**[Barack Obama is the wrong target](http://www.prc.org.uk/portal/index.php/1198-)**

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<http://www.prc.org.uk/portal/index.php/publications/articles/1198->

When I was reflecting on Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu’s domination and control of the Congress of the United States of America, the first headline that came into my mind for this article was “Goodbye to peace”. I’ll now explain why I think the headline above is more appropriate. Because of its flirtation with the proposition that peace between an Israeli and Palestinian state must be based on pre-1967 borders with mutually agreed land swaps, President Obama’s speech on Middle East policy principles did one useful thing. And it was Haaretz’s Gideon Levy, the conscience of Israeli journalism, who put his finger most firmly on it. We should be grateful to Obama, he wrote, because his speech “exposed the naked truth – that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu does not want peace.”

**Netanyahu’s peace on Zionism’s terms**  
  
The gentile me almost always agrees with Gideon but on this occasion, and leaving aside the fact that it was Netanyahu’s rejection of what Obama said initially, that exposed the naked truth, I think Gideon’s version of it needs two clarifications.  
  
One is that the truth was exposed like never before only to those who have not been brainwashed by Zionist propaganda – only a minority of Americans, for example.  
  
The other boils down to this. What Netanyahu does want, and only because of his concern about Israel’s growing isolation in the world, is peace on Zionism’s terms, which means the Palestinians giving up their struggle for an acceptable minimum of justice and accepting crumbs from Zionism’s table in the shape of three or four Bantustatans on about 40 per cent of the West Bank, and which they could call a state if they wished.  
  
That’s what Netanyahu meant but did not say when, at his arrogant, insufferably self-righteous and devious best, he assured both houses of the US Congress that “We’ll be generous about the size of the Palestinian state.” Put another way, what Netanyahu doesn’t want is peace on terms the vast majority of Palestinians and most other Arabs and Muslims could accept – a complete end to Israel’s 1967 occupation and a contiguous and viable Palestinian mini-state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with Jerusalem an open city and the capital of two states.  
  
The only question of interest about Netanyahu is this. Does he really believe the nonsense he speaks about the alleged threats to Israel’s security or is he a smooth-talking but diabolical salesman, selling what he knows to be Zionist propaganda lies as truth?  
  
Obama’s speech also exposed (again) the weakness of his own position on policy matters for Israel/Palestine when he said: “Ultimately it is up to the Israelis and the Palestinians to take action. No peace can be imposed upon them – not by the United States, not by anybody else.”  
  
As things are that means Israel remains free to continue its criminal ways:  
  
defying UN Security Council resolutions and international law;  
  
pushing ahead with more and more illegal settlements to consolidate its hold on those parts of occupied West Bank it intends to keep for ever;  
  
oppressing the occupied Palestinians in the hope that, out of complete despair, they will either give up their struggle for an acceptable minimum amount of justice and be prepared to accept crumbs from Zionism’s table or, better still from Zionism’s perspective, will abandon their homeland and seek a new life elsewhere in the Arab world and beyond; and resorting to state terrorism (attacks on neighbouring Arab countries and possibly Iran) whenever its leaders feel the need to impose their will on the region.  
  
Because of Israel’s dependence on the US in a number of ways, not the least of them being the American veto of Security Council resolutions not to Israel’s liking, Obama does have the leverage to impose a Middle East peace on terms that would provide the Palestinians with an acceptable amount of justice without any risk to Israel’s security. And there’s a very compelling case for saying he ought to do so if only to best protect America’s own interests. I believe Obama knows this, so the question of real interest about him is this. Why won’t he act?  
Obama “trapped in an iron cage”  
  
The answer of almost all of his critics who call and campaign in various ways for justice for the Palestinians is that he’s a willing tool of the Zionist lobby. I don’t believe this to be the case. I think the reality of Obama’s position was best summed up by Professor John J. Mearsheimer. To Al-Jazeera recently he said this:  
  
The sad fact is that Obama has remarkably little manoeuvre room on the foreign policy front. The most important item on his agenda is settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and there he knows what has to be done: push both sides toward a two-state solution, which is the best outcome for all the parties, including the United States. Indeed, he has been trying to do just that since he took office in January 2009. But the remarkably powerful Israel lobby makes it virtually impossible for him to put meaningful pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who is committed to creating a Greater Israel in which the Palestinians are restricted to a handful of disconnected and impoverished enclaves. And Obama is certainly not going to buck the lobby – with the 2012 presidential election looming larger every day... The bottom line is that the US is in deep trouble in the Middle East and needs new policies for that region. But regrettably there is little prospect of that happening anytime soon. All of this is to say that there was no way that Obama could do anything but disappoint with Thursday’s [19 May 2011] speech, because he is trapped in an iron cage.  
  
This cage is, of course, the Zionist lobby’s control through its many stooges in Congress of policy for Israel-Palestine. It’s the cage in which, post-Eisenhower, every American president has been trapped. As former ambassador Chas Freeman put it in a recent interview with Russia Today TV channel, Israeli leaders don’t have to listen to the president because they know their lobby can block him in Congress.  
America’s pork-barrel system of politics  
  
And that’s why, despite the fact that, like  Ilan Pappe, I am sick and tired of Obama’s rhetoric, I’ve come to the conclusion that no useful purpose is served by supporters of justice for the Palestinians attacking him. He’s the wrong target. The right target is America’s pork-barrel system of politics which puts what passes for democracy up for sale to the highest bidders. In this context I say, have always said, that I don’t blame the Zionist lobby for playing the game the way it does. It is only playing by the rules. It’s the rules that need to be changed if Obama in a second term, or any future American president, is going to be able to escape from the cage and use the leverage he has to oblige Israel to be serious about peace on terms virtually all Palestinians and most other Arabs and Muslims everywhere could accept.  
  
Some members of Congress who applauded Netanyahu in a scene that reminded me of the enthusiasm for Hitler at Nazi rallies accused Obama of betraying Israel. There has indeed been a betrayal, but what has been betrayed is democracy in America. The many members of Congress who read from Zionism’s script and dance to its tune in order to secure election campaign funds and organized Jewish votes in tight races are not merely stooges. Because they are putting the interests of a foreign power above those of their own country, it’s time to call them what they really are: traitors.  
  
In my view exposing them as such should be given the highest priority by all who campaign in various ways for justice for the Palestinians and peace for all.  
Footnote  
  
***Memo to all concerned in Congress and the White House.***  
  
***Israel is not a “Jewish state”. How could it be when about a quarter of its citizens are Arabs and mainly Muslim? Israel is a Zionist state. It will only be a Jewish state when it has completed its ethnic cleansing programme.***