

James Petras' New Book: The Power of Israel in the United States

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James Petras is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Binghamton University, New York. He's a noted academic figure on the US Left and a well-respected Latin American expert and longtime chronicler of the region's popular struggles. He's also an advisor to the landless workers in Brazil and the unemployed workers movement in Argentina. Along the way, he managed to find time to write many hundreds of articles and 62 books published in 29 languages including his latest one in which he discusses another vital world region he has extensive knowledge of and has written frequently about – the Middle East and specifically the state of Israel and its relations with its neighbors, the Palestinians and, most importantly and the subject of this book, the US.

Petras' powerful new book is titled *The Power of Israel in the United States*. It's a work of epic writing and essential reading documenting the enormous influence of the pro-Israeli Lobby on US policy in the Middle East. It focuses like a laser to assure that policy conforms with Israel's long-term goal for regional hegemony. The Lobby's influence is broad and deep enough to include officials at the highest levels of government, the business community, academia, the clergy (especially the dominant Christian fundamentalists/Christian Zionists) and the mass media. Petras shows how together they're able to assure the full and unconditional US support for all elements of Israel's agenda going back decades even when that agenda harms our interests such as the unwinnable war in Iraq, any future one against Iran if it's undertaken, and the appalling and brutal subjugation and colonization of the Palestinian people that serves no US interest whatever. In spite of it, the Lobby is able to get the US to go along with Israel unconditionally with no serious opposition to it tolerated.

The book is divided into four parts. This review will cover each one in detail, and what's discussed will likely surprise any reader unfamiliar with the thoroughly documented account presented in it so compellingly. Petras sets the table in his introduction for what's to come in the later chapters. He notes what author JJ Goldberg reported in his book *Jewish Power: Inside the Jewish Establishment*. Goldberg wrote in the early 1990s that 45% of the Democrat Party's fundraising and 25% of that for the Republicans came from Jewish-funded Political Action Committees (PACS). Petras then updates the numbers using the ones Richard Cohen published in the *Washington Post* showing them now at 60% and 35% respectively, and that this funding relates to a single core issue – unconditional US support for Israel's agenda including those parts of it human rights activists and observers of conscience judge most egregious and illegal. Petras stresses that no other single US lobby including Big Pharma, Big Oil, agribusiness, or any other one has this kind of dominant influence over the political process here. He refers to "Zioncon" ideologues and policymakers whose main goal is to make the Middle East into a "US-Israeli Co-Prosperity

Sphere” under the fraudulent cover of promoting democracy in the region – but doing it through the barrel of a gun.

Petras explains the root of the Lobby’s power lies in the high proportion of Jewish families who are among the wealthiest and most influential ones in the country. He cites Forbes magazine that reported 25 – 30% of the wealthiest families here are Jewish despite the small percentage of Jews in the population overall. They include billionaires with enormous influence, and along with all others comprising the pro-Israeli Lobby, have created a “tyranny of Israel over the US” with consequences grave enough to threaten world peace and stability, the global economy, and the very future of democracy in this country.

That democracy and our constitutionally protected rights now hang by a thread after the recent passage of the Military Commissions Act (aka the “torture authorization act” or more accurately the “US Constitutional annulment act”) that makes everyone everywhere an “enemy combatant” subject to arrest and detention out of sight anywhere in the world without regard for our (no longer) constitutionally guaranteed rights. The new law also applies to US citizens as the Jose Padilla case showed. We’ve effectively lost our habeas and due process rights even though technically we still have them.

Because of the Lobby’s power, Petras reports, the US has unconditionally supported Israel’s wars of aggression since 1967. It’s influence also led to the US Gulf war in 1991 and the second Iraq war begun in 2003, now raging out of control and seen by some noted analysts as unwinnable and causing potential irreparable economic and political harm to the nation. Nonetheless, it persists with no plan agreed on to end it. The Lobby also guaranteed this country’s unconditional support for Israel’s illegal wars of aggression against Lebanon and Palestine with all the devastation they caused and the horrendous consequences from them unresolved. The Palestinian conflict still rages under the radar, and the status in Lebanon hangs by a hair trigger ready to erupt again any time Israel decides to resume hostilities. But inflaming the Middle East powder keg to a near boiling point is the strong possibility the US and/or Israel will attack Iran because Israel wants it and the Jewish Lobby put its powerful support behind it. More on this, Palestine and Lebanon below.

Today the situation in the Middle East is so dire, Petras reports a large majority of Europeans and a growing number of Americans believe Israel is the greatest of all threats to world peace and stability. Nonetheless, the Bush administration, in acquiescence to the Lobby, has “bludgeoned” its European partners to go along with its uncompromising support for the Jewish state despite all the obvious perils from it. In this country, open debate is stifled, public figures and academics daring to air one truthfully are pilloried, ridiculed, called anti-semitic and even threatened, and no serious dissent is ever tolerated in the corporate-run media or their funded and controlled so-called public radio or PBS parts of it.

No publication is more servile to, supportive of, or more influential than the nation’s so-called “paper of record” publishing “All the News That’s Fit to Print” – the New York Times. It’s important because the stories it features prominently resonate around the country and the world. This dominant newspaper pledges unconditional support and fealty to the state of Israel whatever it does. The rest of the major media go along unquestioningly putting out regular one-sided pro-Israel uber alles propaganda with no opposition voices allowed to represent other points of view. We call that a free press – but only for those who own one. The state of the corporate-controlled media in this country is now so pathetic that Reporters Sans Frontieres (Reporters without Borders – for press freedom) just ranked the US 53rd in the world in press freedom behind countries like Benin, Namibia, Jamaica, France and

Bolivia.

James Petras is a courageous independent voice who bucks this disturbing trend and refuses to go along. He proves it in his powerful and carefully documented new book that gives no quarter countering the mendacity, deceit and danger of the Lobby, its acolytes and hangers-on, and the corrupted major media. In his introduction, he calls for a “counter-hegemonic movement” to free us from our destructive “Israeli entanglements.” It’s needed to begin rebuilding our democracy and freedoms that are somewhere between life support and the crematorium. This book, he says, is his modest effort toward that goal. Because of the important information in it, it’s considerably more than that. It needs widespread exposure so people will know about it. Hopefully this review will help arouse some of them to want to find out in more detail.

