

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
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Three of the featured articles of this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on the implications of the success of the Iran Nuclear Agreement on the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee. AIPAC seems to have now lost some of its bi-partisan support in Congress due to its alignment with the Republican Party. The Israeli lobby can no longer assume that both Democrats and Republicans will provide the Israeli Government's unquestioning support. The remaining three articles publicize the expanding and very profitable Israeli arms industry, the growing BDS movement in the US, and the possible effect on Israeli exports by the European Parliament's support for putting special labels on consumer goods produced in West Bank, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights settlements, as well as for "differentiating" between the EU's attitude toward Israel and the settlements.

Commentary: In recent weeks the international community and media has been focused on the unsuccessful opposition of Prime Minister Netanyahu, his government, most of the Israeli people, AIPAC and supporters in the US Congress to the Iran Nuclear Agreement. The concerns about what might happen to Israel effectively cloaked what is happening to the Palestinian people, i.e. continuing Israeli oppression and repression in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. With increasing support for the Iran nuclear agreement and the weakening of bi-partisan support for the positions of the Israeli lobby, there is more pressure on the US Government to be open to a similar process of critical analysis and multi-nation cooperation in the promotion of a just and peaceful solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

- Chemi Shalev writes in *Haaretz* that [the head-to-head clash between AIPAC, the Jewish establishment and the Obama administration over the Iran Nuclear Agreement has increased the already significant distance between Israeli policies and Democrats and the left](#). The fact that an overwhelming majority of Democrats voted against Israel on a matter that Israel described as existential doesn't bode well for the future unquestionable support of Israeli policies.
- Jonathan Chait observes in the *New York Magazine* that [the pro-Israel lobby directed a massive national campaign to block the Iran nuclear deal](#), using every medium at its disposal: television ads, face-to-face lobbying, impassioned pleas from the bimah and in the Jewish press. The campaign has not only failed, it has appeared almost completely ineffectual, and its failure has left its members stupefied.
- Peter Beinart [predicted in Haaretz that the Iran Nuclear Agreement would survive a Congressional vote](#) since the more partisan the opposition to the Agreement becomes, the more Democrats rally behind Obama in response: a huge problem for AIPAC. For years, the organization has worked to ensure that both Democrats and Republicans provide the Israeli government unquestioning support.

- Jonathan Cooke [comments in the Middle East Eye on Jeff Halper's new book, War Against the People](#) which sheds light on the arms industry, arguing that Israel is now the go-to nation for armies and police forces around the world.
- [The United Electrical Workers union \(UE\) has adopted a resolution endorsing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions \(BDS\) movement](#) to pressure Israel to end the occupation and grant Palestinians their freedom. UE is now the first national U.S. union to endorse BDS.
- Barak Ravid, writes in *Haaretz* [that for the first time the European Parliament expressed its support for putting special labels on consumer goods produced in West Bank, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights settlements](#), as well as for “differentiating” between the EU's attitude toward Israel and to the settlements. Five hundred and twenty-five EU parliamentarians voted for the motion, which dealt with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, 70 voted against and 31 abstained.
- Links to additional articles and resources

1) Losers of Iran-deal War Use Orwellian Newspeak to Claim Victory

Chemi Shalev, *Haaretz*, September 12, 2015

A few minutes after the Senate vote brought its campaign to an abrupt end, the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC issued a remarkable press release entitled “Bipartisan Senate Majority Rejects Iran Nuclear Deal.” The statement said that the Senate had “sent a strong message” against the “deeply-flawed, unpopular agreement” that would also serve as a “note of caution – especially to foreign companies and governments – about jumping back into Iran.”

What the lobby's communiqué failed to mention, however, was that the all-hands-on-deck multimillion dollar campaign that it had led to scuttle the Iran deal had collapsed, handing Obama one of the biggest political victories of his presidency.

Welcome to the virtual reality created in the wake of the lost battle in Congress, which often sounds like a calculated campaign concocted in the Ministry of Truth in George Orwell's dystopian novel 1984. In this world, defeat is victory, division is unity and a failing strategy is a brilliant success. ...

After all, there was no “bipartisan majority” in Congress, when only 4 of 46 Democrats joined the GOP majority in the Senate or when 25 of 187 Democratic Representatives voted against the Iran deal in the declarative resolution adopted the following day in the House of Representatives. And Israel did not achieve any “moral victory”, as the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem has asserted, not from a Congress which is reviled by most Americans, one in which Republicans wage total war against anything that Obama touches, from the Iran deal through the Federal budget and the Affordable Care Act to abortions and judicial nominations. And there is no real purpose to the flurry of legislation and legal suits with which Republican leaders are now threatening to hound the Iran deal, as they've done with ObamaCare: it's more the crying and feet-stomping of a child who didn't get his or her way than a judicious reaction by politicians who play by the rules. ...

