The US-Israeli Cronyism: Strategic Interests and Common Values Boutarfa Hadi Research Laboratory. LECUCRA/ Department of English, Badji Mokhtar-Annaba University, Algeria.

## **Abstract**

The US-Israeli enduring alliance is not only an interest-based one. Even taken at its face value it proved to be exceptional. It has never been impinged by the vicissitudes of the world conjuncture; on the contrary, it is rather ever-growing. It somewhat becomes a sacred principle in the US decision-making institutions to "venerate", not only this special relationship, but also all that is Jewish. Therefore, it is worth noting here that the US-Israeli cronyism is brought to fruition because it has certainly transcended the accustomed economic or political factors. In fact, this typical rapprochement is the result of an array of factors which are intertwined and deeply rooted in the traditions of both states. In this respect, the present paper attempts to scrutinize the US-Israeli special affinity in the new era, and to delve into the real influential factors that are at its origin.

### Résume

Les intérêts ont toujours été les meilleurs facteurs qui établissent et maintiennent les relations entre états. Mais ils resteront précaires et risqueront de se rompre dès que les raisons qui les ont créés perdent leur ampleur, ou carrément disparaissent. En revanche, l'alliance Israélo-Américaine, au lendemain de l'aprèsguerre froide, reste incorruptible, et elle est toujours menée avec la même ferveur et ardeur d'antan. Certes, ces relations, qui sont le fruit de nombreux facteurs, requièrent une analyse approfondie car elles sont pratiquement multidimensionnelles. Elles peuvent être d'ordre idéologique, économique, politique, ou religieux. A cet effet, l'article en question tente d'exhiber la vraie nature de ces liens étroits qui continuent – sans relâche – à lier les Etats-Unis à Israël au détriment des populations indigènes.

Interests have always been the main factor that knits nations together, and the type of any rapprochement between countries generally varies according to the prominence of these very interests. In the western pragmatism, the sustainability of any alliance is closely pertinent to the existing vital interests whose demise inevitably entails the abrupt fall of any strong friendship.

It is worth recalling that in November 1989, the convulsion which shook Eastern Europe came as a challenge to American interests throughout the world. This blustery wind of change did bring about a new conjuncture that blurred the USA itself, and reshuffled all the cards. For instance, Europe that was on the point of the sword during the whole period of the Cold War era, due to both the threat of the Soviet ideology and its military pre-eminence, was relieved of these apprehensions. In American calculations, the long-run peril caused by the whole communist camp has now vanished in that area (Nixon 205). So, America has to orientate the sextant of its policy towards other hot spots. It focuses on the Middle East region for many reasons; it is a delicate zone that engulfs its vital interests, and also where its best ally, Israel, is located.

The collapse of the Old Order is supposed to bring about the end of the usual rivalry between the Great Powers; the spread of peace in many conflict-ridden areas, and the change in world relationships. Yet, in the Middle East, the new era indeed begets a different reality. Albeit many conflagrations are put out all over the world, the status quo ante in this area remains unspoilt. The USA has seemingly reconsidered its position towards wide ranging issues and states: for instance, Germany is reunified thanks to the US' blessing; Iraq, a former US ally, once selected to destabilize Iran, is torn asunder; Yemen, one of the former pro-Soviet regimes, is courted and befriended to be reliable in any emergency in the Gulf area. However, Israel has been an exception. It continues to profit greatly from the US accustomed backing and absolute protection (Kiali 12). Before this state of affairs, one can only wonder about the strength of this tight alliance that has withstood the fever of change, and about the influential factors which are at its origin.

In fact, it has been a basic principle, closely related to American foreign policy, to regard the Jewish state as the most reliable ally, and the "bastion of democracy" in the Middle East. When Israel was proclaimed, in 1948, the USA immediately gave it recognition, and

started a policy of unfailing diplomatic, economic and military support that is still going on. No Congress, no administration has taken policy position at variance with the views held by Israel. The latter has always been the biggest recipient of the US substantial – financial and military – assistance to ensure both its survival and pre-eminence in the area (Parker42-43).