Part I – Zionist Power in America

Petras begins with a discussion of who fabricated the lies about Iraq’s threat to our security and why. He mentions two competing channels of policy makers and advisors – the long-in-place formal structure of career military and civilian professionals in the Pentagon and State Department and a parallel one Bush administration neocons set up for this one purpose in the Pentagon, staffed by political appointees, and called the Office of Special Plans (OSP). It was the OSP’s job to cook the books, come up with the idea of weapons of mass destruction while ignoring the clear evidence to the contrary and contrive a fraudulent case for war against Iraq. The people in it were those in Donald Rumsfeld’s and Paul Wolfowitz’s chain of command and were closely connected to a number of influential neoconservative and pro-Israel organizations. They planned a war agenda based on lies because Israel wanted it for its security and hegemony in the region – beginning with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein followed by regime change in Syria, Lebanon, Iran and even Saudi Arabia.

Petras points out, contrary to popular belief, this war happened largely due to the efforts of the Jewish Lobby representing the interests of Israel. Big Oil opposed the idea because it feared attacking Iraq would jeopardize its business prospects with other oil-producing states in the region. Still, Israel and the Jewish Lobby got their war, and aside from the gain from high oil prices, Big Oil may end up a longer-term loser from it. US oil interests always prefer stability and normal relationships with countries where they operate or wish to and were quite comfortable dealing with Saddam Hussein without wanting to risk a war that might upset an otherwise profitable arrangement. Their fears proved justified as the war they feared created such unresolved turbulence in Iraq, it’s become too dangerous and unprofitable to undertake new ventures there except perhaps in parts of the Kurdish-controlled north. Big Oil also chafes at not being allowed to deal with the Iranians for contracts now let to its European and other competitors because US sanctions prevent them from doing business there. It’s hard to imagine those interests would ever go along with US – Israeli belligerence in the Middle East, but they dare not oppose it publicly.

Petras observes there’s never a public discussion allowed about that relationship in the mainstream nor will there ever be any, especially any hint the US attacked Iraq in service to Israel. There should be plenty of it though because the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have enraged hundreds of millions of Muslims and all people of conscience worldwide. They’ve caused the US to be seen as a pariah state and George Bush as a dangerous and morally depraved president of a failed administration. He and those closest to him like Richard Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld are reviled around the world and increasingly here at home as witnessed by the many thousands who took to the streets on October 5 in over 200 US cities

on The World Can't Wait Day - Drive Out the Bush Regime. The cost of Bush's wars far exceed any possible future benefits from them, our security has been jeopardized, the nation's status has been compromised, and some analysts believe the total dollar cost of the Iraq adventure may eventually top \$2 trillion - an amount extremely harmful to the nation's economy that's now worrying key business leaders and responsible people in government.

The only clear beneficiary of the Bush war agenda is Israel. It removed its main adversary in the region and cut off the political and economic support it gave the Palestinians. Petras points out that Iraq along with Iran and Syria comprised the core resistance to Israel's expansionist plans to crush the Palestinians (one down, two to go), ethnically cleanse them from their homeland and seize their land as one part of a long-term goal for a greater Israel and unchallengeable dominance in the region. Israel is the only country in the world with undeclared borders. It's kept that status to give itself maximum latitude to annex all the territory it can toward the goal of a greater "Eretz Israel" Zionists want that includes the ancient lands of "Judea" and "Summaria," the West Bank biblical parts of Israel Palestinians claim as their homeland.

With US help, Israel removed one threat to its plan for regional supremacy, but it still faces determined resistance from the Palestinians in spite of having crushed its democratically elected Hamas government. It also faces a resilient Hezbollah in Lebanon that humiliated the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in the summer war there as well as opposition from Iran and Syria. In addition, there's internal opposition within Israel over its war and colonization agenda because of its enormous cost plus the added insecurity it causes. It's resulted in a level of out-migration now exceeding new arrivals as well as an erosion of the nation's social programs because the state needs the resources for its aggression and annexation agenda. It's much like what's happening under the Bush administration where the people pay the price for imperial wars abroad and the moral decay and authoritarianism at home.

Obstacles and setbacks aside, Israel has pursued its goal to "democratize" the region through a belligerent policy of neutralizing its enemies in it by force. The plan they crafted is for a series of wars with its US ally taking the lead and the eventual goal of joint US - Israeli control over the entire region. Making it work depends on getting US administrations to go along, which so far hasn't been a problem and has never been easier with the Bush administration in power and the high-level pro-Zionist officials in it with long-standing ties to Israel. They have the most important policy-making positions in government or are closely associated with the ones who do. These officials have a history of dedication to Israel's interests even when they conflict with those here at home. They're in the administration, the Congress as well as in the most influential Jewish organizations and lobbying groups like the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, the Anti-Defamation League and what some observers believe is the single most powerful lobby in Washington - AIPAC.

Committed support for Israel also comes from the "Jewish Diaspora" that comprises thousands of dedicated activists here - doctors, dentists, philanthropists, key individuals on Wall Street, the major banks and the Federal Reserve and other key segments of business, the major media, the clergy and academics and journalists given special prominence because of their willingness to corrupt their integrity in return for the handsome benefits they get for their unconditional public support and contrived rationalizations for the US - Israeli agenda. This kind of influence and support has made Israel by far the largest recipient in the world of US financial aid that amounts upfront to about \$3 billion a year with more forthcoming any time as needed in added funding, weapons transfers and large low or

no-interest loans that may never have to be repaid.

Israel also gets the unheard of advantage of receiving the latest and most advanced US arms and technology, unrestricted US market access for its products and services, free entry of its immigrants, unconditional support for its aggressive wars and colonization of the Palestinians and South Lebanese, and guaranteed US vetoes in the Security Council against all UN resolutions unfavorable to its interests. It's also able to get prominent Washington officials and the dominant corporate-run and funded media to label all criticism of Israel anti-semitic and freely uses this ruse whenever it serves its purpose. Israel is allowed to get away with its intelligence operations here as well including its covert penetration of military bases, the FBI, IRS, INS, EPA and many other government agencies. In addition, it's believed its agents knew in advance about the 9/11 attack but withheld the information knowing it would serve its interests to let it happen. There's also considerable evidence high US officials either knew about it themselves or were complicit in carrying it out because they also knew it would allow them the kind of reckless free reign at home and abroad they never could have gotten any other way. This is a story that won't go away nor should it, and one day we may finally learn all the parts of it we can only speculate about now.

