

Zionism, Militarism, and the Decline of US Power

Review of James Petras' book

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Theme: [Religion](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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James Petras is Binghamton University Professor Emeritus of Sociology. His credentials and achievements are long and impressive as a noted academic figure on the left. A well-respected Latin American expert, and a longtime chronicler of the region's popular struggles.

He's also a prolific author of hundreds of articles and dozens of books, including his latest titled "Zionism, Militarism, and the Decline of US Power" and subject of this review. It follows from his earlier 2006 book: "The Power of Israel in the United States" that documented the Israeli Lobby's enormous influence over US Middle East policy and its destructive effects.

Petras continues the story in his latest book. Asks is Israel good for America, and responds by exposing and critiquing American Zionism. Its powerfully destructive influence. Its stranglehold on US politics, academia, the media, clergy, and over all segments of society voicing dissent. He debunks the notion that the Israeli Lobby is like all others and provides convincing evidence of its influence and veto power over war and peace, trade and investment, multi-billion dollar arms sales, and all Middle East policy issues under Democrat and Republican administrations alike.

Every Petras book is important. So is this one at a time the most powerful Washington Lobby is assured that a new administration will continue and expand the current "Global Wars on Terrorism." Petras explains the dangers. The current disastrous foreign adventurism. America's economic decline as a result, and the calamitous global fallout overall. High-level officials won't read this book, but they should. To realize the dangers of their destructive policies. How they threaten the republic's survival and are heading the nation for insolvency and ruin.

Part I – Zionism and US Militarism

How Zionist Power Promotes US Middle East Wars

Pretexts for invading and occupying Iraq went from:

- WMDs;
- to removing a dangerous dictator;
- to establishing democracy in the Arab world;
- to preventing a civil war;

- to needing a colonial military victory to retain our global superpower status;
- to reassuring regional regimes they can rely on us for protection; and
- to proving America can fight and defeat “terrorism.”

However, the longer the conflict continues (as well as the Afghan one), the less credibility any argument holds. The more likely an occupied people will grow more restive and reassertive. A similar likelihood that popular resistance will grow throughout the Middle East, Eurasia and elsewhere. The greater the economic and political cost. The less able a depleted military will be able to sustain foreign wars, and less willing the US public will put up with them. Yet they continue, and explanations why crop up as follows:

(A) A War for Oil with arguments ranging from:

- (1) Big Oil wanted it;
- (2) the White House acted reflexively on its behalf; to
- (3) the urgency to secure the region’s oil that Saddam Hussein threatened.

Petras responds that these explanations “fail several empirical tests:”

- (1) Big Oil opposed the war and wants peace and stability instead;
- (2) the oil giants tried to establish economic ties with Iraq before the invasion; they want and are denied the same arrangement with Iran and all other oil producing countries;
- (3) they prefer gaining new markets and business economically and by building good relationships with host countries; not a single Big Oil CEO favored war and occupation; and
- (4) “windfall profits” haven’t materialized as benefits accruing from occupation; lucrative contracts to develop Iraqi oil aren’t arranged; and the country is too violent to warrant serious investments to do it, except in the Kurdish north.

Still, war was declared. The occupation continues. The political and economic costs are enormous. Big Oil has been a loser, not a winner, and the evidence shows that the powerful Israeli Lobby trumped any opposition the oil giants could pose to match it.

Petras refers to the Zionist Power Configuration (ZPT). Its influence over the administration and Congress. Its tentacles spanning the country at the grassroots. Its control of the media, academia, the clergy, and important professional elements in the population. Its “slavish obedience to official Israeli policy” even when US interests are harmed. Its threat to US democratic freedoms, and the fact that anyone daring to confront Israeli policy becomes a target to be intimidated, blackmailed, smeared, pressured, and removed from positions of authority.

(B) the National Security Argument that breaks down as easily as a war for Big Oil. At its height, Iraq was a modestly strong regional power, but never a match for America or a nuclear-powered Israel. Following the 1980s war with Iran; the 1991 Gulf war; 12 years of punishing sanctions; repeated bombings in the 1990s; the patrolled no-fly zone and protected Kurdish north; and the depleted state of Iraq’s military, the nation was in no

position for conflict with any of its neighbors let alone with the world's only superpower. "Saddam Hussein was clearly not a threat."

Neither is Iran the way Israel, its Lobby, the administration, and most members of Congress portray it in an effort to push America into another disastrous war that will only benefit Israel in the short term. Its interests were key in influencing the Iraq war. Economic sanctions and the Gulf war preceding it. For the purpose of removing a regional rival. Eliminating the Palestinians' major source of support, and solidifying the Jewish state as the Middle East's leading power. Iran remains the main obstacle. Followed by Syria, Hezbollah in South Lebanon and the Hamas government in Gaza.

Israel and its Lobby want sequential wars to enhance its power by eliminating them all. Thus far, Congress and the administration have gone along. Saddam's Ba'athist regime is no longer a threat, but Iraq remains embroiled in turmoil with no end of conflict in sight. Many hundreds of billions have been spent containing it with little to show for the effort and expense, yet Israeli supporters want war with Iran and ignore the unimaginable fallout if it comes.