Capitalizing on the physical fragmentation of the Soviet Union, in the early nineties, America manoeuvred to ensure the upper hand in the Middle East that remained the philosophers' stone in the world economic and political competitions. American policy, since then, has somehow been ambivalent, swinging between two distinct and antithetical trends: to closely approach Israel, the chief enemy of the Arab states, and at the same time, to accommodate these very Arab states where the real American interests are and can be at stake. Therefore, American decision-makers assert that only an American presence in the area will guarantee American interests in the Middle East. Henry Kissinger, the former US Secretary of State, was right when he once said, "The Israeli force provides security to Israel only. As for American interests in the Middle East, this force is useless." (Does America...66-69). He clearly offered hints that American presence in the region was a must. Therefore, America embarked on a series of pretexts<sup>1</sup> susceptible to sustain the idea of the Middle Eastern indispensable partner. In this vicious circle, the enduring and unsettled Arab-Israeli conflict remains the best trump card which America continues to exploit for its own interest. It lavishly provides Israel with sophisticated arms to mop up any probable danger that may emanate from its Arab neighbours, because a stronger Israel perfectly guarantees both the sustainability of the status quo, in order to justify the US presence, and the safeguard of the US interests in the region. Thanks to this unconditional support, Israel has become an invincible power in the area. Many a time, the Arabs rose to liberate the Palestinian usurped land, but they came to realize an undeniable reality: Whenever they try to assault Israel, they are also going to war against the USA, either indirectly against advanced American weapons and technology in the hands of Israeli troops; or if Israel were ever about to be defeated, they found themselves in the hostile camp against America (Sofer 22-28).

### The New World Order and the US-Israeli Alliance

The end of bipolarity in the world, by the late eighties, begot the end of the bipolarization of the Middle East, but the USA continued, as usual, to practise its biased policy towards Israel, and privileged it to the detriment of its neighbouring states. Such behaviour can be quite noticeable in any American attempt to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli crisis. Many a time it tried to act as the "honest broker" to convene the belligerents, to propose peace plans, to supervise discussions, to accommodate the influential camps in the Arab world, but procrastination has always been the prevailing leitmotif, and all the negotiations between the warring parties remain dead letters. Desperate people in the area are frustrated by the faking attempts undertaken by America to find a fair and durable settlement. On the ground, they are daily surprised by the US double standard policy. They often think that peace talks would never be a perennial reality unless America is ready to show its bona fides in the handling of the conflict, and to forsake its geared policy (Kiali 14).

The typical US-Israeli alliance stirred the eagerness to scrutinize its nature, to look into its origins and the effective factors that have always strengthened it. By the dawn of the new era, three controversial trends came to broach the issue of this enduring relationship. The first trend asserted that Israel was fully dependent on the USA because it was as an American base in the region, and hence, worthy of being protected. The second tendency saw that it was Israel which had been devising the US Middle Eastern policies thanks to the Jewish lobbies' undue influence on both the US politics and economy. In this case, of course, the USA has "Hobson's choice" in underpinning Israel. It has only to continue to comply with the vision of this trend. It is somehow a forced or guided protection (Halimi 8-9). The third stand claimed that Israel, in the nineties, would no longer be an American strategic asset in the area, and therefore, the USA had to review its policy towards it (Whitcomb 12-16). Nonetheless, nowadays all these viewpoints can be refuted to merely say that the USA alone is able to determine this privileged relationship. Many perceptible factors are indeed at the origin of this close cronyism: religious impulses, ideological, economic and political facts, and also the geopolitical conjuncture of the area itself. Moreover, Israel continues to enjoy the US protection certainly not only owing to the American interests, but also to other strong elements that should be apprehended in this context. If Israel is located in Asia, or in South America, such a relationship will certainly be different, even though we always continue to assert that the USA and Israel, "physically speaking [they] cannot separate." Strong historical and religious links - which date back to the remote history of America itself - bind them for eternity. Furthermore, to rely upon the Israeli role in the area, as an evidence to demonstrate this close rapprochement, one has to evoke the real factors that had allowed the creation of the Jewish state in the Arab area. The Zionist project, for instance, was elaborated and immediately endorsed by the Western Great Powers before the birth of the Soviet Union itself, and also prior to the discovery of oil in the Arab Gulf area (Fieldman 140-142). Israel is regarded as a western extension, in the region of the Middle East, which should be protected. It is worth noting, in this case, that "containment", "preventive and pre-emptive",3 policies, "selective engagement", "Democracy enlargement" – brandished by the different American administrations – are often mentioned as pretexts to tighten the grip on the area, as a whole; but they do not serve as unique evidence to justify America's presence in the area, or to show its privileged alliance with Israel.

