

US Middle East Wars

Social Opposition and Political Impotence

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Everywhere I visit from Copenhagen to Istanbul, Patagonia to Mexico City, journalists and academics, trade unionists and businesspeople, as well as ordinary citizens, inevitably ask me why the US public tolerates the killing of over a million Iraqis over the last two decades, and thousands of Afghans since 2001?

“You cannot win the peace unless you know the enemy at home and abroad” US Marine Colonel from Tennessee.

Why, they ask, is a public, which opinion polls reveal as over sixty percent in favor of withdrawing US troops from Iraq, so politically impotent? A journalist from a leading business journal in India asked me what is preventing the US government from ending its aggression against Iran, if almost all of the world’s major oil companies, including US multinationals are eager to strike oil deals with Teheran? Anti-war advocates in Europe, Asia and Latin America ask me at large public forums what has happened to the US peace movement in the face of the consensus between the Republican White House and the Democratic Party-dominated Congress to continue funding the slaughter of Iraqis, supporting Israeli starvation, killing and occupation of Palestine and destruction of Lebanon?

Absence of a Peace Movement?

Just prior to the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003 over one million US citizens demonstrated against the war. Since then there have been few and smaller protests even as the slaughter of Iraqis escalates, US casualties mount and a new war with Iran looms on the horizon. The demise of the peace movement is largely the result of the major peace organizations’ decision to shift from independent social mobilizations to electoral politics, namely channeling activists into working for the election of Democratic candidates – most of whom have supported the war. The rationale offered by these ‘peace leaders’ was that once elected the Democrats would respond to the anti-war voters who put them in office. Of course practical experience and history should have taught the peace movement otherwise: The Democrats in Congress voted every military budget since the US invaded Iraq and Afghanistan. The total capitulation of the newly elected Democratic majority has had a major demoralizing effect on the disoriented peace activists and has discredited many of its leaders.

Absence of a National Movement

As David Brooks (La Jornada July 2, 2007) correctly reported at the US Social forum there is no coherent national social movement in the US. Instead we have a collection of fragmented ‘identity groups’ each embedded in narrow sets of (identity) interests, and totally incapable

of building a national movement against the war. The proliferation of these sectarian 'non-governmental' 'identity' 'groups' is based on their structure, financing and leadership. Many depend on private foundations and public agencies for their financing, which precludes them from taking political positions. At best they operate as 'lobbies' simply pressuring the elite politicians of both parties. Their leaders depend on maintaining a separate existence in order to justify their salaries and secure future advances in government agencies.

The US trade unions are virtually non-existent in more than half of the United States: They represent less than 9% of the private sector and 12% of the total labor force. Most national, regional and city-wide trade union officials receive salaries comparable to senior business executives: between \$300,000 to \$500,000 dollars a year. Almost 90% of the top trade union bureaucrats finance and support pro-war Democrats and have supported Bush and the Congressional war budgets, bought Israel Bonds (\$25 billion dollars) and the slaughter of Palestinians and the Israeli bombing of Lebanon.

The Unopposed War Lobby

The US is the only country in the world where the peace movement is unwilling to recognize, publically condemn or oppose the major influential political and social institutions consistently supporting and promoting the US wars in the Middle East. The political power of the pro-Israel power configuration, led by the American Israel Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC), supported within the government by highly placed pro-Israel Congressional leaders and White House and Pentagon officials has been well documented in books and articles by leading journalists, scholars and former President Jimmy Carter. The Zionist Power Configuration (ZPC) has over two thousand full-time functionaries, more than 250,000 activists, over a thousand billionaire and multi-millionaire political donors who contribute funds both political parties. The ZPC secures 20% of the US foreign military aid budget for Israel, over 95% congressional support for Israel's boycott and armed incursions in Gaza, invasion of Lebanon and preemptive military option against Iran.

The US invasion and occupation policy in Iraq, including the fabricated evidence justifying the invasion, was deeply influenced by top officials with long-standing loyalties and ties to Israel. Wolfowitz and Feith, numbers 2 and 3 in the Pentagon, are life-long Zionists, who lost security clearance early in their careers for handing over documents to Israel. Vice President Cheney's chief foreign policy adviser in the planning of the Iraq invasion is Irving Lewis Liebowitz ('Scooter Libby'). He is a protégé and long-time collaborator of Wolfowitz and a convicted felon.