Nonetheless, most of official Washington and plenty of media disinformation back one. Starting off with tighter sanctions. A possible partial or full blockade. The idea being to harm the Islamic Republic. Then attack it in a weakened state. That's the plan. Will it happen? Perhaps if ZPC power prevails. But not if high-level Pentagon and others in Washington win out. They know the risks of inflaming the entire Muslim world. The unlikely possibility of regime change by war. The immense disruption to the region through retaliation, blocked oil shipments and skyrocketing prices, and how these factors will affect a world economy already reeling from the strains of a financial crisis.

Nonetheless, ZPC influence is considerable and can't be underestimated. It's "exercised directly on political, academic, and cultural decision makers to make sure their policies back pro-Israel, pro-Zionist interests." High-level administration officials represent it. People like Eliot Abrams, special National Security Council Middle East/North Africa "Global Democracy Strategy" advisor and DHS director Michael Chertoff.

Indirect ZPC power is exerted by:

- "parlaying influence over a small group of Congressmen into a large majority;" also winning over the leadership of both parties and having them publicly pledge allegiance to Israel;
- enhancing power by focusing on single issues – like denouncing prominent Israeli critics and assuring their views won't prevail or even be heard; removing them from Congress and other posts; figures like Cynthia McKinney twice from the House and Norman Finkelstein from the DePaul University faculty;
- publicizing the successful punishing of critics to deter others;
- employing mutually re-enforcing public and private sphere multiple resources like large-scale electoral financing and influencing donors not to contribute to Israeli critics; and
- using powerful, effective, one-sided propaganda to demonize Arabs, especially Palestinians and critics; instead portray Israel as a "democratic fortress surrounded by hostile authoritarian governments;" also having the media on board reinforcing these views.

What precisely is the ZPC or Israeli Lobby? It's unlike any other in power. The breadth of its base, and the only one with no opposition. Representing less than 1% of the population (elites only), it consists of "a multiplicity of highly organized, well-financed and centrally-directed structures throughout the US." It includes scores of political action committees. A dozen or more think tanks, and the "52 major American Jewish organizations grouped under the umbrella listing 'Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (CPMAJO).'" AIPAC, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) are among them at the "national Executive-Congressional lobbying levels."

As or more important are local Jewish community federations and organizations throughout the country. In them are activist professionals – doctors, lawyers, accountants, small business leaders, academics, the clergy and many others who promote Israeli interests, denounce critics, and work to assure their voices aren't heard or are dimmed. On-campus pro-Israeli student organizations are also enlisted to spy on professors. Smear critical ones, and work to pressure universities to fire them.

The ZPC "octopus" reaches everywhere – "far beyond the traditional centers of big city power and national politics....into remote towns and cultural spheres" across the country. With powerful mass media backing, its influence is enormous, and only the brave dare opposes it. Yet they do, and their numbers are growing in spite of the risks.

The Israeli Lobby "is at or near the peak of its political power" – at all levels of government and through the mass media. Yet it's vulnerable nonetheless – because of the extent of its crimes. The defrauding of the American public. For forcing the country into two disastrous wars against Iraq and Afghanistan. Their enormous cost in dollars, lost lives, vast destruction, and mass human misery, and their showing US (and Israeli) democracy to be sheer fantasy.

High Pentagon officials are also angered for being led into "an unprecedented state of disgrace and demoralization, with thousands of officers tendering their early retirement, thousands of troops going AWOL, and an increasing number of retired senior officers expressing outrage" and wanting an end to clearly failed policies.

Nonetheless, the task facing critics is daunting, and consider the public record documentation of the relentless campaign for war against Iraq. In its run-up, "leading pro-Israel Jewish organizations produced approximately 8800 pieces of pro-Iraq war propaganda and circulated them to all its member organizations, every Congressperson, and every leading member of the executive branch, with follow-ups by local activists and an army of Washington lobbyists (150 from AIPAC alone) plus several hundred full-time activists from local and regional offices."

A 2002 – 2007 Financial Times survey (the leading Anglo-American business publication) of 1872 op-eds, editorials and letters contained "not a single (item) by any spokesperson or representative of a major (or minor) oil company calling for the invasion and occupation of Iraq or the bombing of Iran."

In contrast, the one-sided Daily Alert digest of pro-Israeli and Middle East propaganda (from 2004 through September 2007) published 960 issues with on average six daily articles calling for an immediate or near-term preemptive US and/or Israeli attack on Iran. Tightened economic sanctions also plus divestment and boycotts of Iranian products.

During the same period, the Financial Times (in 1053 issues) published no Big Oil op-eds, commentaries or letters advocating war or harsh measures against Iran. Quite the opposite. Large and smaller oil companies want peace and stability everywhere and the right to negotiate deals with all oil-producing states, including Iran. They also fear conflict will disrupt business. Damage or destroy their installations, and undermine transport routes and shipping lanes from wellheads to market destinations.

