of Books*. Schulman concludes that “The far right in Israel very readily opts for totalitarian modes of thinking and acting, and it’s not clear who is left to stop it.” It certainly will not be Hillary Clinton.

Who raises objections to the consequences of U.S. complicity in Israel’s political disaster? People such as Richard Falk and Gideon Levy do and thereby keep alive some semblance of rational discourse about the place of democratic values in U.S. foreign policy formulation. However, despite their rhetoric, liberal politicians like Hillary Clinton have clearly abandoned those values when it comes to any reference to Israel and its behavior.

What this means is that the substance of Clinton's speech at the AIPAC convention was mere propaganda – an effort to rationalize, or perhaps simply to cover up, deeper and more base motives. Therefore, if supporting “shared democratic values” is not what motivates Clinton's kowtowing, what does? The answer is naked political opportunism. Here is the formula: (1) American politics runs on domestically garnered money, and lots of it: running for office, just about any office from dog catcher to president, requires constant financial solicitation; (2) special interests, be they economic concerns, professional organizations, or ideologically motivated groups are a major source of these funds; (3) in exchange for their largesse, such interests require political support for their causes. Here enters, among others, the Zionists, whose deep pockets, ability to shape media messages, and rally voters, both Jewish and Christian, are well known. An alliance with the Zionists is politically profitable while incurring their anger is sometimes politically fatal.

Of course, such an alliance means the abandonment of any objective or even rational consideration of U.S. policy toward Israel and much of the rest of the Middle East. And indeed, the national interest relating to this increasingly dangerous part of the world has long ago been tossed overboard. It has been replaced by the parochial interests of wealthy, well-organized and influential ideologues.