

The Jerusalem UN Vote and the US-Israel Link

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One hopes that the overwhelming rejection of the Trump Administration's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on the 21st of December 2017 will compel Washington DC to rescind its decision. Given Trump's track record so far — on the Climate Change Accord and UNESCO — it is very unlikely. The most we can expect him to do is to delay a little the proposed transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. For Trump what matters most is his Christian Right constituency in the US a substantial portion of which is made up of Christian Zionists.

Leaving aside Trump and his supporters, the Jerusalem vote is a clear affirmation of the world's commitment to international law. Jerusalem was placed under that law in 1947 when historic Palestine was unfairly partitioned. Seizing or annexing any part of that city and then proclaiming it as the capital of one of the disputants is illegal. Surely, the US which sees itself as the world's "greatest democracy" understands this. So should Israel, West Asia's "only democracy."

The Jerusalem vote is also a victory of sorts for global justice. Global justice, like international law, has not always been at the top of the UN's agenda. Nonetheless, on Palestine, there have been a couple of occasions when a modicum of justice was done. In November 1974, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was granted observer status by the UNGA. The UNGA also voted in favour of non-member status for Palestine on 29 November 2012. However, it was more vocal in its condemnation of apartheid in South Africa in 1962 and 1973, and of the genocide perpetrated upon the Bosnian Muslims by the Serbs in 1993. And, for decades, the UNGA has denounced the inhuman sanctions imposed upon the people of Cuba by the US government.

If the UNGA has not been able to emerge as the principled voice of global justice on a much more extensive scale it is partly because of various impediments. One of the most formidable of these is the US-Israel link. (Even on Cuba, it is US and Israel who have consistently opposed the global consensus on lifting sanctions.) Within the context of West Asia and North Africa (WANA) it is this link between US hegemony and Zionism the pivot of which is Israel that is the principal cause of much of the turmoil and turbulence in the region that has resulted in the loss of millions of lives and brought about so much destruction and devastation.

The link serves three purposes at least –

1) control, and not just access, over oil in the world's most important oil-exporting region. Control is achieved through servile regimes that are

completely subservient to the US and Israel

2) control over vital waterways in the world's most strategic region where three continents meet, and

3) maximum protection for Israel's "security."

This is one of the main reasons why the US's biggest air-base in the region is in Qatar; its biggest navy in the region, the fifth fleet, is in Bahrain; and some of the biggest recipients of its military hardware are countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Add to all this, the NATO airbase in Konya, Turkey.

Since Israel's notion of total security is not just hardware and infrastructure but also the elimination of any element within its vicinity that is independent and determined to preserve its dignity, it has sought systematically to crush every form of resistance to its dominant power. Crushing resistance is not just in relation to Palestinian freedom-fighters and liberation movements. It also involves Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Libya even Sudan and Yemen. Beyond the Arab world, Israel's ultimate target is of course Iran.

Has Israel achieved its targets? In spite of multiple assassinations and periodic slaughter of Palestinian civilians, the Palestinians continue their legitimate struggle for an independent state. Indeed, through the peaceful Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS) movement, their struggle has expanded and gained more support especially from Western Europe.

At the same time, attempts to bring Lebanon under Israeli grip — one of the most vicious and brutal of which was the Sabra-Shatila massacre of 1982 — have failed miserably. In 2006, the Hezbollah provided heroic resistance to the Israeli military campaign and thus defended Lebanese territorial sovereignty. Though Israel using Anglo-American fire power ousted Saddam Hussein, an implacable opponent of Israeli dominance, it has not been able to control current Iraqi politics. If anything, in post-Saddam, Shia centred Iraq, the ruling elite appears to be more inclined towards Tehran.

This is not something that neither Israel nor the US bargained for. Their determined drive to overthrow Syria's Bashar Al-Assad, in the midst of the Arab uprisings, has also come to nought. Though tens of thousands of people were killed in the six year war, Bashar, aided by the Hezbollah, Iran and Russia refused to yield to terror groups armed by outfits linked to the US and funded by its regional allies. And Iran not only continues to protect its sovereignty but has also succeeded in expanding its influence within WANA in the face of US-Israeli machinations and concerted attempts by the ruling class in Saudi Arabia to isolate her.

What all this shows is that the US-Israel link has not been able to achieve one of its primary goals, namely, enhancing the "security" of Israel. The defeat of this diabolical link in the UN General Assembly on the 21st of December merely underlines this fact. It should embolden all of us to accelerate our struggle for a just world.

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