Yet conflict continues. More may be ahead under the current or next administration, and nothing is being done to address the core Middle East issue – resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict equitably. Short of that, no regional peace is possible nor can Israel survive even nominally democratic. Yet Israeli Lobby influence thwarts every peace initiative, and consider three recent ones:

- the bipartisan dismissal of a statement sent George Bush and Secretary Rice from former top political officials calling for Israel to abide by UN Resolutions 242, 338 and other conflict-resolving initiatives;

- Tony Blair’s “Quartet Peace-Making Mission” has been a total flop due to Israeli intransigence; and

- the November Annapolis, MD peace conference proved just as fruitless because Israel wants conflict, not resolution.

Key for Israeli officials is total Palestinian subjugation. Weakening, isolating and destroying Iran. Emerging as the region’s unchallengeable power, and tolerating no opposition to its aims. They represent “a clear and present danger to” America’s freedoms, already seriously eroded and heading south unless reversed.

Yet there’s hope in the form of “rising anger and hostility in America against the ZPC, against its arrogant authoritarian communal attacks on our democratic values, to say nothing about our national interests” – grievously harmed by supporting Israel’s. An eventual backlash is coming because things that can’t go on forever, won’t.

The political and economic costs are enormous and ahead will come down to Chalmers Johnson’s conclusion in his two most recent books. That America is plagued with the same dynamic that doomed past empires unwilling to change: “isolation, overstretch, the uniting of local and global forces opposed to imperialism, and in the end bankruptcy” combined with authoritarian rule and the loss of personal freedom. Supporting a tiny Middle East state with interests harming our own is hastening that outcome. It’s high time this stops, but so far it’s just wishful thinking.

War On Iran – The American Military v. the Israel Firsters

Israeli interests and its supportive Lobby have pitted Congress and administration officials against some top Pentagon commanders – irate over Iraq and opposed to more conflict against Iran. Which side will prevail isn’t sure, but civilian militarists neutralized their critics. Marginalized, silenced or removed mid and high-ranking officers. Men like Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Peter Pace. Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki. CENTCOM commander Admiral William Fallon. General John Abizaid for opposing the Bush administration’s “surge.” General Ricardo Sanchez for calling Iraq “a nightmare with no end in sight,” and many others throughout an officer corp racked by half their numbers not re-

enlisting. Career officers fed up, wanting out and leaving. Further depleting an already weakened military.

Nonetheless, the Lobby remains dominant even after losing key pro-Israel administration officials through forced or voluntary departures. Like Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, Larry Franklin, Lewis “Scooter” Libby, Abram Shulsky, David Wurmser, many lesser or unknown figures, and even Colin Powell who in February 2001 said: Saddam “has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors” and thus poses no threat.

On February 5, 2003, he then disgraced himself before the UN Security Council by lying about Iraqi WMDs and “involvement in terrorism” and having CIA chief George Tenet and UN Ambassador (at the time) John Negroponte as visible props behind him for credibility. An episode he’ll never live down nor should anyone let him.

Setbacks notwithstanding and the Bush administration’s tenure nearly over, the Lobby remains supremely confident and empowered. It steamrolls opposition and neutralized the peace movement as well. Now diffused, misdirected, and supporting pro-war Democrats instead of taking to the streets, demanding an end to the Iraq occupation, no confrontation with Iran, and a dramatic change in course in Washington they want but won’t fight for.

Even connecting with anti-war Pentagon officials would help as well as key fundamental issues between them and the Lobby:

- the extent of the Iranian threat: none according to the IAEA; and evidence shows Iran is complying with NPT provisions unlike Israel that’s a nuclear outlaw;

- Iran’s uranium enrichment program: it’s lawful and poses no “existential threat” as Israel claims; intelligence and US military estimates are that at the earliest Iran might be able to produce a low-yield weapon by 2010 – 2015 if it wishes to; hardly a threat to Israel’s nuclear arsenal and sophisticated delivery systems able to devastate any country in the region; none pose a threat to Israel or will in the foreseeable future;

- Iran supplying arms to the Iraqi resistance: the Pentagon and CENTCOM repeatedly deny it; nonetheless, Israel and its Lobby claim it and the dominant media go along; and

- consequences of attacking Iran: retaliation is certain; Israel will be harmed; so will US Iraqi forces; the Strait of Hormuz may be blocked through which up to one-third of Middle East oil passes and 20% of world production of 88 million barrels; and Iranian “ sleeper cells” may be activated around the world for “big impact” terror missions.

None of this deters Israel, its Lobby and their policy of “no dialog, no diplomacy, and a blockade, weakened economy, ripe for Anglo-French-American bombing.” They ignore a frequent criticism about having no “exit strategy” because they want the US to invade, occupy, colonize, build permanent bases, and wage unending “Global Wars on Terrorism” for total victory and dominance – of the region and beyond. So far, the Pentagon is their only effective opposition along with scattered former Washington officials like Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter, Henry Kissinger, Jim Baker and the president’s father. Figures rarely given air time or op-ed space to voice these views. Short of that and mass grassroots activism, the possibility of an unthinkable Iran attack can’t be discounted.