Because of Israel's unparalleled ties to the centers of power and dominant media, Petras notes it's able get back \$50 in return for every dollar it spends. That's how it's able to finance its military and colonial settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) on annexed land. The Jewish networks here support these practices as justifiable compensation allowed victims of the "Holocaust" (the ones noted author John Pilger calls "worthy victims") and circulate that ideology in the corporate media. They also reinforce anti-Muslim hysteria labelling all Arabs untrustworthy, radical Islamic fundamentalists or Islamo-fascists ("unworthy" victims for John Pilger), claiming the right to arrest, torture and mete out summary justice to them in military tribunals or just attack and kill them in imperial wars of "liberation."

The result for Israel and its people has been disastrous because the Palestinians have refused for almost six decades to accede to this abuse and have waged two Intifadas to end it. With little more than a fierce determination, their bodies and crude weapons, they've fought back with suicide bombings and attacks on public facilities in Israel knowing what harsh retaliation they'll face afterward. People in the US have also paid a heavy price in the erosion of democracy and freedom. It's evidenced by the Bush administration's harsh legislation beginning with the infamous USA Patriot Act passed in short order right after the 9/11 attack, followed by other repressive laws and practices allowed like illegal surveillance and secret renditions of anyone targeted to torture-prisons with court acquiescence or silence about most of them.

Petras points out that none of this deters powerful supporters of Israel who raise billions of dollars to support the country's war machine and finance its colonization of annexed Palestinian land plus the Golan Heights (with its invaluable water resources) seized and never returned to Syria after the 1967 war. Israel's economy is not self-sufficient, and without this aid, it would have to make unacceptable cuts in social services, reduce its military budget and curtail its expansionary plans. With it, plus the \$3 billion a year direct US contribution and lots more help, US taxpayers (like it or not) have the burden of funding Israel's belligerence and colonization agenda.

Petras itemizes what it all costs:

- \$3 billion annually in direct aid.
- Billions more in loans as needed.
- Millions annually for resettlement help for Soviet (now Russian) and Ethiopian immigrants.
- a \$10 billion loan guarantee in 1990 and a further \$9 billion one in 2004 plus billions more for the asking and to be forthcoming to pay the costs of the 2006 Lebanon and Palestine wars.
- Since 1981, economic aid made in cash transfers, and since 1985 military aid done the same way.
- \$45 billion in repayment waved loans since 1974 and billions more for the asking - free money at US taxpayer expense.
- Since 1982, ESF cash transfers in one early in the fiscal year lump sum with no strings attached while other countries receiving them are paid quarterly with their use monitored. Israel invests the money in US treasuries costing US taxpayers millions more annually and also gets special FMS funding arrangements costing US taxpayers well over \$1 billion since 1991.
- Other privileged benefits include financial aid to develop Israel's defense industry, transfer of state-of-the-art technology and the latest US weapons, US guarantee for Israel's access to oil, and the likely massive aid still to come to defray the country's "special costs" for its Gaza "disengagement plan" morphing into the colonization of whatever parts of the OPT Israel wishes to annex for new settlements US taxpayers pay for.
- Add to this some \$22 billion Israel got over the past 50 years through the sale of its below-market interest paying bonds that have financed half of its development - meaning the colonization of annexed Palestinian lands and military funding for its predatory imperial wars.

Petras explains the Zionist power structure in the US makes it all possible, but its reach extends well beyond the so-called "Jewish Lobby." He identifies a "Zionist power configuration (ZPC) that includes AIPAC as one part of a "complex network of interrelated formal and informal groupings, operating at the international, national, regional, and local levels" unconditionally supporting the state of Israel and all its policies including its wars, colonization and oppression. It's power is like a cancer infecting the highest levels of government and all the other centers of power and influence as already explained. It controls the selection of political candidates and can defeat incumbents or aspirants daring to criticize Israel. It also shapes the reporting on Israel in the mass media suppressing any of it that's unsupportive or critical. And it's powerful enough to get "uncooperative" journalists, and even some academics, fired and banished from the mainstream for daring to step out of line.

Petras reports the power of the ZPC was evident in the run-up to the Iraq war and the Gulf war before it in 1991. Going back to the GHW Bush administration, the US wanted regime change in Iraq, but that decision was heavily influenced by the ZPC that considered Saddam a mortal enemy of Israel who had to be removed. He managed to survive through the 1990s despite our efforts to destabilize the country and bring it to its knees. But once the GW Bush

administration neocons took over in 2001, the ugly business of war planning and occupation took hold to complete what the Gulf war left unfinished, and powerful Zionists (like Paul Wolfowitz and Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman – the senator from AIPAC) in key policy-making positions invented the threat to bring it about in March, 2003 – all based on lies, deceit and subservience to Israel’s imperial agenda.

The US military finally removed Saddam and conducted a scorched-earth campaign to destroy Iraqi society, its infrastructure and historical treasures to “dismantle the secular state (and) turn the country in a desert kingdom – a loose collection of at least three ‘tribal’ client mini-states based on ethnicities, religious-tribal loyalties (and no viable threat against) Israeli expansionism, particularly in Northern Iraq.” The effort to do this is now underway after the Iraq puppet parliament’s passage of its federalism bill to take effect in 18 months that will effectively divide the country into the three US-ordered, designed and supposedly more easily governed parts it wants.

It’s unlikely this can work, but it’s clearer than ever now what the human cost of the war has been for Iraqis. It caused the violent deaths of about 655,000 of them attributable to the war according to a shocking new study published by the noted Lancet British medical journal which updated their two earlier ones done after March, 2003. The study used the statistically reliable technique known as random households “cluster sampling” with personal interviews conducted across the country that used death certificate verification in the great majority of cases to come up with the total. It’s likely the true number of deaths is even much higher than this appalling number as the interviewers were unable to include in their count the most dangerous and violent parts of the country like Fallujah, Ramadi and other areas of al Anbar province where mass killing still goes on daily as well as families (likely in the thousands) in which all the members were killed.

