

Is Israel an America colony?



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By Anton M. Pillay

On December 25th 2016, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution demanding a halt to Israeli illegal settlements in the occupied territories. The resolution was passed unanimously (14-0) despite both the Israeli government and president elect Donald Trump applying pressure on the White House to veto the resolution. The US decision to abstain led Trump to declare that when he takes office the state of Israel's agenda will be prioritised. Despite Trump's rhetoric, US-Israel relations have been based on the ideology of "shared values." As a point of reference, the US decision to abstain from this particular resolution is nothing short of damning of Israel's policies, as in 2011 the US vetoed a similar resolution and since 1972, the US has used its veto powers to protect Israel. Examples of resolutions vetoed by the USA include:

- 1972 Condemning Israel for the death of hundreds of people in Syria and Lebanon in air raids and the violation of the cease-fire of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.
- 1973 Affirming the rights of the Palestinians and calling on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories.
- 1976 Condemning Israel for attacking Lebanese civilians.
- 1976 Condemning Israel for building settlements in the occupied territories.
- 1976 Calling for self-determination for the Palestinians.
- 1976 Affirming the rights of the Palestinians.
- 1978 Criticising the living conditions of the Palestinians.
- 1978 Condemning the Israeli human rights record in the occupied territories.
- 1979 Calling for the return of all inhabitants expelled by Israel.
- 1979 Demanding that Israel desists from human rights violations.
- 1979 Requesting a report on the living conditions of Palestinians in the occupied Arab countries.
- 1979 Providing assistance to the Palestinian people.
- 1980 Condemning the Israeli policy on the living conditions of the Palestinian people.

- 1980 Condemning Israeli human rights practices in the occupied territories.
- 1980 Affirming the right to self-determination for the Palestinians.
- 1981 To discuss the issue of Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip.
- 1981 To grant the rights of displaced Palestinians to return home.

Since 1982, the United States has vetoed 32 United Nations Security Council resolutions that were critical of Israel, a number greater than the combined total of vetoes cast by all the other Security Council members. A few prominent US Veto votes since 1982 include:

- 1995 Stating that land in East Jerusalem, annexed by Israel is occupied territory.
- 2003 Condemning the decision of the Israeli parliament to "eliminate" Palestinian President-elect Yasser Arafat.
- 2003 Condemning the construction of a wall by Israel on Palestinian land.
- 2006 Calls for an end to raids and Israeli military attacks on Gaza.

In the majority of these resolutions the US vetoed alone, or with only Israel plus one in support of it against a hundred plus state majority. As of 2013, Israel had been condemned in 45 resolutions by United Nations Human Rights Council since its creation in 2006.

The unwavering support that America affords to Israel does raise the question: Is Israel a colony of the US? A colony is defined as a country or area under the full or partial political control of another country and occupied by settlers from that country. The term colonisation refers strictly to migration, for example, to settler colonies in South Africa or New Zealand, trading posts, and plantations, while colonialism deals with this, along with ruling the existing indigenous peoples of styled "new territories". Colonialism is the establishment of a colony in one territory by a political power from another territory, and the subsequent maintenance, expansion,

and exploitation of that colony.

Using these various definitions as examples, to what extent can Israel be described as a US colony?

The colony as a substate

The idea that the colony is a substate of the homeland is prominent in the colonialisation philosophies of France and Britain. France viewed its colonies such as Algeria as "an extension of its borders". Britain saw its colonies as large corporations, hence the setup of "companies" such as the Royal Niger Company or the Imperial British East Africa Company. In the upkeep of the colony, the core must channel funds to the periphery to maintain the colony's efficiency as "sources of revenue." This exploitation is conducted

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through a bureaucracy usually run by a Governor. Basically, the core must undertake the expensive task of setting up an efficient government. This can be very expensive as seen in the case of a bankrupt Britain at the end of WW2 succumbing to the anti-colonial revolutionary struggle baby the Indian National Congress.

This bankrolling paradigm is observable in the US-Israeli relationship. The US has given more aid to Israel than it has to all the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean combined – which have a total population of over a billion people. Since 1949 the US has given Israel approximately \$130 billion plus while other estimates range

from \$200 billion plus. Since 1992, the US has offered Israel an additional \$2 billion annually in loan guarantees. Congressional researchers disclosed that between 1974 and 1989, \$16.4 billion in US military loans were converted to grants. In addition, there is the more than \$1.5 billion in private US funds that go to Israel annually in the form of \$1 billion in private tax-deductible donations and \$500 million in Israeli bonds. In 2007, US donations/diaspora remittances reached \$2.1 billion in a single year.

Israel receives about \$3 billion in direct foreign assistance each year, which is roughly one-fifth of America's entire foreign aid budget. In per capita terms, the United States gives each Israeli a direct subsidy worth about \$500 per year even though Israel comprises just .001 percent of the world's population and already has one of the world's higher per capita incomes on par with Spain or South Korea. Indeed, Israel's GNP is higher than the combined GNP of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza. With a per capita income of about \$14,000, Israel ranks as the sixteen wealthiest country in the world; Israelis enjoy a higher per capita income than Saudi Arabia and are only slightly less well-off than most Western European countries.