In the wake of the second Gulf War, Arab public opinion has often held one of the two following simplistic views regarding this weird rapprochement. First, as the Arabs see, Israel behaves as if it were one of the American states since it constitutes a strategic American base in the region. Second, and here they join the previously mentioned argument, American Congress and society are respectively so dominated by the Jewish lobby, and American Jews – often acting as an invisible government – that the USA finds itself constrained to bend to their wills (145). The Arab stance, here expressed vis-à-vis this American propensity to protect and to favour Israel, can be admitted to some extent. But it needs an in-depth analysis because it neglects some other facts – like religion, historic roots – often claimed by the Americans themselves. In the same vein, a new viewpoint emerged – in the area – in the aftermath of the end of the bipolar world order. It maintained the idea that America, strategically speaking, no longer needed Israel for the protection of its interests. This stance argued that, with the outbreak of the second Gulf War, American pretexts to interfere in the area were altered by new tactics. They were superseded by a spectrum of the new era catchwords susceptible to give room to an American across-the-board interference: For example, democracy, terrorism threat, Weapons of Mass Destruction, the mounting Islamism, to name but a few. Whereas, the incipient American post-Cold War behaviour has revealed that this relationship is much more enhanced than ever before (148).

It is actually premature to say that the US-Israeli relationship is receding. The continuous blind alignment with Israel's arrogant policies is the perfect gauge which indicates the harmonious rapprochement between the two states. "Arabs should understand", cynically said Brzezinski, "[...] it's no wise that the US should press on the weakest [Israel] to concede. Arabs have not the least chance to get a settlement unless they manifest their readiness to accept the Israeli perpetual existence" (Wright 25). The former vice-president Dan Quell, in the George Bush administration, also expressed his view in the same way. He wittily put it this way, "the two states [the USA and Israel] need each other, because the alliance between them is built on two solid pillars: the strategic interests, and the common values. Amity and alliance between them go on for eternity." Moreover, Quell refuted the thesis which argued that the end of the Cold War eroded the symbiotic bonds that had always tied America to Israel since, as he indicated, "these relationships did not come as a result of the Cold War" (26). James Helms, a Republican Senator who pleaded for a continuous and unconditional support for Israel, ascribed the American prosperous situation in the Middle East to the key role played by Israel. He pointed out, in this context, that "Had not Israel existed, the US' position in the Middle East would have been lamentable. We would not know the price we'd spend to protect our interests in the area: as oil and like."(27)

In fact, it is often perceived that the Jewish state is really an active actor that struggles to make the USA change its policies, and adapt them to the Israeli priorities. Nonetheless, albeit Israel strives to strengthen the links of this relationship – via its Jewish lobby, and American Jews – America alone can determine the ceiling of the Israeli policy and manoeuvres (Halimi 10). Stressing the American close commitment to the Jewish state, Q. William, argued that "the USA doesn't spend billions of dollars of military and economic aid to Israel for the sake of moral commitment, or under the constraints of two percent of its population [2% is the total number of American

Jews]. However, there's certainly something more realistic in this pledge...Israel is the most reliable American ally in the region."(12-13).

