Israeli-US Strategy: Lebanon and Iran

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In-depth Report: IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?, THE WAR ON LEBANON

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The War Debate on Iran

A survey of Israeli State pronouncements, documents and press releases echoed by its resident representatives in the Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and their supporters writing and speaking in the major media reveals a concerted effort to convince the United States to militarily attack Iran. Beginning in the mid 1990's, Israel's top US ideologues promulgated documents and propaganda manifestos, purporting to be strategy papers directed toward joint US-Israeli aggression against Iraq, Syria and especially Iran.(1)

Even as the bricks were still smoldering from 9/11, Israeli ideological point men, Senator Lieberman and Undersecretary for Defense Wolfowitz urged Washington to attack Iran by launching either simultaneous or sequential wars. In pursuit of Israel's regional priorities, its representatives in the US Government, in the Pentagon (Wolfowitz, Feith and Shulsky), in the National Security Council (Abrams), in the Vice President's Office (Libby) and in the President's Office (Speech writer Frum) falsified intelligence, designed the propaganda (War Against Terror, Axis of Evil) and planned the War against Iraq, and with the Lobby secured near unanimous Congressional acquiescence. They then successfully secured a US boycott of Syria and support for Israel's expropriation, annexation and settlement of Palestinian land

in the West Bank and the destruction of Gaza. Even as the US invasion failed to secure control of Iraq, Israel's representatives in the US Government did destroy Iraqi society and state, and its capacity to support the Palestinian resistance, increasing Israel's regional power (at a very high cost to the United States).

Even as the US was at war with Iraq, even as it suffered over 20,000 dead and wounded, even as its war spending rose to over $430 billion dollars, even as the bulk of its ground troops were stretched thin, Israel's representatives in the Executive and Congress and through the Lobby pushed for a US pre-emptive attack on Iran.

Within the US government, Israeli representatives faced several objections from the State Department and active military officers to a pre-emptive military attack on Iran:

Preparing for War

In response, Israel's representatives in the US formulated a series of policies to get around these objections.

- In the first place, they, along with the Israeli secret police and their Lebanese collaborators, and with the approval of the US-dominated United Nations Security Council, successfully implicated Syria as the author of the February 14, 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Baha'eddin Al-Hariri, on the basis of recanted testimony from a single perjured 'witness'. On that basis, the US-UN forced Syria to withdraw its forces from Lebanon, thus hoping to isolate Hezbollah and other anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements. Once Syria was out of Lebanon, the US with Israeli approval secured a client regime in Beirut, a regime nonetheless that only had influence in the center-north of the country. Hezbollah remained the most influential force in Southern Lebanon and much of South Beirut and impregnable from any military machinations emanating from Beirut.

  In 2004 the US and France co-sponsored UN Resolution 1559 which called for "the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias." This extraordinary interference by the Security Council in Lebanon's internal politics was clearly a set-up for Israel's 2006 invasion.

  Washington in co-ordination with Israel continued its 'salami tactics' chipping away at real or potential opponents to absolute US-Israeli regional control. By isolating Syria, destroying Gaza and 'surrounding' Hezbollah (or so they thought), they believed they were moving closer to isolating Iran. In June 2006, Israel proceeded to invade and demolish Gaza, arrest the Hamas political leadership in order to install a new client regime. In the same month, Presidential Adviser on Middle Eastern Affairs, Elliot Abrams, in close consultation with the Israeli military command, gave the green light to invade Lebanon in order to destroy Hezbollah as a step toward the strategic goal of isolating Iran and overcoming US military fears of retaliation from a pre-emptive bombing of Iran.

  Parallel to the US-Israeli coordinated invasion of Lebanon and Gaza, Washington and the Jewish Lobby were working the diplomatic track. They sought to secure UN approval for a multi-lateral boycott in opposition to Iran's legal uranium

enrichment program. In the case of Gaza, the Lobby secured unanimous White House, Congressional and mass media support for labeling the electorally oriented Hamas, as a 'terrorist' organization. Paradoxically President Bush supported the 'free elections' in the Palestinian territories as well as Hamas' decision to go to the ballot box. The Lobby then followed Bush's endorsement of the 'free and democratic' nature of the electoral process in Palestine by pressuring the US Congress and the White House to cut all aid and contact with the democratically elected Hamas government. The White House then pressured the European Union to follow suit. Israel blocked all trade and supply routes, and illegally refused to hand over Palestinian tax revenues to the newly elected government. Israel moved to asphyxiate the Palestinian economy. The Lobby secured US endorsement of the Israeli policy.