Burying the National Intelligence Estimate

In December 2007, the US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) reported that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003 (with no evidence one ever existed) and has none of these weapons in its arsenal. The Bush administration, Israel, and its Lobby dismissed the report calling it an Iranian ploy to buy time. The White House knew its findings months in advance. No doubt shared them with Israel, and effectively diffused them to remove an obstacle to new aggression. AIPAC, in fact, twisted NIE's findings by arguing they bolster the case for confrontation because the absence of a nuclearized Iran should support the case for greater pressure on the country.

With plenty of media support, the Lobby effectively buried the NIE report and refocused attention on "Iran's nuclear program still (being) a threat," and who can counteract it when no opposition voices get air time or op-ed space in key mainstream broadsheets. Nonetheless, the intelligence report has credibility and "made liars of the White House and Congressional Democrats and the Presidents of the Major American Jewish Organizations who 'knew' Iran had a nuclear weapons program" no one can find a trace of.

It shows that the nuclear issue is a ruse. Israel wants unchallengeable regional dominance, and Iran is its major rival. Remove it and lesser ones remain with no worry about the Islamic Republic intervening against further Palestinian oppression, displacement and isolation, and Israel's other imperial aims. With billions from Washington, worldwide backing or indifference, and the power of their Lobby to win support and intimidate opposition.

The drumbeat for war continues. Yet it's quieted somewhat following the August Caucasus crisis with Russia now a reinvented evil empire opponent in a new Cold War and Great Game confrontation for control of Eurasia's vast resources, including those in the Middle East.

Iran, however, hasn't gone away, and with General David Petraeus now CENTCOM chief, the Bush administration, Israel, and the Lobby have their man in charge of going in whatever direction they send him. Obediently and willingly to further his own political ambitions that got him this far despite his less than stellar record. More on the general below.

Provocations as Pretexts for Imperial Wars – From Pearl Harbor to 9/11

Despots need no pretexts for war. Imperialist democracies have to invent them to convince the public to go along. In 1916, Woodrow Wilson was reelected on a promise that "He Kept Us Out of War." WW I, that is, that began in 1914.

Unknown to the public, Wilson had imperialist designs. He needed the war to advance them, and established the Committee on Public Information under George Creel. A government propaganda initiative that in six months turned a pacifist nation into raving German haters and got Congress (overwhelmingly) to declare war on Germany on April 17.

The effort also showed corporations how effective propaganda can be. It launched the public relations industry. All the mind manipulating methods that followed, and it taught business how to market their products, denigrate unions, and today keep people glued to TV screens, influenced by hyper-commercialism and bread and circuses to want all the things they don't need and think less about essentials like clean air and water, safe food, and government providing everyone with vital services like health care and education.

Wilson's war led to America's unchallengeable ascendancy after WW II. The war Roosevelt

wanted and got as did his successors to the present time and to be continued under the next administration. Petras explains that “US presidents have routinely created circumstances, fabricated incidents and acted in complicity with their enemies” to convince the public to be “receptive to war.”

WW I and the major imperial wars to the present needed “a provocation, a pretext, and systematic, high-intensity mass media propaganda to mobilize the masses for war.” Manipulated to accept it by “an army of academics, journalists, mass media pundits and experts.” Well rewarded for their complicity.

Japan’s rulers didn’t want war with America. FDR goaded them into attacking through multi-step harassment and embargo provocations. Acts of war leading up to December 7, 1941. An effort to foment an attack by selling arms to Tokyo’s enemies. Denying Japan strategic resources and port access, and imposing a damaging embargo on the country.

It worked. Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. US cable documentation showed Washington knew it was coming. They tracked the fleet across the Pacific, but officials gave no warning to Admiral HE Kimmel in charge of Pearl Harbor’s defense. Crucial intelligence reports were withheld to let the attack proceed unimpeded to mobilize public anger and give FDR his war. Think of the similarity between then and 2001.

At its conclusion, America was triumphant, but its conquest of Asia incomplete. Truman’s dilemma – “how to consolidate US imperial supremacy in the Pacific at a time of growing nationalist and communist upheavals” in spite of a war-weary public wanting peace, demobilization, and normalcy.

Again, a provocation worked. Mass propaganda followed. The great “red” menace was fabricated. Hawkish collaborators took over unions and civic organizations. McCarthyism emerged. Peace and anti-war organizations were targeted. Many thousands lost jobs. Hundreds jailed, and hundreds more blacklisted. All under Harry Truman now reinvented as one of our great past presidents. Point of fact – he was a war criminal.

He chose the Korean peninsula. Lawlessly intervened in the country’s civil war because the wrong side was winning, and that outcome couldn’t be tolerated. The war destroyed the North. Killed millions of Koreans. Shattered millions of more lives on both sides. Left the country divided, and gave Washington a permanent foothold in the South with bases it retains to this day. The empire was on a roll. It was just the beginning.