The head to head clash between AIPAC, the Jewish establishment and the Obama administration increases the already significant distance between Israeli policies and Democrats and the left. The fact that an overwhelming majority of Democrats voted against Israel on a matter that it described as existential doesn't bode well for the future either. ...

2) The Iran Deal and the End of the Israel Lobby

Jonathan Chait, *New York Magazine*, September 4, 2015

...A month ago, that lobby was gearing up for a massive national campaign to block the Iran nuclear deal, using every medium at its disposal: television ads, face-to-face lobbying, impassioned pleas from the bimah and in the Jewish press. The campaign has not only failed, it has appeared almost completely ineffectual, and its failure has left its members stupefied. The deal's anticlimactic success shows that the world has moved beyond them, and they fail to understand how or why this happened.

The miscalculations by opponents of the Iran deal began with a poor grasp of public opinion. They imagined they could foment a broad public backlash, and opponents frequently, and triumphantly, cited opinion polls showing more respondents disapproved than approved of the Iran deal. But the results of these polls varied widely. Small changes in wording produced wildly varying results, reflecting the fact that few people knew or cared much about the issue. Turning a foreign-policy issue with no immediate salience to American security — even a nuclear-armed Iran, a worst-case scenario, would not involve an attack on Americans at home or abroad — into an issue Americans would actively care about was never realistic. ...

The deal's opponents not only misjudged public opinion as a whole, but more astonishingly, they misjudged the state of American Jewish opinion in particular. Congress might have been moved to oppose the Iran deal if the American Jewish community had viewed it as an existential threat to Israel. But Jews did not, on the whole, take that view. A detailed survey of American Jewish opinion by *The Jewish Journal* found that American Jews support the deal, 53 percent to 35 percent. How could that be? Well, this chart shows how Jewish opinion breaks down. ...

3) How Obama Defeated AIPAC on Iran: After Iraq, Democrats didn't want to vote for war

Peter Beinart, *Haaretz*, September 2, 2015

...The Iran deal is unusual in that members of one party — the GOP — are refusing to show that deference. In fact, opposing the president on Iran has become a way for Republicans to rally their political base. But that merely brings us to reason number two that the deal is almost certain to pass: The more partisan the opposition to it becomes, the more Democrats rally behind Obama in response.

This is a huge problem for AIPAC. For years, the organization has worked to ensure that both Democrats and Republicans provide the Israeli government unquestioning support. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, by embracing Mitt Romney in 2012, colluding with Republicans to organize a speech to Congress behind Obama's back this spring and making Ron Dermer, a former GOP operative, his top representative in Washington, has made AIPAC's work harder. ...

AIPAC's power doesn't come from its staff in Washington. It comes from its ability to mobilize influential people in a state or district, people who know their member of Congress well. But if fewer of the AIPAC activists in a given state or city are Democrats, their Iran views carry less weight with Democratic members of Congress. In the words of one Jewish official who has spent time discussing the Iran deal on Capitol Hill, "Members have commented on how AIPAC's membership has changed. They say that when they walk into an AIPAC meeting, it feels to them like they're walking into a conservative, Republican space." Why should Democrats listen to Republican AIPAC activists who will oppose them no matter what? ...

4) In an endless war on terror, we are all doomed to become Palestinians

Jonathan Cooke, *Middle East Eye*, August 29, 2015

For 18 years Jeff Halper has been on the front lines of the Israel-Palestine conflict, helping to rebuild Palestinian homes in the occupied territories demolished by Israel. As he prepares to step down as head of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHAD), he is publishing a new book on Israel. Halper's main conclusion is disturbing. Israel, he says, is globalising Palestine.

The former anthropology professor's wide-ranging research has forced him into an expertise he is not entirely comfortable with: the global arms industry. Halper argues that Israel is cashing in – both financially and diplomatically – on systems of control it has developed in the occupied territories. It is exporting its know-how to global elites keen to protect their privileges from both external and internal challengers. In a world supposedly mired in an endless war on terror, we may all be facing a future as Palestinians.

Halper's book, entitled *War Against the People*, due out next month, suggests that Israel provides a unique window on some of the most important recent developments in what he terms "securocratic warfare". The book's central thesis emerged as he tried to understand why tiny Israel hits way beyond its weight economically, politically and militarily. How does Israel have so much clout – not only in the US and Europe but, more surprisingly, in countries as diverse as India, Brazil and China? None of the usual explanations – Holocaust guilt, the power of lobbies, even the growth in Christian fundamentalism – seemed to provide a complete answer. ...

Halper emphasises that the US is still the world's largest arms dealer by some margin. But in its scramble to fill the niches, Israel helps shine a light on the arms industry's true purpose: not security, but pacification. "When you call it 'security', you shut down the debate. Who doesn't want security? But when you reframe it as 'pacification', the real goals become much clearer."