This new information, just out and covering a period since March, 2003, compares to Human Rights Watch’s estimate of 250,000 – 290,000 people killed by Saddam Hussein’s Baathist regime over its 20 year existence. It amplifies the outrageous crime of this barbarous adventure to achieve a “Greater Middle East US-Israel Co-Prosperity Sphere” and to give Israel access to the extra water, oil, capital and markets it lacks. It was also part of Israel’s greater agenda under the Sharon Likud, and now Olmert Kadima, governments to have free reign to pursue their stated policy of “annexation and separation” in the OPT. The Zionist influence in the Bush administration is so entrenched, it assured there’d be no opposition to it then or now.

It’s all gone on in spite of mass anti-imperial resistance to what’s seen as an arrogant disregard for the standards and norms of international behavior and laws in the pursuit of an expansionist agenda. Israel and the US today willfully violate the UN Charter, the Hague Regulations and Geneva Conventions relative to the conduct of war and when it may be legally waged, the treatment of prisoners, the use of torture, destruction of infrastructure and historical sites, and plunder of natural resources to establish client puppet-run regimes exploiting their people in service to the dominant capital and political interests of their imperial conquerors.

Then to quell resistance and tighten security, the US and Israel resort to the most extreme methods including mass arrests and detentions and the free use of torture and targeted assassinations as state policy. Amnesty International reports since the passage of the Military Commissions Act of 2006, the US and Israel are the only two countries in the world to have legalized the use of torture. Petras and others report the top leaders in the

Pentagon up to Donald Rumsfeld specifically ordered its use “while the Justice and Defense Departments insisted that the President could override any laws – international or national as well as the US Constitution – in defending the empire.” These top officials in key areas of government have audaciously given the President “de facto and de jure dictatorial powers” to do whatever he chooses to establish “Imperial Security.” It makes our citizens at home no safer than the victims of US and Israeli imperial aggression in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine or anywhere else in the world.

But Petras reports it’s even worse than that as the expose of torture in Iraq revealed a highly organized network of US and Israeli assassins worldwide. They operate as international death squads engaged in “killing, kidnapping and torturing ‘suspects’ and sympathizers of resistance movements.” Petras calls this a US-sponsored “Murder Incorporated” that’s composed of Army Special Forces, Navy Seals and a DELTA force operating in a Special Agency Program (SAP). It follows the same practices long engaged in by Israel’s Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations known as the Mossad, and its aim is to remove all opposition by whatever extralegal methods it chooses while ignoring international law. It then justifies this activity at the highest levels of government as a matter of policy.

Petras further points to the UN’s International Leadership report on the destruction of civilian and military infrastructure in Iraq (much like what Israel did in the OPT discussed below). It showed “84% of Iraq’s higher learning institutions have been burnt, looted or destroyed.” Archeological museums and historic sites, libraries and archives have also been plundered, and targeted assassinations have been carried out against academics, other teachers, senior military personnel, journalists and other professionals including doctors. In addition, there are random or targeted daily terror killings by US-directed “Salvador option” death squads as well as thousands of kidnappings and other systematic horrors making life intolerable for most everyone in the country outside the four square kilometer fortress-like Green Zone HQ in central Baghdad for “coalition” officials and the puppet “Iraq interim government.”

It’s all part of Washington’s design to destroy the country’s cultural identity as an Arab state, separate its oil resources from any large population base, and divide the nation into more easily governed parts just the way it was done in the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. It’s now been reported that longtime Bush family consigliere James Baker, co-chairing an Iraq Study Group, will formerly propose the kind of plan the Iraq puppet government just passed putting a quasi-official US imprimatur on it as part of a US – Israeli divide and conquer strategy that may not be as easy to pull off as as the one in the former Yugoslavia or in the simple north – south divisions of Korea and Vietnam after WW II.

What’s happening today in Iraq and Palestine is so outrageous and chaotic, Petras refers to a “House of Horrors” in both countries with the Zionist militarists at the Pentagon and their Israeli counterparts in charge of their respective “Horror Shows....under the big tent of a ‘Mid-East Democratic Reform Initiative.’ ” This is the modus operandi of empire building and colonization – blast and tear a nation to shreds so it can never again exist as it once did. Then terrorize the people into submission and kill off all the ones who resist. It’s a barbaric thumb in the eye to humanity, but this is the way rogue empires do things, especially when they’re too powerful to challenge.

The US-led killing machine is in full operation in Iraq, and so is the Israeli one in the OPT. Petras calls the one there “Israel’s Final Solution” or the “Palestinian Holocaust,” and it’s

focal point is in Gaza which even unoccupied is the world's largest open-air prison for its 1.45 million people in the most densely populated space of its size in the world. Today the Strip and the West Bank are Israeli-directed killing fields targeting Palestinian civilians helpless to stop it beyond their courageous acts of desperation with crude weapons and their bodies against tanks, F-16s, helicopter gunships, and illegal and immoral terror weapons like white phosphorus bombs and shells, cluster bombs that never stop killing and maiming, and experimental new weapons that don't have publicly-known names yet.

Israel's war on Palestine has gone on for nearly six decades, and September 28 marked the sixth anniversary of the al-Aqsa Mosque Intifada resistance against it that began with Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the holy site in 2000. Israel dramatically escalated the conflict after the minor June 25, 2006 incident at an Israeli military post near Kerem Shalom crossing killing two IDF soldiers, injuring several others and capturing a third still held whose name the corporate media made sure everyone knows but won't ever reveal any of over-10,000 names of Palestinian prisoners held (the fate of "unworthy victims"). The June clash followed a series of bloody earlier in the month Israeli attacks on Gaza including the widely reported beach shelling that killed eight Palestinians and injured 32 others including 13 children. Much as it did in Lebanon (discussed below), Israel's response was swift, deadly, disproportionate to what happened and planned months in advance as revealed by General Yoav Galant, in charge of Gaza, in a candid interview he gave in Israel's Maariv daily.