Vietnam was next, and things began early in 1954. Bare months after the July 27, 1953 Korean armistice. Washington backed their corrupt puppet in the South. Ngo Dinh Diem, imported from New Jersey for the job. Most Vietnamese supported Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi and his national liberation and anti-imperialist government. An intolerable situation for Washington that had to be stopped.

War was for two strategic reasons:

- to establish client regimes and military bases in East and South Asia to encircle China – in Japan, Korea, Indochina, the Philippines, and elsewhere; and
- to destroy opposition Southeast Asian governments and movements – in N. Vietnam, all Indochina, Indonesia, and elsewhere if they arose.

In all, to solidify America's hold in East Asia. Install or consolidate client regimes. Build more military bases. Establish opportunities for US business. Privatize raw material sectors, and as much else as possible.

Doing it meant removing opposition regimes. Ho in Hanoi. Sukarno in Indonesia, and hundreds of thousands of anti-imperialist movements, trade unionists, communists, peasants and others seen as threats to US ambitions. Covert attacks against N. Vietnam began in 1961. Then the fabricated Gulf of Tonkin Incident led to full-scale war. The country decimated. Millions of deaths in the region for a war America lost, but Southeast Asians and 58,000 US service men and their families paid for.

Ronald Reagan pursued proxy wars in Central America and elsewhere until GHW Bush attacked Panama. Deposed Manuel Noriega. Tricked Saddam into invading Kuwait. Won a quick victory and declared: "By God, we've licked the Vietnam Syndrome" – meaning: restraints are removed and America is free to invent pretexts to attack anyone.

September 11, 2001 gave Bush administration militarists their opportunity to pursue new Middle East/Central Asian conquests. In spite of no credible threat in either region. Solution – invent one. "...some catastrophic and catalyzing event, like a new Pearl Harbor" the way Project for a New American Century planners envisioned it their 2000 Rebuilding America's Defenses document.

Afghanistan was first in October 2001. It was planned many months in advance. Long before 9/11. Iraq followed in March 2003. Also planned well in advance and awaiting a pretext to launch – 9/11, non-existent WMDs, and a made-to-order despot like Saddam made it easy. Especially because Israel wanted war. Pushed hard for it, and Bush administration hard-liners obliged.

When the opportunity arose, Israel and its Lobby mobilized a phalanx of ideologues, academics, Christian Right clergy and spokespeople, writers, journalists, pundits, and the entire mass media for one common purpose. Round-the-clock propaganda to convince the public about a dangerous enemy. Scare them enough to want him removed. Turn them into "irrational, chauvinist militarists," and get them to sacrifice their freedoms for a "Global War on Terrorism" that, according to Dick Cheney, "won't end in our lifetime." The nation has been at war ever since. No end is in sight. The next president promises no change. Perhaps new wars on new fronts. And the country and public continue to pay dearly for their leaders' crimes and deceit.

Israel's and its Lobby's as well. A small group of extremists. Behind closed doors. Deceiving the public. Creating a cauldron and scorched earth in Iraq and Afghanistan. Erasing two countries. Giving Israel free reign to attack South Lebanon. Syria on the pretext of a non-existent nuclear site. The endless oppression, occupation, displacement, and isolation of Palestinians while the world looks on dismissively. Plus the stoking of tensions for more wars so Israel and America can solidify their positions as unchallengeable imperial powers. Israel in the Middle East. America everywhere.

Part II – Embracing the Israeli Modus Operandi of Endless War

The Palestinian Sewage Disaster: The Political Ecology of the US/Israeli Responsibility in Microcosm

In the broader scheme of things, what happened on March 26, 2007 in Northern Gaza was one incident. Barely noticed outside the region, among so many others attracting more attention. It was when a river of raw sewage and debris escaped from a collapsed earthen embankment. Flooded a refugee camp. Drove 3000 Palestinians from their homes. Killed five, injured 25 and destroyed scores of houses.

Israeli propagandists blamed Palestinians for what Israel caused. Years of neglect. A policy of undermining public maintenance projects, including sewage treatment plants and cesspools. Massively bombing Gaza in summer 2006. Destroying roads, bridges, sewage treatment facilities, water purification ones, and the Territory's only electrical power plant.

Israel bombs, kills, marauds, invades, occupies, destroys, and Palestinians are blamed. Rogues are rewarded. Victims demonized. A raw sewage flood one day. Aerial bombardment the next. Mass arrests, incarcerations, torture as official policy, and an agenda of conflict over peace to assure Israel is the dominant regional state. No challengers exist, and world support lets this policy go on unimpeded.

General Petraeus – From Surge to Purge to Dirge

Last April, Defense Secretary Robert Gates nominated General David Petraeus to replace Admiral William Fallon as CENTCOM commander. The reason – Fallon disagreed sharply with the administration's Middle East policy. Why Petraeus? He's fully on board to further his own military and political ambitions. On September 16, he took over putting him in charge of US military operations in 27 Eurasian countries (up to Russian/Chinese borders), including the Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and vital waterways like the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.