### The Middle East: A Second Promised Land

If we were to delve into the remote history of the early foundation of the USA, we would find an amalgamation of beliefs closely related to the orientation of America's current policy towards the world in general, and towards Israel, in particular. It would be erroneous to think that the US-Israeli relationship was born with the discovery of the hydrocarbons in the area, and America's proclivity to favour Israel - at the expense of the peoples in the region - is only dictated by these very interests for which the USA attaches great importance. But rather, this alliance stems its roots deeply in the history of both. America, for instance, claims that it is endowed with a special destiny, and hence, there is a close similarity between it and biblical Israel. This divine pre-ordination – as it pretends – has elected it for a special mission in this world. It empowers it to intervene for the sake of the western civilization, and to uplift backward peoples. Lee M. Friedman said that the early settlers "wanted to establish, in America, a theocratic state to restore the behaviour of the historic Jews." (150). Moreover, the concept "to alter peoples and cultures, by other peoples and cultures", through armed incursions and "unnatural" justifications, is the core of historical Israel. On the basis of such a philosophy, Americans embarked on the extermination of the "Red Indians," and discrimination against the African Americans. By the same token, this slogan thrusts them to invade foreign states, and to pledge that they are Israel's protector in the Middle East. For the Pilgrim Fathers, America is none but a reincarnation of Old Israel, and each event they encountered – for instance, their persecution and their emigration to the New World, the westward movement - was regarded as an evidence for such a belief. Jonathan Edwards<sup>4</sup> has evoked the real meaning of Israel in American belief; and, for him, the depiction of Jerusalem as the "City upon the Hill" is America itself that would be the light which soon spreads in any corner of the world. The Pilgrims again saw their arrival in the New World as a landing on the "Promised Land", the same as was Palestine regarded by the Zionists when they considered it as "the final point, a return of the circle into itself, the end of a movement that has shaken Europe and the whole world.". The Manifest Destiny<sup>5</sup> concept also leads to the idea of the absolute self-confidence that "Canaan" land is an elected nation. Such a vision clearly exhibits the real dimension of the Middle East region in American interests. It certainly epitomizes a return to one's origin, to a second "Promised Land" (Katz 31-42).

As it can be noticed from the above facts, the US-Israeli perennial relationship is unique of its own. The factors that have engendered it are so intertwined and solid that a physical dissension is likely impossible. It would be naïve to continue awaiting a probable American deflection from its biased policy; or unduly hoping for an alteration in American position towards Israel, because both states form a "single whole" with a common vision, and facing a common enemy (Davis 18-20).

## Israel's Dimension in the New American Strategy

At the outset of the nineties, two events emerged to somehow orientate the course of history in the Middle East, and to compromise the US vision towards the area, namely the physical shattering of the Soviet Union, and the second Gulf War. Separately or combined, they impacted and, to some extent, diluted the US-Israeli relationship. The first issue compelled America to rethink of its generous assistance to Israel that became a real burden to the nation's economy. The USA saw that such an "effusive" economic and military backing would probably bring about horrendous consequences on American status of the sole remaining superpower. The second event, namely the second Gulf War, also embarrassed America which had promised its Arab coalition members, in the incursion on Iraq, that the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict would be one of its priorities as soon as it quelled Sadam's regime. America, taken at its word, felt that its credibility was at stake. Therefore, it attempted to satisfy the Arab camp by embarking on the peace process to find a durable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. (Aharon 107-108)

Of course, the countdown for the erosion of the privileged Israeli both place and role – in American consideration – has not started yet. No post-Cold War American administration: the Bush Junior, the Clinton, or any other preceding one, has relinquished the protection of Israel which is rather regarded as victim of the Arab aggression

(Friedman 163-167). In America, however, people actually start to be aware of the tremendous US aid to Israel. They are critical to such American lax behaviour (Miller 57-59). "The Great Beast" in the Middle East – to borrow Hamilton's expression to denote restive people – that felt discriminated against, also gradually disapproved of American principles, and became distrustful of its presence in the area. The Arabs saw America's blind alignment with Israel as an insult, and a rift between them and the USA. In fact, only an impartial policy would repair and restore this frustrated confidence. Henry Kissinger, in a Machiavellian assessing statement, somehow summed up the dichotomy between America's action and reaction, by the early nineties. He advised the then leading staff to opt either for the promotion of America's political values, or simply for embracement of typical behaviour which might serve as an example for others to adopt. However, in both cases, he quietly justifies that American interventionism is a necessary evil, and the US' presence outside its boundaries to interfere, to ally, to invade is an integral part of its policy. He noted in this context

[...] the singularities that America has ascribed to itself throughout history have produced two contradictory attitudes towards foreign policy. The first is that America serves its values best by promoting democracy at home, thereby acting as a beacon for the rest of mankind; the second, that America's values impose on it an obligation to crusade for them around the world (Diplomacy18).

