

Dem leaders out of step with voters on Israel's attack on Gaza

Commentary by Edward Herman

By [Glen Greenwald](#)

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As Glen Greenwald points out below, the U.S. political system is failing once again (as with the Iraq invasion-occupation) to allow a powerful dissident current on the Gaza attack to have any response in the two party political system. This is an acute failure of democracy.

Another interesting point and question: as the current Israeli wholesale terrorist attacks, with unconditional U.S. support, are almost certain to elicit a retail terrorist response, is it possible that that is one of its purposes? It will justify further Israeli dispossession of Palestinian land and water, and will benefit the thus far unchallengeable militarization and power projection of the U.S. security state and keep Obama under constraint (if he needs more than is already built-in).

Edward Herman

A new Rasmussen Reports poll — the first to survey American public opinion specifically regarding the Israeli attack on Gaza — strongly bolsters the severe disconnect between American public opinion on U.S. policy toward Israel and the consensus views expressed by America's political leadership.

Not only does Rasmussen find that Americans generally “are closely divided over whether the Jewish state should be taking military action against militants in the Gaza Strip” (44 percent to 41 percent, with 15 percent undecided), but Democratic voters overwhelmingly oppose the Israeli offensive — by a 24-point margin. By stark contrast, Republicans, as one would expect (in light of their history of supporting virtually any proposed attack on Arabs and Muslims), overwhelmingly support the Israeli bombing campaign (62 percent to 27 percent).

It's not at all surprising that Republican leaders — from Dick Cheney and John Bolton to virtually all appendages of the right-wing noise machine — are unquestioning supporters of the Israeli attack. After all, they're expressing the core ideology of the overwhelming majority of their voters and audience.

Much more notable is the fact that Democratic leaders — including Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi — are just as lock step in their blind, uncritical support for the Israeli attack, in their absolute refusal to utter a word of criticism of, or even reservations about, Israeli actions.

While some Democratic politicians who are marginalized by the party's leadership are

willing to express the views that Democratic voters overwhelmingly embrace, the suffocating, fully bipartisan orthodoxy which typically predominates in America when it comes to Israel is in full force with this latest conflict.

Is there any other significant issue in American political life, besides Israel, where citizens split almost evenly in their views, yet the leaders of both parties adopt identical positions which leave half of the citizenry with no real voice?

More notably still, is there any other position, besides Israel, where a party's voters overwhelmingly embrace one position (Israel should not have attacked Gaza) but that party's leadership unanimously embraces the exact opposite position (Israel was absolutely right to attack Gaza and the U.S. must support Israel unequivocally)?

Equally noteworthy is that the factional breakdown regarding Israel-Gaza mirrors quite closely the factional alliances that arose with regard to the Iraq war. Just as was true with Iraq, one finds vigorous pro-war sentiment among the Dick Cheney/National Review/neoconservative/hard-core-GOP crowd, joined (as was true for Iraq) by some American liberals who typically oppose that faction yet eagerly join with them on Israel.

Meanwhile, most of the rest of the world — Europe, South America, Asia, the Middle East, the U.N. leadership — opposes and condemns the attack, all to no avail. The parties with the superior military might — the U.S. and Israel — dismiss world opinion as essentially irrelevant. Even the pro-war rhetorical tactics are the same, just as those who opposed the Iraq war were said to be “pro-Saddam,” those who oppose the Israeli attack on Gaza are now “pro-Hamas.”

There are certainly meaningful differences between the U.S. attack on Iraq and the Israeli attack on Gaza (most notably the fact that Hamas does shoot rockets into Israel and has killed Israeli civilians and Israel is blockading and occupying Palestinian land, whereas Iraq did not attack and could not attack the U.S. as the U.S. was sanctioning them and controlling their airspace). But the underlying logic of both wars is far more similar than different: military attacks, invasions and occupations will end rather than exacerbate terrorism; the Muslim world only understands brute force; the root causes of the disputes are irrelevant; diplomacy and the U.N. are largely worthless.

It's therefore entirely unsurprising that the sides split along the same general lines. What's actually somewhat remarkable is that there is even more lock-step consensus among America's political leadership supporting the Israeli attack on Gaza than there was supporting the U.S. attack on Iraq.

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