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<http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/13/the-beginning-of-the-end-for-mindless-america-support-for-israel/>

## The Beginning of the End for Mindless America Support for Israel?

by JOHN GRANT

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*The legacy of the Zionist revolutionaries who once enraptured the parlors of Europe and America with talk of a Jewish homeland as a moral beacon in a benighted region has instead bequeathed to the Jewish world and the West a highly militarized dependency — a state that has achieved great feats of cultural and economic development but has failed to build strong enough institutions to balance its military zeitgeist with imaginative or engaging diplomacy.*

- Patrick Tyler, from *Fortress Israel: The Inside Story of the Military Elite Who Run the Country — and Why They Can't Make Peace*

Recently there have been cracks showing in the Israeli militarist right's lock on free thinking in the minds of citizens of the United States.

This mind lock in America became evident to me some years ago when an Israeli gunship pilot from an Israeli anti-war group spoke in Philadelphia. He told about a conversation he had in Tel Aviv with a member of The American Israel Public Affairs Committee or AIPAC. With some threat in his tone, the man said, "Say anything you want here in Israel, but don't go to America."

America, of course, is the bankroller for what Tyler calls the “highly militarized dependency” that Israel has become.

Serious cracks began to show up after the Palestinian Authority won statehood recognition in the UN and the Netanyahu government responded by publicly approving steps leading to a huge development east of Jerusalem that would make a two-state reality impossible.

First, there was the prominent upper west side New York synagogue that proudly broadcast its opposition to both Israeli and US leadership by declaring the UN General Assembly recognition of Palestine as a nation state in the world of nations as “a great moment for us as citizens of the world.”

Some Jewish American members of the B’nai Bishurim synagogue were “delighted,” one said: “I think it was great.” Some members were, of course, “in a state of shock.” Responding to those in shock, the leaders of the synagogue accordingly back-peddled a half step. But they did not retract their enthusiastic approval of the UN General Assembly action.

Likewise, it’s clear cracks are developing in the support for the Israeli right’s militarist policy when *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman says from Tel Aviv, “I am stunned at what I see here politically.” He sees only two options being considered in Israeli politics: the “iron fist” and the “iron dome.” The former implies dictatorship and the latter a reliance on the so-called Iron Dome anti-rocket technology that will presumably create a shield to protect Israel in the future. Friedman might have used the term Iron Wall as well, the term coined in 1923 by the father of Israeli militarism, Ze’ev Jabotinsky, to indicate how Jews should separate themselves from the Palestinians they militarily dominate and whose land they occupy.

Andrew Bacevich, a US Army veteran and conservative historian, recently published an essay titled “How We Became Israel” that explains what it means to associate peace with dominance — versus associating peace with harmony. His point is that the US is tragically following the Israeli militarist lead in this respect.

Though these voices are not from the traditional left, their ideas represent a political opening for the left. The recent US election arguably set the far right back on its heels here and seems to have opened some wiggle room for the left. At the same time, as the Middle East and North Africa go through waves of profound change and the Israeli militarist right doggedly moves farther to the right, it may be creating a line in the sand that some American Jews find hard to cross. The next step, then, is speaking out like the B’nai Bishurim synagogue did.

The fact is, while there are many differences between a Jewish state and an Islamic state, both are nation states organized around religious and cultural identities. From the point of view of Palestinians, a boot on your neck is a boot on your neck, whether it’s an Arab dictator like Mubarak or a militarist occupying state like Israel. At some point, the fear is it’s all going to catch up to the Israeli militarist right, and when it does, it will be explosive.

Ponder for a moment the powerful symbolism of the recent triumphant return of Hamas leader Khaled Meshal to Gaza. In 1997, an Israeli Mossad targeted assassination team tried and failed

to murder Meshal in Amman, Jordan, with poison. The killers were caught and an embarrassed Netanyahu, in a prior stint as prime minister, had to order the antidote sent to Amman. It doesn't get much more dramatic than that. So, now, Meshal, a man who Mubarak would not permit access to Gaza through Egypt, is allowed to enter through Egypt by President Morsi. Meshal tells thousands of gathered Gazans that it is his "third birth." First, there was his natural birth, second his survival of the botched Mossad targeted assassination, and third, this moment, his triumphal return to Gaza. Netanyahu reportedly was ballistic.

Those on the right will poo-pah calls for diplomacy with people like Meshal, since the entire history of Israel has been founded and managed on the principle of militaristic dominance of Palestinians and, thus, a disdain for respectful diplomacy. And Meshal and Hamas are, like the Israeli right and unlike the Palestinian Authority, intensely militaristic from an underdog position.

In his new book *Fortress Israel*, Patrick Tyler lays out the history of how Israeli leaders' militarism consistently trumped diplomacy. Echoing Bacevich's notion of the US as a strange lackey for the Israeli militaristic right, Tyler quotes former Israeli intelligence chief Avi Dichter. "The state of Israel has turned targeted assassinations into an art form. Foreign delegations come here on a weekly basis to learn from us, not just Americans." It's an "art" all right — except when it fails, as with Meshal, then it's dark Keystone Cops comedy.

This is what it has come to: This is why in the US we have an imperial President who, like our founding imperialist "bully" President, Theodore Roosevelt, has a Nobel Peace Prize. In President Obama's case, he doesn't send out river gunboats and waterboard Filipino guerrillas to bring light to the benighted corners of the world.

Rather, he has his own personal hit list for Seal Team targeted assassinations of globalized guerrilla networks.