Moreover, Kissinger thinks that in the post-Cold War era America is required, more than ever before, to fully perform the appropriate responsibility of the sole remaining superpower. The promotion of the US' values should be adopted as the prominent principle around which its devised policies revolve (qtd in Parker 45-48). Such a vision clearly construes the US-Israeli close friendship, and American presence in the area. Yet, American open assistance to Israel, in the post-Cold War era, prodded people, in the USA, to be more inquisitive. "Why don't we consider Israel an American state?" they ironically reacted, and sometimes they bitterly asked, "Who has imposed this moral duty on the USA to help Israel?" They were even sceptical towards Israel's behaviour, and they often decried its

policies, because it always refused to adapt to the world changes (qtd in Essafir, 24March 1992).

By the dawn of the new era, Brzezinski, as a prominent US strategist, expressed a middle-of-the road standpoint as to the American assistance to the Jewish state. He attracted the US policy-makers' attention to be more rational in their foreign aids, mainly towards Israel. He advisedly warned of the US costly commitment to the protection of this state in the post-Cold War era. He did not call for a square cancellation of America's subsidies to its most favoured Middle Eastern ally, but he was against any lavish assistance that might bring about the US' people reticence. He pointed out, in this respect,

The US aid to Israel soared to US \$77b,[which means] between \$15,000-20,000 for each man, woman, and child in Israel, and this amount by far outnumbers the amount we can afford to our society [...] this has provoked the American people's indignation. Therefore, I think any endeavour made by the US leadership for peace [...] will be supported by the people (Middle East, 3 February, 1992).

American new considerations pertaining to the New World Order kept on arousing a spectrum of controversies. Pros and cons rose in many political and media spheres to fuel the debate over this issue. Once commenting on the US-Israeli common interests, an American analyst wrote "What is as alternatives by Israel, related to its future, is regarded as secondary problems by America. Israel [...] seeks to ensure its security by creating buffer zones when it invades the neighbouring states, and not to expand for the sake of annexing new areas." (Muravchik 18-19). It was a manifest support to the Jewish state to justify its land confiscation policy. Anthony Lewis enriched the debate. He summed up the misunderstanding that sometimes "flared up" between the USA and Israel over the latter's intransigence. He argued that "the USA is not obliged to ensure to Israel what is not in the behalf of America. We don't want to use our assistance in a way susceptible to compromise the peace process; peace indeed is an opportunity to seize in order to build a secure position to Israel itself." (20-25). The most violent US reaction towards Israel came from the former US Secretary of state, James Baker. He chose to aim his fire at the heads of some Jewish organizations. He advised them to relinquish their imperialistic ambitions. He pointed out, in this respect, that "it's time for Israel to forsake, and for ever, its unrealistic concept of 'Greater Israel'" (Shuman 26-30). Richard Murphy was also annoyed by the American infinite support to Israel. He wanted that the US backup, in this new era, should be plausible and rational. "Americans desire to really delimit Israel's boundaries", he noted, "in order to know what should be protected or supported, because it is not an open commitment." (qtd in Wright, J<sup>r</sup>, 20-27). Before him, Robert Dole, in his reaction, also evoked "the dynamic immobilism" that had always characterized Israel's policy in the area. He said that the Jewish state should keep up to the world changes. "We are able to take from Israel" he opined, "not to prejudice it since it is a reliable ally, but to notify it that we have other claims that should be fulfilled". (Donald 8-9)

As it can be noticed, regardless the sporadically emerging trivial misunderstandings, the bottom line is that the US-Israeli relationship becomes one of the American constant, an immutable principle easily embraced, and carefully implemented by any American decision-maker. Intermittent official or public remarks often come up, in the USA, to warn of this exaggerated commitment that has seriously tarnished American image in the world political arena. But they are likely ineffective, because the US aid – to Israel – is always taking its course, albeit peoples in the Middle East region continue to view America as tantamount to an untrustworthy partner due to its affinity to the Jewish state.