Six months into a murderous campaign, Israel escalated its armed incursions into Gaza and the West Bank, by deliberately killing civilians, families and children who were engaged in the most innocent activities, such as family outings at the beach. These grotesque Israeli provocations were intended to push the democratically elected Hamas into breaking its 17-month unilateral ceasefire. A Palestinian attack to incapacitate an Israeli tank emplacement near the frontier shelling Gaza and the capture of an Israeli soldier served as the pretext for a full-scale invasion of Gaza. The Israeli government systematically destroyed most of the basic life-supporting infrastructure (water treatment and power plants, sewage systems, roads, bridges, hospitals and schools) and arrested the top executive and legislative leadership of the elected Palestinian Authority. Israel killed over 251 Palestinians in the first two months of its 'Summer Rain' campaign against Gaza, injured over 5000 – mostly civilians (Haaretz September 4, 2006). Following the Lebanon debacle Israel unleashed a massive 'kill and destroy' campaign.

The Lobby silenced any dissenting voices and secured near unanimous Congressional and automatic Executive endorsement for Israel's policies toward Gaza. Israel's stranglehold over Gaza weakened any organized Palestinian opposition to a pre-emptive attack on Iran.

Where the Israeli military invasion of Lebanon failed to destroy Hezbollah, the Lobby succeeded in pushing the US to secure a major diplomatic victory via the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UN Res. 1701) on a 'cease fire'. The entire resolution was verbatim a replica of Israeli strategic aims for destroying Hezbollah, dividing Lebanon, securing its military primacy in Lebanon and isolating Iran. The approval of the resolution followed the usual multi-step process: Israel set the terms, the Lobby organized its apparatus to push Congress and the White House. Washington presented the resolution to the Security Council and pressured its members to approve it. The resolution was approved and the military, economic and diplomatic processes were set in motion, with Kofi Annam serving as point man for the US-Israeli strategy.

To say that the ceasefire resolution is 'one-sided' and biased in favor of Israel is an understatement. The problem is in the very terms and premises of the resolution. Israel invaded Lebanon. A country, which invades another, destroys the entire civilian infrastructure and 15,000 housing units and kills over 1,100 of

its citizens, is considered by international law to be the 'aggressor'. A buffer zone or demilitarized region should be located within the borders of the aggressor country – namely a twenty-kilometer area within the Israeli frontier. This is the common practice with states with long histories of military intervention into neighboring countries. This is especially the case since Israel initiated the bombing of Lebanon and Israel invaded Lebanon and not vice versa. Instead, the resolution provided for the United Nations forces to occupy Lebanese territory and to eliminate its first line of national defense – namely the complex of bunkers and underground tunnels which Hezbollah and the Lebanese resistance organized as civil defense against the onslaught of Israeli bombs, missiles, artillery and invading infantry.

- Second, the United Nations resolution called for the displacement, dissolution and disarming of the defenders (Hezbollah) of the invaded country instead of the invaders (the Israeli Defense (sic) Forces – IDF). In line with Israeli strategy, this proposal was meant to accomplish via the UN military what Israel's IDF was not able to do.
- Third, while the resolution proposed that Hezbollah was to be forced to disarm or at least 'hide' its arms, Israeli armaments, occupation soldiers and over flights remained in place within Lebanon, ready and eager to bomb and attack the Lebanese resistance as its Prime Minister and Defense Minister publicly declared (and practiced on several occasions).
- Fourth, while Hezbollah agreed to the ceasefire, Israel did not. Israel retains its air and sea blockade, which are 'acts of war' according to International law, and upholds the 'right' to freely send commandos and assassination teams into Lebanon. The UN and Kofi Annam have not denounced Israel's non-compliance. The US, on the other hand, has endorsed Israel's non-compliance.
- Fifth, Israel has insisted and the UN resolution proposed that Lebanese troops patrol the border, hunt down and destroy Hezbollah arms and activists, thus hoping to promote a sectarian civil war and divide Lebanon into a fragmented, dysfunctional state in place of the coalition government (which includes Hezbollah) that existed prior to and during and after the Israeli invasion. In response Hezbollah has not disarmed although it has agreed to not permit its fighters to openly carry arms in public. Hezbollah has not resisted the placement of Lebanese soldiers on the Israeli frontier; rather it has fraternized with them.

In this most perverse of all ceasefire resolutions, the aggressor (Israel) retains its arms, its occupation of Lebanese land, sea and air space, and increases its purchase of offensive weapons. The Lobby pushes the US/UN to encircle Hezbollah, control Lebanon's border with Syria (thus losing sovereignty) and stop the flow of any defensive weapons to replenish the supply depleted defending the country from Israeli invaders.

The Israeli/US/UN resolution is designed to isolate the Lebanese resistance from Syria and Iran, and to weaken any common Arab solidarity if and when Iran and Syria are attacked.

Kofi 'the Gopher' (a pejorative American term for an errand boy or flunkey) Annam, nominally the UN Secretary General, but known by UN insiders as Washington's – and therefore the Lobby's – messenger, went on a 'peace' mission to the Middle East. His purpose was not to open negotiations over a prisoner exchange between Lebanon-Hezbollah and Israel but to secure the unilateral release of the two captured Israeli prisoners of war.