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) documented it all including the devastation of the past six years. Overall it created a state of mass-immiseration for the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank:

- essential infrastructure affecting power, clean water and sanitation destroyed
- mobility restricted or denied
- imposition of an embargo threatening the collapse of an already weak economy creating unemployment up to 80% of the population
- hostile incursions into the OPT, daily killings, and frequent extra-judicial assassinations
- home and property demolitions
- mass arbitrary arrests, administrative detentions of thousands of Palestinians without charge, and the systematic use of torture on those held including against women and children
- the destruction of a viable Hamas-led Palestinian Authority (PA) through imprisonments of its democratically elected members held without charge or on contrived ones against them as well as the destruction of its civil and security facilities

All this and much more has been done (as in Iraq) to destroy the cultural identity and very existence of the Palestinian people to prevent them from ever having a viable independent state of their own as well as force a mass-Palestinian exodus to other Arab states willing to help them escape their intolerable situation in the OPT.

The plan to crush these defenseless people now includes credible evidence that the Bush and Olmert administrations have been arming, training and plotting with Palestinian

President Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah followers to lead a civil uprising against the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority (PA) and destroy it by force. It follows the Palestinians failed efforts to form a national unity government because Hamas refused Fatah's demand to govern as Israel's enforcer and abandon its own pledge to serve the welfare of its people. Now in an interview on October 8 in the London Sunday Times, Fatah militia leader Tawfig Tirawi, inflamed matters by accusing Hamas of "accumulating weapons" and that "a full-scale civil war can break out at any moment." He earlier said "civil war is inevitable." The paper also reported President Abbas "notified the US, Jordan and Egypt that he is preparing to take action against Hamas." These statements defy Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh who firmly said he'll never allow a civil war to happen, and it's unimaginable the Palestinian people want one. But Haniyeh and his people may have no choice as this seems to be the current joint US-Israeli strategy to destroy Palestinian resistance and do it with help from Fatah President Abbas. This is the same man who pledged his fealty to Israel as a participant in crafting the Oslo Accords sellout of his people and being a principle in the Arafat-led corrupted and mismanaged Palestinian Authority until Hamas won a majority of the seats in the January, 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections. The Bush and Olmert governments wouldn't tolerate that outcome, and the New York Times reported right after the election US and Israeli officials met at the "highest level" to plan the destruction of Hamas by "starving" the PA and making the people in the OPT pay the greatest price.

For Israel, this is part of its state policy of ethnic cleansing by slow-motion genocide and out-migration all leading to the destruction of the Palestinian identity. It wants to co-opt a corrupted PA leadership of its choice to act as Israel's enforcer and partner in the destruction of its own people. It's to fulfill the intent of what former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meier meant by her racist comment that "There are no Palestinians" and what Prime Minister David Ben Gurion earlier said after Israel brutally expelled the Palestinians from their homes and land in the 1948 war establishing the state of Israel: "We have come and we have stolen their country....We must do everything to insure they (the Palestinians) never do return....(and 10 years earlier had written his son) We will expel the Arabs and take their places....with the force at our disposal." He and his successors planned to include all the land of biblical Eretz Israel (the land of Israel) within the final fixed borders of a greater Israeli state whenever they're finally declared. The US unconditionally supports Israel's plan to do this as well as its policies of plunder and exploitation, but as Petras explains: "No one in their right mind can claim that the Israeli assault on Gaza advances US policies, interests or US imperial power." It doesn't matter because the power of the Jewish Lobby got the full support of the Bush administration for it anyway as well as the near unanimity for it in the Congress.

The Rape of Lebanon

What Israel did to the Palestinians in the OPT over decades, it did to Lebanon in 1978, 1982 and in about a five week blitzkrieg beginning July 12, ending formally but fragily with a UN-brokered ceasefire on August 14. Petras compares the assault to the Nazi's November 9 and 10, 1938 infamous Kristallnacht pogrom in the German Reich against the Jews calling that event a "garden party" compared to the rape of Lebanon and vast devastation from it. It began with Hezbollah's cross-border incursion on July 12, killing eight IDF soldiers in the exchange that followed and capturing two others. There's still a dispute over which side of the Lebanese border the incident took place as for years Israel routinely makes hostile incursions into Lebanon by land and air, and still illegally occupies the 25 square kilometer Shebaa Farms area of South Lebanon it never relinquished after seizing it in the 1967 war.

As against Gaza, Israel again responded swiftly and disproportionately in a reign of terror against the Lebanese people by land, air and sea. It killed and wounded thousands and displaced a million or more Lebanese civilians. It also systematically destroyed the country's essential to life and other vital infrastructure and created an amount of physical devastation that could take a generation to recover from if Israel even allows it to happen. It was done in part to destroy Hezbollah as a political entity and as an effective resistance force against Israel's imperial designs on the country. But Israel's plans are much more far-reaching than that as explained below.

Petras reported Middle East expert Juan Cole claims Israel wanted the war and planned it at least a year in advance. Matthew Kallman of the San Francisco Chronicle Foreign Service also found and reported evidence that preparations for it began in May, 2000, immediately after Israel ended its occupation of the country that began with its invasion and brutal assault in 1982 that killed about 18,000 Lebanese. Kallman also reported that over a year before the conflict began a senior IDF official gave "PowerPoint presentations" off the record to US and other officials and unnamed journalists and think tanks explaining how the attack would unfold "in revealing detail."

Again, Israel got the full backing, funding and arming as needed from the Bush administration to carry it out, effectively making this gruesome adventure a joint US-Israeli operation. Besides wanting to neutralize Hezbollah's resistance, the goal was to destroy Lebanon as a functioning country and ethnically cleanse the southern part of it up to the Litani River Israel wants to control and eventually annex and keep as it did the Golan after the 1967 war. Israel claims this area (like the Golan) is important for security reasons, but its greatest value (again like the Golan) is as a source of fresh water from the Litani and from the Wazzani springs that feed into the Hasbani River that's a tributary of the Jordan River. The Hasbani flows into Israel two miles downstream from the Wazzani and runs into the Sea of Galilee that's Israel's largest source of fresh water.