### **Conclusion**

It is crystal clear, from the foregoing facts, that in this unipolar world the US's Middle Eastern policy is totally geared towards Israel. The US-Israeli alliance has become even more symbiotic than ever before. This privileged alliance has permitted the protection of the Israeli policy of transgression and intransigence in the occupied territories. Israel has always received "wink-and-nod" from America to commit its daily despicable acts, or to refuse concessions for the sake of peace. The USA has rather depicted the aggressor as victim, and defended its odious deeds, arguing that they are an inevitable response to violence, but without indicating the latter's real causes. It even thwarts any attempt to condemn Israel for its aggressions; and

the relative Security Council's resolutions are always intentionally vetoed by America.

Actually, the American-Israeli alliance has been unalterably evolving. However, the new era, even taken at its face-value, shows that it has really emerged with challenging realities which have seemingly influenced the US-Israeli close relationship in the Middle East. This unique cronyism is likely starting to be eroded by some conflicting views over wide-ranging issues: American credibility in the eyes of its Arab Middle Eastern partners; the peace process; the US substantial assistance to Israel. The latter has become a topical issue because with the fall of the USSR, America is supposed to halt its biased policy since the previous post-Cold War anticommunism tendency has lost much of its relevance, and the East-West rivalry has abated. In other words, the Middle East is no longer a bone of contention with the same degree of acuteness as it was in the Cold War era. In fact, America felt compelled to instill in its Middle Eastern policy new game rules, and thought that only a durable peace would be the panacea. Nonetheless, any misunderstanding between the USA and Israel should not be misconstrued since contentions between the two states have never reached the point of discord owing to the central place Israel has always occupied in American consideration. The American steadfast loyalty towards Israel can perhaps be perfectly rounded off by a deep, and true in every way, statement made by the former American President, Bill Clinton. He once said, "When I was young I remember speaking to our priest, [about] who truly loved Israel. He told me, 'You have much potential – you might even be President of the United States. But remember one thing. If you ever forget Israel, God will forget you."

Last but not least, we can assert that Israel's reliance on America is seen – by the Jewish state – as a dependence of existence; while the US' reliance on Israel is that of interests reinforced by kindred bonds. If we assume that Israel is created by Great Britain, we should not forget that it is fostered by the USA. In this respect, it is fair to note that the US-Israeli special relationship is none but a collusion that has jeopardized the Middle East region. It is an everlasting alliance, founded upon strategic interests and common values that continue to the present-day to knit the two states in the area. Yet, if America keeps on espousing its blind alignment with Israel to the detriment of the peoples in the region, itching to meddle in the affairs of the

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neighbouring states, acting as a "redeemer nation" for the implementation of a concealed agenda, it will damage its position, and as it has been noted by Brzezinski, it "will destroy [its] existence in the Middle East area". (Viewpoint, 7 August, 2006).

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Among the pretexts America has fabricated, in the post-Cold War era, we can evoke some catchwords like: WMD, terrorism, democracy that are adopted with a stated goal: to justify and perpetuate its presence in the area of the Middle East. It is a compromising statement said by Abraham Lincoln – the 16<sup>th</sup> US President (1861-1865), when the southerners strove to secede from the Union in the early 1860's.

<sup>2</sup>These are two strategies used by the USA in its interventionist policy. According to Joseph Cirincione, the Director of the Non-Proliferation Project of the Carnegie Endowment, "Preemptive war is justified by an imminent threat or attack, a clear and present danger that the country in question is about to attack you. In such a case, a preemptive attack is recognized as justifiable. However, what America has so far undertaken can be depicted as a "preventive" war".

<sup>3</sup>An American theologian (1703-1758) who was extremely rigid in his stances. He was once pastor in New York and Northampton. For more details you can visit the website: http://www.monergism.com/tethreshold/articles/edwards.html

<sup>4</sup>This nationalistic phrase is the zeal that has always thrust Americans to expand inside the boundaries of their country: the Westward Movement, and also to crusade outside them to carry out their imperialistic ambitions in many parts of the world.

<sup>5</sup>It is a religious term that came to denote the USA itself, as a promised land, in reference to St Matthew. In its original meaning, it is the Biblical name of Palestine.

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