

PERVERSE POLITICS

The uprising in the occupied territories of Palestine has once more brought the whole issue of the legitimacy of the Zionist state of Israel to the fore. Even those who subscribe to the UN partition of Palestine consider Israel to be in illegal occupation of much of the territory under its control. Certainly the West Bank (including the city of Jerusalem) and the Gaza strip come under this category.

Israel on its part, has resorted to a creeping annexation of these territories. Firstly, it has let it be known that the city of Jerusalem (Al-Quds) is non-negotiable. Indeed, it has tried to persuade many countries to move their diplomatic missions to the city. It has also ringed the city with Zionist settlements to make it well nigh impossible even for a future accommodating government to give up its control over the city. Similar settlements are being constructed in the West Bank to achieve the same purpose.

What is also clear is that the United States has backed this Israeli intransigence to the hilt. From the time of the 1967 war, to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, US aid to and collaboration with Israel has increased manifold. Indeed, support for Israel has become almost a non-negotiable issue in terms of US foreign policy. A measure of this is provided by the fact that currently, despite its crippling budget deficit, the US is giving Israel over US\$5 billion every year.

One would have thought that Israel's position on Jerusalem and the fate of the Palestinian people and the US's support for this stance would have created some friction in the latter's relations with the Muslim Arab countries. Yet the reverse is the case. The Arab boycott of companies supplying goods to Israel has collapsed, the Arab boycott of Egypt following Sadat's signing of the Camp David Accords has been reversed without any change in the status quo, Iraq has firmly joined the US camp and the Arab countries are clamouring for US protection in the Persian Gulf.

Indeed, what is being suggested by accepting Egypt back without the renunciation of the Camp David Accords is that the Arab countries are ready to recognise the Zionist state. In fact, had it not been for the timely uprising in the occupied territories the Amman summit of the Arab League had already decided upon such a course of action. By castigating Iran as the prime enemy and relegating Palestine to a minor issue the ground for such capitulation was already laid.

While there were these moves to accommodate the US stance on the Zionist state, there were others to follow the US line vis-a-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran. The positioning of the US navy in the Persian Gulf, the massacre of the Iranian *Hujjaj* during the last Hajj and now the severing of diplomatic links with Iran all result from the need to tow the US line.

The basic contradiction in the policy of the Arab allies of the US is thus becoming glaringly clear. To continue to receive US protection they have to tow the line on Israel and distance themselves from Islam as an all-embracing way of life. Indeed, the US would like Islam to become a spent force. Over the last twenty years the US has read the Arab governments' lack of resolve to resist this scenario and seen only approval of this stance. It has therefore had no need to take cognizance of Arab sensitivities in its unquestioned championing of the Zionist state. Over the next twenty years perhaps the Muslims will deliver their verdict on this capitulation by their regimes.

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