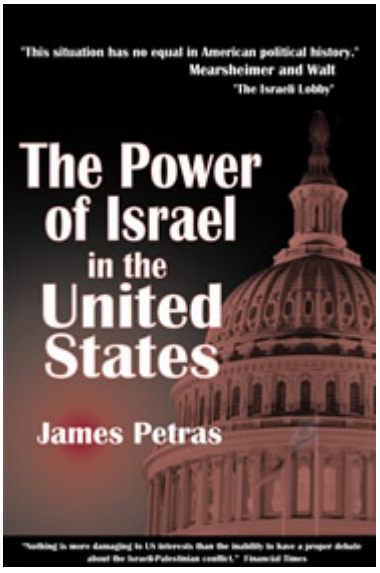
Never at any moment did he mention the key demand of the Lebanese, which was the release of the unlawfully imprisoned 1,000 Lebanese civilians and combatants suffering in Israeli prisons, many of whom have been held without charges or trial for years. For Annam, articulating Israel's demands for prisoner release was the only issue to be discussed. When Syria agreed to work with Annam on a negotiated reciprocal Israeli-Lebanese prisoner release and Israel rejected the offer, Annam refused to criticize Israeli intransigence and continued mouthing their demand for an unconditional, unilateral prisoner release.

It is clear that Israel and the US-Jewish Lobby are trying to build on the pro-Israeli ceasefire resolution and its implementation to widen and deepen inroads in Lebanese politics, control its security policy and erode its sovereignty by buying off sectors of the Beirut elite with 'reconstruction aid' while keeping Israel on a wartime footing within, around and above Lebanon.

The 'ceasefire' agreement is in effect a 'mousetrap' offering donors' assistance (cheese) to the weak and vacillating Beirut regime (particularly its rightwing, pro-Western sectors) and the iron clamp of air, sea and land encirclement and military attacks by Israeli and UN collaborators on a disarmed Hezbollah.

The Jewish Lobby has ensured 100% White House and US Congressional support for Israel's continued air and sea blockade and its demands for disarming and destroying Hezbollah as conditions for withdrawing from its territorial occupation of Lebanon.

Even worse, as the UN begins its occupation of Lebanon and Israeli retains its military presence, Tel Aviv 're-interprets' the ceasefire to ensure its forward position within Lebanon. Israel demands the release of its two prisoners of war, the destruction of Hezbollah before considering the ending if its occupation and blockade. Israel insists that the UN troops control the Syrian border before conforming to the terms of the agreement and withdrawing its own troops. No mention is made of the UN patrolling Israel's borders with Gaza which Israel crosses daily on its way to murder and assassinate Palestinians. In other words, as the UN erodes the position of the Lebanese resistance and strengthens the Israeli militarily, Israel neither negotiates nor reciprocates – it escalates new and harsher demands. All of this is backed by the Jewish Lobby and its highly placed officials in the Executive branch and US Congress. The purpose of this complex United Nations maneuver is to neutralize any Lebanese opposition to the escalation of US-Israeli aggression against Iran.



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Diplomacy for Confrontation and War

Parallel to and converging with the Lebanese 'mousetrap' strategy, the US with a powerful push from the Lobby have moved to secure United Nations Security Council support for a series of diplomatic measures and economic sanctions against Iran. The UN Security Council prompted by the US and Europe is making demands in total contradiction to the Non-Proliferation Treaty allowing all countries in the world at any time to enrich uranium for peaceful uses, thus provoking a major confrontation with Iran. These illegal and presumptuous demands have absolutely no basis in law and in fact: According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, there is no evidence that Iran is building a nuclear weapon. The US has taken a step-by-step approach to preparing for pre-emptive war with Iran, in order to minimize its (the US) isolation, the heavy financial and human costs and the prospects of retaliation. Washington has prepared a resolution calling for economic sanctions – limiting travel and investment. Once the principle of economic sanctions is in place, Washington can more easily push for add-ons, like trade sanctions, shipping restrictions and freezing overseas assets. Once having secured the multi-lateral economic isolation of Iran, Washington can launch its military-air assault with less opposition and greater acquiescence from Europe and its Mid East clients.

From Iraq, Hezbollah, Hamas to Iran: Another Failed Strategy?