Israel has had designs on Lebanon for 40 years or more and has kept the country in a state of instability, partial occupation and conflict over most of that time. Now the state of the country is a devastated near-wasteland monitored by so-called (Israel-approved and friendly) UN Blue Helmets and Lebanese Armed Forces replacing the IDF on the ground under a fragile UN brokered ceasefire arrangement that could end any time Israel wishes again to unleash its war machine and on any pretext. There's nothing to deter Israel from doing it as it has the unconditional support of the Jewish Lobby and whatever US administration is in power. Unless this changes, the people of Lebanon, like those in Iraq and Palestine, can only look ahead to more conflict and the pain and suffering from it.

That's because there's still unfinished business for both empires, and it's not likely either one will soon give up on what they're determined to achieve. So even though Iraq is a hopeless quagmire, the Bush administration says it will "stay the course." And as long as Israel has full US backing, it will continue pursuing its imperial agenda even though Hezbollah humiliated the IDF in Lebanon and the Palestinians show no signs of ending their determined resistance short of mass-annihilation or forced expulsion. But it's not all smooth sailing as the unholy US-Israeli alliance faces a threat it can't ignore that could derail it. It's a growing broad-based worldwide anti-imperialist movement against these two partnered pariah states. It remains to be seen how far it will go, whether it can achieve critical mass in the US and in Israel, and if it can succeed in changing the direction of these two belligerents so far unstoppable and determined to go on unchecked by what passes for the civilized western world.

Part II – Israel and Middle East Warfare

It now looks like the only lesson the US and Israel learned from past failure is to press on with a new adventure. It appears the likely prime target is the Islamic Republic of Iran, as ill-advised as it will be to attack it. Petras explains that “Israel’s political and military leadership have repeatedly and openly declared (their intention) to attack Iran in the immediate future.” And once again it looks like the power of the Jewish Lobby in the US has the Bush administration thinking the same way to help its Israeli partner free itself from another “irritant” in the region that stands in the way of both countries’ imperial aims. Petras calls Israel’s Iran-directed war preparations “the greatest immediate threat to world peace and political stability (today).” It’s hard to disagree.

That threat was heightened following North Korea’s nuclear test which Israeli officials were quick to jump on suggesting it will benefit Iran. It came from an inflammatory statement by Miri Eisin, Prime Minister Olmert’s spokeswoman, who told the AP: “We should remind ourselves that the North Koreans have already been suppliers of launching platforms which could reach Europe and certainly Israel. As such, they have already shown their willingness to be suppliers to Iran.” Then Israel’s UN Ambassador Dan Gillerman went further on Israel’s Channel 2 TV referencing North Korea’s nuclear activity and adding: “what Iran is about to do could be much worse, much more frightening and much more dangerous.” This language practically demands an attack on Iran to destroy its presumed “nuclear threat” even though Iran is no threat to any country and the real threat is a growing likelihood of an Israeli and/or US attack on Iran or any other country in the region targeted as an enemy.

The US and Israel are allowed to get away with these kinds of outrageously stark and provocative statements even though the only pretext either country can fabricate is the baseless claim that Iran’s legitimate right to enrich uranium for commercial use means the country has embarked on a nuclear weapons program that will threaten Israel. In fact, Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and, from all the evidence uncovered from years of monitoring by the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), is in full compliance with it. It has every legal right to pursue its commercial nuclear program and nuclear enrichment for it. Israel, on the other hand, never signed the treaty, is known to have two to three hundred or more sophisticated nuclear weapons and launching systems for them, has stated its intention to use them if it chooses to, and is a nuclear outlaw – but one with an important ally the Iranians lack.

Today the debate in Israel is only over the method and timing of attacking Iran. Petras explains the Israelis have been pushing the US to do it for over a decade with the power of the Jewish Lobby in full support claiming the Islamic Republic threatens Israel’s security and its dominance in the region. It doesn’t matter that Iran never attacked its neighbors and isn’t likely to undertake a military action except in self-defense as it did against Iraq in the 1980s. Further, it’s an Israeli and made-in-America agitprop fabrication that Iranian President Ahmadinejad threatened “to wipe Israel off the map.” The president said a number of things including...“this regime that is occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time” meaning an illegal racist colonial one, but he didn’t say or mean it should be removed by force or that Jews should be expelled from Israel.

Further proof of Iran’s intentions came from Grand Ayatollah Khamenei’s public pledge never to attack another country. He also condemned the development and use of nuclear weapons as being against Islam. The Western media was careful to suppress Khamenei’s pledge and instead published false reports that he threatened the US to heighten the

tension between the two countries. It's all part of the scheme to get full US support for Israel's intended war plans and the long held desire of both countries for regime change in Iran.

Petras lays out a dire scenario if a US, Israeli or joint attack is launched. It will be especially bad if the US does it using so-called "mini-nuke robust earth penetrator bunker-buster" munitions which are weapons that can be made to any desired potency and are likely to be from one-third to two-thirds as powerful as the Hiroshima bomb. In other words, there's nothing "mini" about them. Aside from the catastrophic level of immediate and long-term casualties from nuclear annihilation and radiation in Iran and beyond, Petras explains such an attack will only be a "pyrrhic victory." If Israel does it alone, it may set off a chain "political conflagration (to) unseat the rulers of Jordan, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia." If the US attacks, it "would be even worse: major oil wells burning, US troops in Iraq surrounded (with the catastrophic consequences of far greater loss of life on both sides), long-term relations with Arab regimes undermined and increased oil prices (possibly high enough to cause a worldwide economic calamity) and supplies disrupted." It's almost certain this would inflame or enrage public opinion in the US and Israel that could lead to the ouster of the ruling parties in both countries.

It would also likely undermine Big Oil's existing and desired major oil exploration projects and cause the Israelis to crack down harder on the Palestinians and make them face forced massive ethnic cleansing expulsion from their homeland. Further, it would almost certainly get a response from Hezbollah or other resistance in South Lebanon, reignite the conflict there, unleash the Israeli killing machine all over again and cause more mass displacement and reoccupation by the IDF as the UN Blue Helmets and Lebanese forces evacuate the conflict zone. And it would lead to a growing threat of retaliatory terror attacks in the US, other Western countries and in Israel and would likely strengthen the resolve of other nations feeling potentially threatened by a hostile US, Israel and the West to seek defensive economic and military alliances in a structure like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that was formed in 2001 for political, diplomatic, economic and security reasons to act as a counterweight to NATO which the US dominates.