5) UE Endorses BDS Movement for Peace and Justice in Israel and Palestine

UE Union, September 1, 2015

At its national convention in Baltimore August 16-20, the United Electrical Workers union (UE) adopted a resolution endorsing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) to pressure Israel to end the occupation and grant Palestinians their freedom. UE is now the first national U.S. union to endorse BDS. The full resolution is below. ...

"We reached a breaking point when Israel launched the war on Gaza in 2014, killing over 2,000 people including 500 children. Because Israel has been unwilling to engage in real negotiations to bring about a just resolution to the occupation, this is a necessary step for labor to take in order to bring about a peaceful end to the conflicts there" said Carl Rosen, president of UE's Western Region and a member of the national executive board. ...

UE General President Bruce Klipple says, "The widespread abuse of workers under the occupation is a concern for the global labor movement. We support our brothers and sisters in the labor movement who call for this peaceful protest to bring about a just peace in Israel and Palestine."...

6) [European Parliament Expresses Support for Labeling Settlement Goods](#)

Barak Ravid, *Haaretz*, September 10, 2015

The European Parliament expressed its support Thursday for putting special labels on consumer goods produced in West Bank, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights settlements, as well as for “differentiating” between the EU's attitude toward Israel and to the settlements. Five hundred and twenty-five EU parliamentarians voted for the motion, which dealt with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, 70 voted against and 31 abstained.

The motion stated that the European Parliament: “Welcomes the EU’s commitment – in the spirit of differentiation between Israel and its activities in the occupied Palestinian Territory – to ensuring that all agreements between the EU and Israel must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, takes note of the letter sent to the VP/HR by 16 EU Foreign Ministers on 13 April 2015, encouraging her to take the lead within the Commission with a view to completing the work on EU-wide guidelines on the labelling of Israeli settlement produce.”

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu blasted the expression of support. "The European Parliament decision is unjustified, it is just a perversion of justice and a distortion of reason, and I think that it also harms peace, it doesn't advance it," he said. "The roots of the conflict are not territories and the roots of the conflict are not the settlements. We already have a historical memory as to what happened when Europe marked products of Jews."...

Foreign Ministry officials said that the labeling directives are the first step on a slippery slope that could lead to a boycott of products from the settlements and on all Israeli products in general. The European representatives said that these were not sanctions or a boycott on Israel but only a technical step to apply EU legislation with regard to consumer protection. ...

The issue also came up in a meeting between Netanyahu and British Prime Minister David Cameron Thursday in London. At the beginning of the meeting Netanyahu reiterated the message that he stated frequently in recent weeks as part of his attempts to block moves against the settlements. “I want to say here in 10 Downing Street, and reaffirm again that I am ready to resume direct negotiations with the Palestinians with no conditions whatsoever to enter negotiations, and I'm willing to do so immediately," Netanyahu said.

Mattia Toaldo, a Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, told Haaretz that "this is the first time in my memory that one of the 3 top EU institutions uses the word 'differentiation' for this policy. This clarifies the distinction with boycotts and makes it more acceptable for a number of European governments. On the one hand, this is gradually becoming an automatic policy that is implemented to bring bureaucracy in line with EU laws and international law. On the other hand, some politicians still see it as an alternative to the peace process, and this could block it in the future given that Mogherini now has the imperative to restart talks."

Other articles of interest:

- [The day after is here: What the Iran deal means for Israel](#), Shemuel Meir, *+972 Blog*, September 2, 2015

- [Peaceful Activism In Palestine: They Tried To Kill Me](#), Saed Bannoura, *International Middle East Media Center*, September 6, 2015
- [Abbas to declare end of Oslo II Accord at UN general assembly](#), *Ma'anNews*, September 7, 2015
- [UN Overwhelmingly Approves Proposal to Raise Palestinian Flag](#), Barak Ravid, *Haaretz*, September 11, 2015
- [Detainees' Committee: "100 Palestinian Children Held In The 'Ofar Israeli Prison"](#), *MEMC News*, September 7, 2015
- [Gaza is already unlivable](#), Yousef Munayyer, *Al Jazeera - America*, September 4, 2015
- [RT Report: Nearly all of Gaza's water 'undrinkable'](#), Celine Hagbard, *MEMC & Agencies*, September 10, 2015
- [Palestinians Seek to Fly Flag at UN](#), Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin, September 4, 2015
- [Will Abbas end the Oslo Accords?](#), Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin, September 11, 2015
- [Palestine and Israel: The Double-Standard](#), Robert Fantina, *Palestine News Network*, September 6, 2015
- [Rosh Hashanah - The Jewish People's Job This Year: Cleaning Up Netanyahu's Mess](#), Bradley Burston, *Haaretz*, September 9, 2015
- [Israeli bubble maker that employed Scarlett Johansson is closing a factory](#), William Booth, *Washington Post*, September 7, 2015
- [SodaStream quits West Bank yet remains cruel to Palestinians](#), Nora Barrows-Friedman, *The Electronic Intifada*, September 11, 2015