Why Petraeus? A man Admiral Fallon openly criticized for shamelessly supporting Israel in northern Iraq and the Bush "Know Nothings" in charge of Iraq and engaging Iran. Fallon went further as well about a man he clearly dislikes whose main skill is "brown-nosing." As for his theory and strategy in defeating the Iraqi resistance, he was "a disastrous failure," but that was predictable given his "phony success in Northern (Kurdish) Iraq."

The region's relative stability "has nothing to do with (his) counterinsurgency theories" and more because of Kurdish "independence" and "separatism." He bought off local militias and accomplished there what can't be duplicated in the rest of the country. The "surge" was a ruse and achieved nothing but headlines about its effectiveness. Phony and untrue. The reduction in violence is mainly because some elements were bought off and that Muqtada al Sadr agreed to a ceasefire that may prove only temporary.

Then there's the matter of a competent Iraqi army in a country where most volunteers want a pay check but have little appetite to fight. With rampant unemployment, hunger, deprivation, and the country destroyed, what choice do they have. Nonetheless, many desert after enlisting. Refuse to attack fellow Iraqis, and in some cases join them against a brutal occupation promising no end.

The "Petraeus Manual" prioritizes "security and task sharing as a means of empowering civilians and prompting national reconciliation." Neither is achievable with thousands of Iraqis still dying. Attacks against US troops continuing, and all that can be said for Petraeus' Multi-National Force – Iraq tenure is that "empowered people (the locals) have protected and supported insurgents and oppose the US occupation and its puppet regime." His goal of

“national reconciliation” was a total failure and won’t change until the occupation ends.

He also followed the same failed Vietnamese strategy producing widespread civilian casualties. Bombing densely populated areas. Mass-arresting suspected local leaders. Targeted assassinations. Wncircling entire neighborhoods. Punishing suffering Iraqis and engendering deep hostility, and destroying the country to save it the way it was tried in Vietnam and failed.

Even Petraeus understands that and said “There is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq, to the insurgency.” So prioritizing military victory is only explainable by his desire to please the administration and further his own military and political ambitions.

He’s a master of “double speak” and last April lied to Congress and the public in fabricating accounts of progress. He claimed the war was being won. Progress being made. Iraq being stabilized. Peace around the corner, and then on to more war against Iran. He was the first general to claim Iranian weapons were blowing up US armored carriers and Iranian agents training the Iraqi resistance.

He clearly played up to Bush administration neocons and the Israel Lobby in supporting an attack against Iran. They “found their stooge” in the general, and he took full advantage at the same time the puppet Iraqi government was praising Tehran for helping to stabilize the country and invited President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Baghdad to sign trade agreements. Petraeus now commands all of Eurasia at a time Russia may now be targeted, and if so, the stakes are far greater and so are the risks.

Part III – Militarism and the Decline of US Power

Military-Driven Over Market-Driven Empire Building (1950 – 2008)

From the middle of the 19th century to especially post-WW II, Petras distinguishes between two forms of empire building: by military conquests or through “large-scale, long-term economic penetration via a combination of investments, loans, credits and trade in which market power and superiority (greater productivity) in the means of production led to....a virtual empire.”

European militarism declined after WW II. America’s was just beginning as it followed a military-based empire building approach over the alternative. Based on foreign wars, proxy ones, encircling the world with bases, and establishing a military-industrial complex to advance it. Today exceeding \$1 trillion annually with all spending categories included. Plus multi-billions more in secret off-the-books budgets. Overall, a reckless agenda for shorter term gains at the expense of long-term decline, bankruptcy, despotism and ruin.

As the US expanded its war-making capacity, Western Europe, Japan, and more recently China and Russia chose to develop their economic potential both at the public and private levels. The results were predictable. America prospered through the 1960s before competitors grew more formidable. Since then, “European and Japanese (and now Chinese and Russian) market-based empire building moved with greater dynamism from domestic to export-led growth and began to challenge US predominance in a multiplicity of productive sectors.” The trend continues with EU and BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) emerging as formidable competitors as US supremacy declines.

Why so? The off-shoring of US manufacturing. Growing a predominantly service economy.

Substituting low wages for higher ones. Reducing social benefits. Becoming heavily dependent on speculative finance. Financialization or Frankenstein finance. Letting Wall Street and big banks decide what's best for the country and failing badly. Diverting wealth to the rich and super-rich at the expense of 80% or more of the public. Destroying unions and high-paying jobs. Running up massive trade and current account deficits. Unrepayable national debt as well, and now reeling under a financial crisis. Not getting a grasp on it, and not knowing when or how it will end or what condition the country will be in when it does. Or if it will.

Readying the nation for martial law if things get bad enough and a popular revolt erupts. Practicing for it in real time in Denver, St. Paul and New Orleans. Ready for more foreign wars under a new administration and even one or more before the current one ends. Trying to disprove the notion that things that can't go on forever, won't. Having to learn the hard way that they're dead wrong after eight failed years under George Bush taught both parties nothing. Hoping the public will decide that change must percolate up. Never does it flow the other way.