Israel's representatives in the US government saw the war against Iraq as a key staging ground for the attack on Iran– as part of a triumphal series of military conquests turning the Gulf into an Israeli-US condominium. Together with the Iraq War, the Lobby successfully bulldozed the US Congress to pass legislation boycotting Syria, another target in the overall Israeli-Lobby strategy. Lebanon, especially the national resistance led by Hezbollah is a key piece in the US-Israeli strategy for militarily attacking Iran. South Lebanon under Hezbollah and Hamas in Gaza, and other potential allies of Iran, were subsequently targeted for diplomatic isolation through the UN and militarily for physical extermination. Each US and Israeli war serves an immediate purpose (weakening adversaries) and more important forms part of the preparation for a major attack on Iran. The 'dual purpose' wars are designed to weaken and destroy adversaries to US-Israeli plans for regional dominance and to create military bases, geographic encirclement and economic pressure for the ultimate military assault on Iran.

The Dominos are Falling in the Wrong Places

The Lobby and the Israeli architects of sequential wars in the Bush Administration have however suffered several severe setbacks as well as victories on their road to Teheran.

They succeeded in destroying the secular nationalist government of Saddam Hussein and totally crippled Iraq's defensive military and economic potential. However they face an unanticipated long-term, large-scale insurgency which ties down hundreds of thousands of US active military forces and depletes their reserves, imposes enormous financial costs and undermines public support for that war and any new military invasion promoted by the

Israeli Lobby.

The Israel-Lobby-US backed effort to oust Arafat and impose a client regime opposed to Iran and Hezbollah via elections, backfired: Hamas, an anti-colonial national movement won the elections. As a result Israel re-took the path of outright military assaults and massacres to decimate opposition to its larger Middle East agenda.

The effort to exterminate Hezbollah in South Lebanon succeeded in ravaging that country and killing many civilians, but failed its main mission to clear the way for an uncontested attack on Iran. While Israel failed militarily, the Lobby and its clients in US Congress and the Administration succeeded in imposing their joint Israeli/US policy goals in the infamous UN Resolution 1701 via United Nations and Lebanese troops. Nevertheless the resolution, while imposing some important restrictions, is still highly contested: Hezbollah rejects disarmament, the Lebanese Army, which is nearly 40% Shia, fraternizes with Hezbollah and doesn't challenge them and the United Nations troops have no intention of acting as Israel's shock troops in provoking a new attack on Hezbollah, especially after Israel's deliberate killing of UN peacekeepers.

The Israel-Lobby-US diplomatic strategy in the United Nations to impose sanctions on Iran, has secured European support for relatively marginal issues but has failed to secure Russian and Chinese support for a full-scale embargo. China is negotiating an agreement with Iran on the enrichment process that may undermine the entire US 'diplomacy to war' strategy.

Facing a series of military and diplomatic obstacles, the Jewish Lobby does not cease and desist. The Lobby presses ahead with a new campaign to whip up war fever in the US through the ultra-militant 'Zionophiles' John Boulton, US Ambassador to the UN, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Cheney, President Bush and, of course, the inimitable 'Chief Adviser on the Middle East' Elliot Abrams. Their current position is to sweep aside all the failed, phony issues and diplomatic proposals and base the impending military attack of Iran on ideology: The new struggle between Democracy and 'Islamo-fascism'.

For the Israeli Government, a pre-emptive US attack on Teheran would be seen as weakening another opponent to Israel's regional dominance. For the United States, it would open the floodgates of insurgency into Iraq and beyond, leading to two, three many Iraqs. At some point 'the chickens may come home to roost'. For sacrificing untold numbers of American lives at the service of a foreign power, the Lobby and its political supporters in the US Congress will go down in history as traitors to our highest ideals as a free and independent country.

Failing to secure a US attack on Iran, Israel constantly accelerates its plans for war with Iran and Syria. Once again the Lobby mounted a massive, sustained propaganda campaign which claimed that Iran's President Ahmadinejad in a speech on October 2005 declared "Israel must be wiped off the map." The Lobby totally falsified the English translation. In fact the Iranian President never used the word 'map' or the term 'wiped off' (Counterpunch August 28, 2006). What he actually said was, "… this regime that is occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time." Clearly he was referring to a regime which illegally occupies a city by military conquest, that reduces its own Arab citizens to discrimination and poverty and which colonizes the occupied territories. In other words he calls for the disappearance of a racist colonial regime, not the destruction or removal of the Jews in Israel.

These and other deliberate 'mistranslations' are part of the Lobby's effort to build up worldwide opprobrium against Iran and to stigmatize Iran with the worst 'holocaust-denier' features, in order to present an Israeli attack as an act against an 'Islamo-fascist' rogue state. From January to March 2006, the Israeli military high command set in motion war plans to attack Iran – postponed temporarily as Washington went through the diplomatic motions. In September, the London Times (September 3, 2006) reported that "Israel is preparing for a possible war with both Iran and Syria." According to Israeli political and military sources, "The challenge from Iran and Syria is now top of the Israeli defense (sic) agenda."

Footnote

(1) See The Project for the New American Century: White Paper Rebuilding American's Defenses (September 2000) prepared and authored by the leading American pro-Israel Jewish and non-Jewish ideologues.
