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A Devils' Alliance: the U.S./Israel Obstacle to Peace

By L. Michael Hager
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In *Obstacle to Peace: The US Role in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Jeremy R. Hammond, publisher and editor of the online *Foreign Policy Journal*, makes a convincing case that the American government has routinely collaborated with Israel to block a genuine peace process, avoid compliance with international law and co-opt the mainstream media.

Hammond traces the conflict from the rise of Hamas in Gaza in 1987 through the U.N. vote on Palestinian statehood in 2012. His chapters on “Operation Cast Lead,” The Goldstone Report and the Gaza Flotilla Incident (“Murder on the High Seas”) are especially revealing of the U.S.-Israel complicity.

With 70 pages of detailed notes to support his case, the author cites as continuing U.S. policies:

- + Refusal to accept a two-state solution;
 - + Refusal to negotiate with Hamas;
 - + Refusal to call Israel to account for war crimes;
 - + Opposition to Palestinian statehood; and
 - + Co-option of the mainstream media.
- + The following are the book's significant conclusions:

"Two-state solution"

In the wake of the 1967 war, the unanimously approved UN Security Council 242 laid the legal foundation for the two-state solution that we know today. Among other things, the Resolution provided for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and "acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force." Although both the United States and Israel have accorded lip service to Res.242, the book shows how both countries have worked in tandem to block its implementation. According to Hammond, U.S./Israel policies "are not premised on the equal rights of all human beings and are not intended to achieve the fulfillment of a just settlement through the application of international law."

Negotiating with Hamas

Ignoring repeated Hamas offers of a ceasefire and a readiness to accept two-states, both Israel and the U.S. have consistently refused to negotiate with that organization, either alone or in concert with Fatah. In 2006 the U.S. refused to recognize the democratically-elected government in Gaza, plotted unsuccessfully to overthrow it and later failed to stop Israel's collective punishment of Gazans for their election of Hamas.

Tolerating war crimes

According to Mr. Hammond, the U.S. government "condemned only the violence committed by Palestinians while giving its blessing to Israel's onslaught." Both Israel and the U.S. rejected the Goldstone Report and other reports that documented IDF war crimes. A constant theme during the 2009 war on Gaza and beyond has been the refusal of Israel and the USG to acknowledge the demands of international law (e.g. mandates against the use of white phosphorus munitions and the bombing of civilian places). As American-made arms devastated Gaza, the USG declined to criticize Israel for its attacks on schools, mosques and apartment buildings. Hammond's chapter on "Operation Cast Lead" is replete with examples of Israeli war crimes that the USG repeatedly failed to condemn.

Palestinian statehood

Opposed by the U.S. and Israel in its effort to achieve statehood, the PA attempted to secure international recognition through the UN, initially by joining UNESCO. Facing certain opposition by the U.S. in the Security Council on a bid for full UN membership, the PA managed to secure from the General Assembly an upgrade of its status to non-member observer state. Along the way, Palestinians faced dire threats of aid cut-offs and other sanctions.

Mainstream media

Throughout the volume, Hammond cites mainstream media articles that make Israel appear the victim. There are, for example, a number of *New York Times* articles that either applaud Israeli attacks on Gaza (e.g. “Israel Reminds Foes That It Has Teeth”) or blame the Palestinians for initiating conflict when the facts are otherwise. Parroting IDF reports, western journalists have regularly emphasized Israeli losses without citing Palestinian casualties. They have tended to equate military violence, as if the Palestinians had a war machine remotely equal to Israeli might.

In its detailed review of America’s role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *Obstacle to Peace* convincingly exposes USG complicity with Israel in blocking the peace process, undercutting a two-state solution (despite pious words to the contrary), resisting the demands of international law, disregarding war crimes, endorsing the Gaza blockade and opposing Palestinian statehood. The book also offers abundant evidence of pro-Israel bias in the mainstream media, the result of which has kept most Americans in the dark.

What the book doesn’t do is explain *why* Israel has continued to earn the unquestioning support of the American Congress and *why* the mainstream media has acted as an echo chamber for Israeli spokespersons. Is it only the backing of Zionist or Evangelical Christian constituents that fuels pro-Israel policies? Or could it be the money that flows from the lobbyists of AIPAC-affiliated organizations to fund political campaigns, reward elected officials and offer lawmakers all-expense junkets to Israel? Perhaps the author’s next volume will answer those questions.

In the meantime Jeremy Hammond has produced a valuable record of a U.S. collusion with Israel that resounds to the detriment of Palestinians, disrespects international law and shames America.