Petras reviews market v. military empire building approaches post-WW II. Its early years. Then in the 1980s under Reagan. The 1990s Clinton years, and after 2000 under George Bush. The 2002 - 2008 40% decline of the dollar alone provides strong evidence of America's competitive decline that may accelerate under the current economic crisis or in its wake. In contrast, China, India, Russia, European, Asian and Latin American states are developing their economies. Expanding business relationships around the world at the expense of America. Likely this trend will continue as the US grows more militaristic and declines under the weight of maintaining it.

Partnering with Israel makes it worse. Advancing the Jewish state's agenda at the expense of our own. Allowing pro-Israeli extremists to run foreign policy. Seeing no difference under Democrats or Republicans. Promising more of the same in 2009. Advancing or prolonging current conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia. Planning new ones in Eurasia. Proxy ones in Latin America or wherever US and Israeli interests are at stake.

Ignoring the historical record that "imperial wars destroy the productive forces and social networks of targeted countries." Eat the homeland's seed corn as well. Let market-driven empires gain advantage through productive alliances. Advantage them to grow strategic industries. Arrange favorable trade and monetary agreements. Plus policies of building productive forces, not destroying them or their nations' social fabric. That lesson is lost on US militarists or the broader defense establishment that profits hugely at the expense of the remaining economy and the public.

Petras goes even further saying that "Militarist imperialism has weakened the entire economic fabric of the US empire without any compensatory gains on the military side." Since WW II, GHW Bush waged the only two successful conflicts. Both against weak opponents, and they were quick and cheap. In contrast, Korea and Vietnam were quagmires. So are Iraq and Afghanistan today. Hopeless and lost, yet doomed to continue for years with unconscionable further loss of lives. Continued destruction, and hundreds more wasted billions so badly needed at home for productive investment and desperately needed social services being cut not increased.

The result, especially under George Bush: Militarism writ large. Costly military adventurism. "Catastrophic economic costs." Pushing the nation toward insolvency. Declining

economically as competitors advance. Having no one around with enough foresight so see the folly. So addicted to wars it doesn't matter if some do. Like a junkie too far gone to change. Knowing a bad ending awaits, yet heading full steam toward it. Leaving Petras to foresee two possible outcomes – “a new rabidly nationalist authoritarian regime, or the re-birth of a republic based on the reconstruction of a productive economy centered on the domestic market and social priorities....” Based on the current state and bipartisan campaign rhetoric, there's faint hope for the latter.

US Militarism and the Expanding Israeli Agenda

With key allies in high places in both parties, the Israeli Lobby consistently “steamroll(s) domestic opposition in securing unconditional US backing for Israel's position in the Middle East.” Exhibit A – Iraq.

Nonetheless, some signs of critical public scrutiny have emerged, and one example is from the Council of Gulf Cooperation. It's conservative, pro-US and composed of Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Its members also produce 40% of world oil. Have strong business ties to the US (and elsewhere) and are large purchasers of American military hardware.

In late March 2007, the Council called for diplomatic dialogue with Iran, not confrontation or sanctions. Big Oil shares this view. So do many European states and Turkey. Others outside the region as well. Russia, China and Venezuela prominently. Israel is opposed and vetoed any chance for a changed policy. It highlights the divergent interests of Israel and America compared to moderate Arab states and most other countries. Stability over Washington and Tel Aviv's “radical militarist destabilizing policies.” Both countries are structurally incapable of pursuing peace over conflict. It assures “disastrous military adventures” ahead and the terrible toll from their fallout.

Yet what harms America helps Israel, at least in the short run. Iraq has been a great success. Saddam was overthrown. A key Palestinian backer removed. Iraq destroyed. Israel's regional dominance increased. It's unimpeded in colonizing and devastating Palestine. It can now pursue its next key objective to eliminate Iran as a regional rival. Regime change if possible or at least a weakened state so it doesn't matter. Then on to Syria and consolidating control over Lebanon, especially in the water-rich South.

Petras states: “....Democratic and Republican candidates (and all key members of Congress have) pledged to unconditionally support Israeli interests, specific pledges to the ZPC-AIPAC included.” Not a brave soul in sight to challenge their reckless agenda or acknowledge European polls that show large majorities call Israel the most threatening and negative country in the world. Over Iran, North Korea and Syria. All the more so because of its stranglehold over US foreign policy. And in the face of disastrous regional wars. Yet more may be planned and America may willingly go along. Against Iran, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon and/or Hamas in Gaza.

Outside the region as well, especially against opposition forces in Pakistan and an accelerated effort in Somalia. Perhaps in Latin America also against Venezuela and Bolivia even though countries that far removed are outside of Israel's sphere of influence. But it doesn't deter the Jewish state from aiding America as it did in arming and training Georgians to attack South Ossetia and using its agents around the world for similar nefarious activities. It's also the world's fourth largest arms supplier, ahead of the UK, and has the world's fourth

most powerful military.

Petras sees a “Judeo-centric view of the world” as deadly. Believing “what’s good for the Jews (means) providing unconditional support to an aggressive colonial state (Israel)....” Proving that to be “a formula for global disaster.” Also what just a small minority of Jews believe in. Most of them have no ideological ties to Israel nor do they support its imperial wars or America funding them. No matter. They’re marginalized and ignored. “Where will it take us? When will it end?”