Still, with all the hazards of attacking Iran clearly in the minds of US policy makers, the momentum for it is moving ahead. It's happening in spite of serious high-level dispute in Washington about undertaking it. The Pentagon has war plans for it to include NATO, Israel and Canada, and it currently has a major US naval strike group deployment in the Persian Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean. Part of it is permanently stationed in the region, and in early October, The powerful Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group got "prepare to deploy" orders, headed there on October 3 and is now in place for whatever action may be intended. It joins the Enterprise and Iwo Jima Expeditionary Strike Groups making a total of three US naval task forces in position opposite Iran for whatever purpose may be planned and will shortly be joined by a fourth Boxer Expeditionary Strike Group that left Singapore on October 16 for the region. Naval forces already there have been engaged in what the Iranian foreign ministry calls "dangerous and suspicious" exercises in the Gulf practicing intercepting and searching ships for potential WMDs and missiles.

This all may be just a saber-ratling bluff, but if it's more than that it could unfold as a late October or early November "surprise" ahead of the November 7 congressional elections now only days away and be initiated in response to a manufactured incident on the order of the August, 1964 Gulf of Tonkin one or the blowing up of the USS Maine in February, 1898 in Havana Harbor. It's never hard for an aggressor to find reasons for war if it wants one and

just needs a convenient excuse to start it.

The Bush administration and Israelis may get their wish if the Navy goes ahead with its reported plans to blockade Iranian oil ports. This action will be an act of war if it's done that Iran will have a legal right to respond to in self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter but will surely be met with a "shock and awe" counterattack against about 400 Iranian target sites already designated as ones to destroy in the event of hostilities. None of this guarantees an attack is imminent, but it shows a real possibility one may be coming. It also shows the power of the Jewish Lobby in the US that supports Israel's long-term aim to attack Iran no matter how grim the fallout from it may be. There's so much open speculation about this, it's gotten saner military, political and economic analysts here to believe this would be an act of insanity with the kind of potentially catastrophic consequences Petras outlined above. Will it happen? We can only hold our breathe waiting to find out, but it may not be long before we do.

Part III - Experts on Terror or Terrorist Experts

In this part of his book, Petras goes head-to-head with the so-called self-styled "terrorist experts" (TE) and clearly comes out ahead with his incisive dissection of them explaining why they're prominently featured in the major media. He calls them the "set-up" people - there to play a role to "motivate the colonial and imperial conquerors and reinforce their idea that the terrorists are not worthy of ruling or being ruled," so we have to get rid of them. It doesn't matter that the so-called "war on terrorism" is a shameless overused but very effective ruse scare tactic. It's always used because the public never catches on no matter how many times before supposed threats turned out to be another scam to get them to go along with whatever schemes our government had in mind to undertake. It never ceases to amaze how short an attention span the public has, but it's clear the power of the corporate-run media has a lot to do with it. It led author Studs Terkel to refer to a national Alzheimer's disease and author and political critic Gore Vidal to subtitle his 2004 book *Imperial America - Reflections on the United States of Amnesia*.

It gives the whole propaganda apparatus and the TE an open field to manipulate the public mind and get it to believe most anything. Petras calls these people "verbal assassins" who can't or won't understand that people pummelled by "shock and awe" attacks, their countries plundered in the name of "liberation," their people mass-murdered, raped, arrested and tortured might be desperate and motivated enough to strike back in retaliatory self-defense. It follows logically from Newton's law that for every action there's a corresponding reaction. In 1954, the CIA understood this and invented a term for it (no self-respecting TE will touch). The agency called it "blowback" referring to the unintended consequences from US hostile acts abroad like overthrowing legitimate or otherwise constituted governments as it did against Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran in 1953 ushering in the 25 year terror reign of the Shah. It finally led to the "blowback" 1979 revolution, and it causes other instances of retaliation now ongoing in Iraq and Afghanistan and for nearly six decades in Palestine.

But prominent TE featured in the major media have a different diagnosis of resistance fighters. They call them "incurable psychopaths (who are) extremely dangerous when at large (so we must flush them out to) capture, confine, torture or kill (them)." A convenient division of labor is then arranged to do it and the TE play their assigned role along with the military, recruited satraps, prison commandants, interrogators, guards and assorted other functionaries. They're team member hegemon-devil's disciples turning "victims into

executioners and the executioners into victims.” They do it by dehumanizing the legitimate resistance they label Islamo-fascists, Islamic fundamentalists, terrorists or other invented designations of inferiority or implied threat that must be destroyed.

It’s incomprehensible to the TE that almost any act of retaliatory self-defense might be justifiable resistance given the level of state-directed violence used against them mercilessly. In Israel, and now in Iraq and Afghanistan it led to the phenomenon of suicide bombings which Petras calls “a form of individual sacrifice, of individual resistance taken in the name of the collective.” He explains further that in the West individual sacrifice is rewarded with medals, but in the Middle East and specifically in the case of suicide bombers the reward is martyrdom for giving their lives in the cause of national liberation against a superior hostile force. This is a phenomenon common throughout history when a people face an overpowering conquerer and occupier. Petras explains “there have always been and always will be self-sacrificing individuals or (whole populations)....prepared to defend nation and home....and to use (their) body as a missile or weapon (to do it).”

Petras also explains there are different forms of imperial conquest and subjugation, and the one the US uses in Iraq and Afghanistan and that Israel uses against the Palestinians is a cruel and dehumanizing “process of destruction, degradation, and exploitation followed by efforts to ‘reconstruct’ a colonized military, police, and political structure willing and able to repress and contain anti-colonial resistance.” It’s a doctrine of “total war” against target nations too weak to fight back except by asymmetrical guerilla warfare means that include tactics like car and suicide bombings. Petras calls this practice “one of the ultimate forms of rejection of tyranny” that will only end when “total war” does. And that will only happen when the “colonial revivalist strand of imperialism in....its US, European and Israel variants” are defeated....Peace and reconciliation is only possible if justice is meted to the architects and practitioners of total war and human degradation.” A long and painful struggle for liberation may be ahead before that goal is ever achieved.