Those targeted for assassination now in 2012 are essentially the updated counterparts of the guerrilla armies that fought the British, French and American colonial occupying armies of the early and middle 20th century in places like Kenya, Vietnam and the Philippines. As the old, classic empires crumbled and faded, colonialism became imperialism. Once capital and power became fully globalized, naturally the opposing elements of bottom-up opposition formed globalized networks themselves. Thus, we have the much feared al Qaeda and a host of others that ebb and flow. In need of demons, the forces in support of a US Global War On Terror do their best to make the al Qaedas of the world into enemies worthy of the Myth of American Exceptionalism.

The dance between entrenched power and the bottom-up impulse for liberation goes on. Each side pursues its game plan by demonizing and attempting to murder the other. It's a very messy confrontation, now reaching into Africa, with lots of moral damnation to go around.

## **A Strange and Beautiful Interlude**

Because I've written about Israel before, I'm on lists that send out pro-Israeli propaganda. The other day, I got a mailing that began with a cheerful, "Hello!" The tone was that of an old friend. The writer, apparently a US military veteran, advocated "national service" for all Americans based on an Israeli model.

"I am emailing you," he went on, "to bring to your attention the fact that Israel is the only country in the world that maintains obligatory military service for its women. So here is a great collection of Israel female soldiers in action. ... Israel's economy is fine, and its future looks bright. They are a happy and prosperous people, even though they are totally surrounded by those who demand their total destruction."

The writer went on to describe his own survivalist philosophy. He, then, attached 47 photographs of beautiful Israeli women wearing assault rifles as fashion accessories. After the final image — the one on the right, above — he wrote this in large, bold type:

"Come on, take your best shot, Iran!!!"

OK, the right-wing man who sent this email may be overly horny, and it's pretty certain he's freelancing and not part of AIPAC. But when you consider this item in relation to reality, it's actually not that far off from much of the pro-Israel propaganda I receive. Like much of the right-wing thinking during our recent election campaign, it's totally aspirational and un-moored from a larger reality.

The propaganda always points out how wonderful and special Israel is and how everyone surrounding Israel is out to destroy it. The special genius and the great abilities of Israel and Israelis are always listed to justify Israel's policies. Making the desert bloom becomes like making the trains run on time, a justification for everything. Not to worry, Israel has the situation under control and can militarily obliterate all its foes if necessary. Its "highly militarized dependency" on the United States and Europe isn't usually mentioned, since the propaganda itself is intended to shore up this dependency.

I'm not a psychiatrist, but if I was and had the Israeli right on my couch I'd conclude it has lost its mind in some narcissistic mirror loop to the point it seems to be goading its neighbors to bring on the apocalypse. It's an updated and possibly even more frightening version of the old Cold War posture known as MAD, or Mutually Assured Destruction.

## **Is Sanity Possible in Israel/Palestine?**

For the record, I support the State of Israel and recognize it does have a security problem. Also, talk by Hamas or anyone about destroying Israel is as crazy and indefensible as the continuation of Jabotinsky's Iron Wall by the Netanyahu government. Far right Israeli militarists would rather lead us to Armageddon than sit down to talk with a Palestinian as a fellow flawed human being with natural political interests in the land they assume is a gift from their God.

While both sides make diplomacy difficult, due to its military dominance the onus for diplomacy is on the side of Israel. Thus, a real route to sanity in Israel seems to reside here in the United States. The militarists in Israel only exist because, from the beginning, US leaders have punked out and gone along with the anti-diplomatic madness Tyler writes about in *Fortress Israel*. It's all there from the beginning, how Ben Gurion blew off all US efforts at diplomacy with Nasser and other Arab leaders. While lying to, or withholding information from, Eisenhower, Prime Minister Ben Gurion, General Dayan, Major Sharon and other determined militarists pursued preemptive attacks and killing forays into Egypt and other neighbor nations in hopes of setting off a larger war that they felt they could win.

So far, Israel has won most of these wars, with the exception of the 2006 invasion of Southern Lebanon, which most analysts say was a victory for Hezbollah. It should also be said, these wars were not entirely instigated by Israel. There's plenty of sin to go around. But the point is, Israel from the beginning has refused to pursue diplomacy and has, instead, pursued militarism and preemptive violence and war as a means of solving the problem of two peoples claiming the same land. That kind of war-determined policy can only lead to madness.

According to the severe, locked down logic of some Americans, saying this makes me an enemy of Israel. Though I don't see it that way, that's how the powerful PR entity AIPAC would have it. This seems to me the problem: As Friedman suggests, things are pretty bad when an argument for diplomacy as a pragmatic means to ratchet down war fever is seen as more dangerous than the current mindless, lockstep militarism.

I look at the 47 images of beautiful Israeli women with weapons and I imagine a similar propaganda piece featuring 47 beautiful Arab and Palestinian women with weapons and fashionable bomb vests. The insanity and obscenity of it all becomes overwhelming. It's classic tragedy headed for Act Three.

But then there's another model in which women, as nurturers not sexual provocateurs, play a strong role. Instead of using attractive women as a red flag for war — as in “Come on, take your best shot, Iran!” — why not encourage Israeli women and Palestinian women to forge a diplomatic beginning? Women In Black in places like South America and elsewhere have shown that fed up women in war zones can triumph over their macho, male counterparts in the difficult process of getting along rather than killing.

The best of the left in the US and in Israel have preached this line for decades and no one has listened. It's as simple as Lennon put it: “Give peace a chance.” The B'nai Jewshurun synagogue in New York seems to understand the wisdom of this. Let's hope other Americans — Jews, Christians, Muslims, atheists and the rest — will follow suit.