Part IV – Challenging the Lobby

American Jews on War and Peace – What the Polls Do and Don’t Tell Us

Independent polls and a recent American Jewish Committee (AJC) one show most Jewish Americans have different views on the Iraq war and attacking Iran than do leaders of major American Jewish organizations. Yet this has no impact on the administration, Congress or the dominant media. Why so?

One explanation is that most American Jews are pro-Israel and (mistakenly) “believe Democrats will make the right decisions on the war in Iraq” in spite of clear evidence they won’t. Further, 82% of them think that “the goal of the Arabs is not the return of occupied territories but rather the destruction of Israel, (and a majority say) Israel and its Arab neighbors (won’t) settle their differences and live in peace.” Conclusion – right or wrong, most Jews identify with Israel, support the Jewish state, and retain ingrained anti-Arab prejudices.

Israeli public opinion also undermines progressive American Jewish anti-war views as evidenced in a recent Haaretz report. It cites a civil rights poll showing that “Israel has reached new heights of racism....” Findings in it cite:

- a 26% rise in anti-Arab incidents;
- double the number of Israeli Jews expressing hatred of Arabs;
- half of them opposing equal rights for them; and
- three-fourths of young Jews believing Arabs are “unclean,” according to a Haifa University study.

These and other factors along with identifying with Israel help explain why Jewish Americans (in spite of their views) won’t criticize leaders of reactionary Jewish organizations, making it all the easier for them to influence favorable congressional and administration policies toward Israel.

Why Condemning Israel and the Zionist Lobby is So Important

First some misguided beliefs:

- that the ZPC is just another lobby;
- that other nations and their leaders commit equally violent crimes and abuses;
- that criticizing Israel is anti-Semitic;

- that Israel is a democracy and the only one in the region;
- the uniqueness of Jewish suffering and the Holocaust as exclusively affecting Jews; and
- that Israel/Palestine discussion should be balanced – in complete denial of a powerful oppressive state v. a near-defenseless and persecuted people – on their own and with virtually no outside help.

Now some facts:

- the Israeli Lobby is far and away the most powerful in America;
- criticizing Israel more than other abusive states is important because of its inordinate ability to influence US policy;
- accusation of anti-Semitism is a canard, a non-starter, a way to shift attention from real issues;
- Israel defiles democracy by granting it only to Jews and not even all of them; it disdains the less privileged much the way they're treated in America;
- exploiting the Holocaust as an exclusive Jewish issue defiles the outrage of so many others, including much greater ones; and
- the imbalance between pro-Israeli representation v. hostile or indifferent views about Arabs is pronounced.

Confronting the Israeli Lobby is vital because it plays such “a decisive role (and) world-historic impact on the present and future of world peace and social justice.” Ignore it and consider the peril of America hurtling from wars to greater ones with no end in sight and solidifying tyranny at home.

Consider also some “big questions facing Americans as a result of the power of Israel in the United States:”

- the ZPC wants was; “has played a major role” in influencing them in the past eight years; and is very capable of pushing America into new conflicts regardless of which party in Washington is dominant;
- the big issue is “World Peace or War” and the horror of the latter;
- Israel and its Lobby harm US democracy by stifling “the right to debate, to elect (and) legislate free from coercion;” also to select political candidates strongly opposed to Israeli policies and against providing financial and military support;
- Israeli interests harm our own; further, “never in the history of the US republic or empire has a powerful but tiny minority been able to wield so much influence” over our foreign policy for the benefit of another nation;
- by doing it, the ramifications are staggering: permanent wars; massive deaths; unimaginable human misery and destruction; outrageous and ill-directed amounts of spending; a staggering amount of unrepayable debt; the alienation of the entire Muslim world; growing world indignation overall; and the demise of democracy in America – partly

because of sacrificing homeland interests to serve those of a tiny foreign power.

Petras asks: "What happened to the peace movement? Mass indignation and outrage as well because of harmful policies to everyone and getting worse. America is the only nation where this movement isn't willing to condemn an agenda promoting Middle East wars and the fraudulent "Global War on Terrorism." Its leaders won't denounce the pro-Israeli Lobby's stranglehold over US policy and the overwhelming harm it causes.

It refuses to confront the Democrat party that's no less militant than Republicans. Both are totally subservient to Israeli interests. Their destructive imperial wars. The likelihood of more ahead for a state "whose Supreme Court legalizes political assassinations across national boundaries, torture (as official policy), systematic violations of international law including collective punishment, and a regime which repudiates United Nations resolutions and unilaterally invades and bombs its neighbors and practices military colonist expansionism." America is a "look-alike" state writ large that practices these and similar policies worldwide and justifies the most outrageous acts in the name of "national security."

"Where (and how) will it end," asks Petras. In the depths of tyranny unless good people confront oppressive power and put a stop to "uncontainable humanitarian calamities whose ramifications impact the entire world." Whose fallout may contaminate it beyond repair if we don't.

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