Part IV – Noam Chomsky and the Pro-Israel Lobby

In the book’s final part, Petras challenges a man who may best be described as an iconic figure on the Left, an anti-war activist, and much more but not one unused to being challenged and sometimes harshly. Petras points out that Chomsky has been a sharp critic of Israeli policies through the years and has been strongly attacked for his views by pro-Israeli organizations and the major media on the rare times his name is even allowed in it. Still he defends the existence of the Zionist state and has a different view than Petras on the power and influence of the Jewish Lobby in shaping US policy toward Israel. Petras lists what he calls Chomsky’s fifteen erroneous theses reflecting his long-held belief that the Lobby isn’t as potent as the strong case Petras makes in this book that it is. Not wishing to take sides with two distinguished men this writer holds in high esteem, the points of disagreement will only be listed so the reader can decide who makes the better case.

Petras begins by listing what he calls Chomsky’s eight “dubious propositions:”

1. The pro-Israel Lobby is like any other one.
2. The Lobby’s backers have no more power than other pressure groups.
3. The Lobby succeeds because its interests coincide with those of the US.

4. Israel is a tool of the US empire and used as needed.
5. "Big Oil" and the "military-industrial complex" are the major forces shaping Middle East policy.
6. US and Israeli interests usually coincide.
7. The Iraq war and threats to Iran and Syria stem from the "oil interests" and "military-industrial complex."
8. US behavior in the Middle East is the same as what it practices worldwide.

Petras then uses the above list to discuss what he calls Chomsky's 15 theses and uses the persuasive evidence presented in his book to take issue with them, one by one. He sums up his case stating he's done this because of Chomsky's enormous stature making whatever his views are stand out prominently. It's a matter of consequence when a man like Noam Chomsky believes the Jewish Lobby is like all others which in Petras' view gives a "free ride to the principal authors, architects and lobbyists in favor of the (Iraq) war (and is an) obstacle to achieving clarity about whom we are fighting and why. To ignore the pro-Israel Lobby is (also) to allow it a free hand in pushing for the invasion of Iran and Syria (and any other regime in the region Israel may wish to remove)." Petras sums up saying that "the peace and justice movements, at home and abroad, are bigger than any individual or intellectual - no matter what their past credentials." In this battle of noted titans on the Left, it's for the reader to decide who's right.

Summation - Confronting Zionism and Reclaiming American Middle East Policy

Petras has written a powerful and important new book that needs broad exposure and resonance. But he'll never get its content past the corporate gatekeepers controlling the major media because of his courage to reveal what others fear to do - confront Zionism, its agenda of aggressive wars and colonization, and the power of the Jewish Lobby to assure Israel gets the full and unconditional support of every US administration regardless of whether what it does serves the interests of this country. That Lobby power reached its apogee and full fruition with the ascent of the Bush administration neocons that effectively pledge their fealty to the rulers of the Israeli state and prove Ariel Sharon may have been right when he once arrogantly boasted about his relationship with George Bush saying: "We have the US under our control."

The result has been disastrous for this country and the sacred principles on which it was founded. In partnership with Israel, the US began tearing apart the Middle East and Central Asia by attacking and occupying Iraq and Afghanistan. It now threatens to inflame the whole region enough to make it explode if we go ahead with plans to attack Iran, do it with nuclear weapons, and then move on to Syria and even Saudi Arabia while continuing to hold Lebanon hostage and under siege in a state of interregnum awaiting the next inevitable trigger igniting the whole ugly business there all over again. The Bush administration "long war" against Islam enraged 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide growing in unity against us. It's also destroying our freedom and democracy at home in the process threatening everyone with the emerging power of a national security police state that spells tyranny with an out-of-control president usurping the dictatorial power of a "unitary executive" claiming the right to go around the law of the land and its international obligations to govern as he pleases.

Petras sounds the alarm and asks how did we get into this debacle, and who's responsible for it. He stresses the need for a full-scale Congressional investigation to find out, but laments it's not likely to happen as long as the Bush neocons have their way. The central thesis of his book is that the Jewish Lobby serves the interests of Zionism and acts as agents for the state of Israel. It co-opted the Bush administration, all others preceding it, and the key centers of power and influence in the country leading us to the disaster we now face because of our misguided Middle East adventurism. He equates our actions in league with Israel to the Nazi war crimes committed in WW II, saying "These are the highest crimes against humanity." Referring to the crime of aggression, the Nuremberg Tribunal called it the "supreme international crime," and those Nazis found guilty of it were hanged. Petras explains that the "worst crimes are committed by those who claim to be a divinely chosen people, a people with 'righteous' claims of supreme victimhood." He goes on to say: "Righteous victimology, linked to ethno-religious loyalties and directed by fanatical civilian militarists with advanced weaponry, is the greatest threat to world peace and humanity."

Petras makes an impassioned plea for progressives (really all people of conscience) to reject the imperial agenda of all nations, and in the case of Israel, to stand firm against inevitably being labelled anti-semitic. Scurrilous name-calling is another refuge of scoundrels that shouldn't be tolerated or allowed to deter our committed assault against the forces of darkness that will destroy us unless we stand firmly against them. Petras tells us it won't be easy, and we can expect forceful ideological attacks against us premised on the notion that Israel is the embodiment of "democracy, liberty and justice" and those daring to criticize the Jewish state will be called supporters of "Arab dictatorships, repression, injustice and terrorism."

The stakes are much too high to let them get away with it using scurrilous name-calling in defense of it. In Petras' words: "Israel and its overseas network in the US...(threatens) not only the oppressed people of Palestine (and Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria and any other state Israel takes aim at) but the rights of people throughout the world." He stresses we have mass public opinion on our side nearly everywhere outside the US, and it's gaining resonance here as well. It sees Israel and our actions in support of the Israeli state as the greatest of all threats to world peace and stability. Petras ends his book with one final impassioned call to arms: "Let's move ahead and de-colonize our country, our minds and politics as a first step in reconstituting a democratic republic, free of entangling colonial and neo-imperial alliances." Wise thoughts from a wise and courageous man. We can't ignore them lest we pay the supreme price of the loss of our freedom (and maybe our lives) because we didn't know it was being taken from us until it was too late to act to save it.

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