Libby-Liebowitz committed perjury, defending the White House's complicity in punishing officials critical of its Iraq war propaganda. Libby-Liebowitz received powerful political and financial support from the pro-Israel lobby during his trial. No sooner did he lose his appeal on his conviction on five counts of perjury, obstructing justice and lying, than the ZPC convinced President Bush to 'commute' his prison sentence, in effect freeing him from a 30 month prison sentence before he had served a day. While Democratic politicians and some peace leaders criticized President Bush, none dared hold responsible the pro-Israel lobby which pressured the White House.

The Presidents of the Major American Jewish Organizations (PMAJO) - numbering 52 - and their regional and local affiliates are the leading force transmitting Israel's war agenda against Iran. The PMAJO, working closely with US-Israeli Congressman Rahm Emmanuel and

leading Zionist Senators Charles Schumer and Joseph Lieberman, succeeded in eliminating a clause in the budget appropriation setting a date for the withdrawal for US troops from Iraq.

In contrast to the successful vast propaganda, congressional and media campaigns, organized and funded by the pro-Israel lobbies for the war policies, there is no public record of the big oil companies supporting the Iraq war, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon or the military threats of preemptive attacks on Iran. Interviews with investment bankers, oil company executives and a thorough review of the major Petroleum Institute publications over the past seven years provide conclusive evidence that 'Big Oil' was deeply interested in negotiating oil agreements with Saddam Hussein and the Iranian Islamic government. 'Big Oil' perceives US Middle East wars as a threat to their long-standing profitable relations with all the conservative Arab oil states in the Gulf. Despite the strategic position in the US economy and their great wealth "Big Oil" was totally incapable of countering their political power and organized influence of the pro-Israel lobby. In fact Big Oil was totally marginalized by the White House National Security Advisor for the Middle East, Elliot Abrams, a fanatical Zionist and militarist.

Despite the massive and sustained pro-war activity of the leading Zionist organizations inside and outside of the government and despite the absence of any overt or covert pro-war campaign by 'Big Oil', the leaders of the US peace movement have refused to attack the pro-Israel war lobby and continue to mouth unfounded clichés about the role of 'Big Oil' in the Middle East conflicts.

The apparently 'radical' slogans against the oil industry by some leading intellectual critics of the war has served as a 'cover' to avoid the much more challenging task of taking on the powerful, Zionist lobby. There are several reasons for the failure of the leaders of the peace movement to confront the militant Zionist lobby. One is fear of the powerful propaganda and smear campaign which the pro-Israel lobby is expert at mounting, with its aggressive accusations of 'anti-Semitism' and its capacity to blacklist critics, leading to job loss, career destruction, public abuse and death threats.

The second reason that peace leaders fail to criticize the leading pro-war lobby is because of the influence of pro-Israel 'progressives' in the movement. These progressives condition their support of 'peace in Iraq' only if the movement does not criticize the pro-war Israel lobby in and outside the US government, the role of Israel as a belligerent partner to the US in Lebanon, Palestine and Kurdish Northern Iraq. A movement claiming to be in favor of peace, which refuses to attack the main proponents of war, is pursuing irrelevance: it deflects attention from the pro-Israel high officials in the government and the lobbyists in Congress who back the war and set the White House's Middle East agenda. By focusing attention exclusively on President Bush, the peace leaders failed to confront the majority pro-Israel Democratic congress people who fund Bush's war, back his escalation of troops and give unconditional support to Israel's military option for Iran.

The collapse of the US peace movement, the lack of credibility of most of its leaders and the demoralization of many activists can be traced to strategic political failures: the unwillingness to identify and confront the real pro-war movements and the inability to create a political alternative to the bellicose Democratic Party. The political failure of the leaders of the peace movement is all the more dramatic in the face of the large majority of passive Americans who oppose the war, most of whom did not display their flags this Fourth of July and are not led in tow by either the pro-Israel lobby or their intellectual apologists within progressive circles.

The word to anti-war critics of the world is that over sixty percent of the US public opposes the war but our streets are empty because our peace movement leaders are spineless and politically impotent.

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