The US provides Israel \$10.2 million in military aid each day, US military aid to Israel was \$2.775 billion in 2010, \$3 billion in 2011, \$3.07 billion in 2012 (and \$3.15 billion per year from 2013-2018). In 2016, the US signed a \$38 billion military aid package over a decade which will start in 2018.

Normally US aid recipients receive funding in quarterly instalments, but Israel receives its entire appropriation at the beginning of each fiscal year. In the case of military aid, the requirement is that all should be spent on American companies. Israel though is the only recipient that does not have to account for how the aid is spent and uses roughly 25% of its aid allotment to subsidise its own military industry.

Migration

A further aspect of the colony is the migration or arrivals between the state and its colony. The United

States has played a special role in assisting Israel with the complex task of absorbing and assimilating masses of immigrants in short periods of time. Within months of Israel's founding in 1948, President Truman offered \$135 million in loans to help Israel cope with the arrival of thousands of Holocaust refugees. Within the first three years of Israel's establishment, the number of immigrants more than doubled the Jewish population of the country.

Drawing on 2014 estimates of Israeli government ministries and Israeli American Council which represents Israelis across the United States and promotes their interests, there are between 500,000 and 800,000 Israelis living in the US. A significant figure given Israel's 2014 population was 8 million. Between 2015 and 2016, approximately 4000 Americans emigrated to Israel. Two-thirds of US-Israeli borns have dual citizenship; approximately 91,000 in 2010. The largest number of Israeli tourists in 2015 came from the US with 640,000 arrivals, representing a 2% increase from the previous year.

Both the US Capitol Hill and Knesset have many members with dual US-Israeli citizenship. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as well as former Prime Ministers Shimon Perez and Ehud Barak completed their university education in the US. As such the cultural affinities between the two are immense.

Expansion of new territory

According to Mearsheimer the US has become the *de facto* enabler of Israeli expansion in the occupied territories. Despite the recent resolution to "condemn", the US has long protected the expansion of "new territory" giving Israel wide latitude in dealing with the occupied territories (the West Bank and Gaza Strip). In 2004, President Bush proclaimed that Israel would not have to return all the territories that it occupied in 1967 and that Palestinian refugees would not be allowed to return but would have to resettle elsewhere.

Trump's nominee to become the next ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, has been an outspoken supporter of settler groups the illegal settlements in occupied territories

and has cast doubt on the notion of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

Over half a million Israeli settlers now live in the occupied West Bank. Under international law, it is illegal for Israel to move Israeli settlers into the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel is on the verge of annexing 60% of the West Bank.

The colony as a trading post

The US is Israel's largest single trading partner. The United States-Israel Free Trade Agreement, established in 1985, was the first free trade agreement entered into by the United States. Since, trade between the countries has increased fivefold to \$49 billion in 2016. Israelis now invest close to \$24 billion in the United States, nearly triple what it was a decade earlier.

In its efforts to defeat 'radical'

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movements, Israel has become a testing ground for US weaponry. Between 2001 and 2008, Israel was the 7th largest arms supplier to the world, selling \$9.9 billion worth of equipment. In 2015, Israel sold \$5.7 billion in military goods to other countries. The United States also contributes funds for a joint US-Israeli Missile Defence Program. Arrow II, Arrow III, David's Sling, and Iron Dome refer to different projects under the umbrella of this Missile Defence programme. In 2015, the US spent \$619.8 million on these programmes and plans to spend between \$280 and \$601 million in 2017 (depending on Congressional approval).

As with Apartheid diamonds, Israel has successfully funnelled US arms to third countries to which the US could not send directly, such as apartheid

South Africa, the CONTRAS, the Guatemalan military Junta, South Sudan, and Iran.

American companies such as Motorola, HP, IBM, Microsoft and Intel chose Israel to establish major R&D centres. Critical components of leading American high-tech products are invented and designed in Israel, making these American companies more competitive and more profitable globally.

US firms have been a big part of the Start-Up Nation story, with US companies establishing two-thirds of the more than 300 foreign-invested research and development centres in Israel. Israeli firms, meanwhile, represent the second-largest source of foreign listings on the NASDAQ after China – and more than Indian, Japanese, and South Korean firms combined.

Israel is home to more than 2,500 US firms employing some 72,000 Israelis, according to an estimate by the US Chamber of Commerce.

Conclusion

What do you call a relationship where one country pays tribute to another? And where one country sends its men and women to fight to defend the interests of another? American right-wing political heavyweight John McCain was quoted as saying he would go to war for Israel at the drop of a hat. It is worth noting that in the past two decades American military aggression has caused a serious economic and political crises in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. Israel remains America's most reliable partner in the Middle East. Israel and the United States are bound closely by historic and cultural ties as well as by mutual interests.

Israel serves as a surrogate for American interests in a strategic region. The US-Israel relationship is based on the twin pillars of shared values and shared interests. Given this commonality of interests and beliefs, it should not be surprising that support for Israel is one of the most pronounced and consistent foreign policy values of the US.

Indeed, Israel does fit the description of colony. ■