

# Israel: A significant shift in U.S. public opinion? And what if the answer is “Yes”?

By Alan Hart

March 11, 2014 "Information Clearing House - A recent public opinion poll asked Americans which of two options they would favor if a two-state solution to the Israel/Palestine conflict was no longer on the table. (It is in the rhetoric of leaders and diplomats but not in reality). The two options were:

“The continuation of Israel’s Jewish majority (presumably this assumes permanent Israeli occupation of the West Bank and continuing ethnic cleansing of it by stealth) even if it means that Palestinians will not have citizenship and full rights.”

“One democratic state for all in which Jews and Arabs would be equal.”

Only 24 percent supported the continuation of things as they are.

According to the poll, **65 percent of those asked for their opinion preferred the one state option.**

What explains this?

Is it that an apparent majority of Americans are at last understanding and supporting the need and rights of the Palestinians for justice, or is it something else – an indication that while they are not much concerned about the rights of the Palestinians, an apparent majority of Americans are fed up with an Israel they rightly perceive to be the obstacle to peace?

While I was thinking about my own answer to this question I read a magnificent piece by Gideon Levy in *Ha’aretz* with the headline *AIPAC the Kremlin of U.S. Jewry*. In this article Gideon, who along with Amira Hass is the conscience of Israeli journalism, explained, very convincingly, why AIPAC is in reality “anti-Israel”.

Here, slightly shortened and with my emphasis added, is what he wrote.

QUOTE

**It’s the biggest convention of Israel-haters, attended yearly by some 15,000 representatives, and the damage, historically speaking, that it has done to Israel is perhaps graver than any done by Iran.** The convention is held once a year, and time seems to stop. It’s always the same wheeler-dealers, the same kitsch (trash), the same hollow applause, and the same standing ovation for every Israeli prime minister, no matter his policy. The world turns round and round, but this never changes. Even Israel changes, but not in their eyes. Here Israel is worthy only of applause, blind and automatic applause, now and forever. Like at similar conventions held in Romania by Nicolae Ceausescu, all they do is praise the great leader. Welcome to Bucharest in Washington, to the Kremlin of American Jewry, behold the yearly AIPAC conference. Only here can Netanyahu use his old tricks and gimmicks and be met with a full auditorium on its feet.

Behind Netanyahu sat a young American woman who rose to cheer him when everyone else did. I said to myself, **Why exactly did she get up and cheer? For the ongoing occupation? For the undermining of Israeli democracy? For the ever prevalent racism in Israel?**

“I’m pro-Israel, I’m AIPAC,” says the organization’s slogan. Pro-Israel? The organization’s critics claim that it sometimes acts against U.S. interests; that it also acts against Israeli interests.

Bravo, AIPAC. Seek out the conservative right among American Jewry. **But long ago, Israel should have said, “No, thanks.” Not every show of loud and pushy, even crazed support is a display of friendship. Sometimes caring and friendship mean criticism. But that is not in AIPAC’s playbook.**

The word is that the organization’s power is waning, but it doesn’t look that way on the ground. We see what happens to Congress members who dare to criticize Israel. AIPAC is still in the field with its army of lobbyists, and it is the second most effective lobby in Washington, after the gun lobby – and this should cause Israel to worry. Just like the gun lobby, the Israel lobby is not a good partner. It has affected U.S. policy in the past, as one of the factors that led to continued American support for the occupation, as well as Israeli violence and expansion.

**If AIPAC wanted to show true friendship for Israel, it would have stopped cheering long ago and started whispering. Whisper in the prime minister’s ear, that something bad is happening to the state that AIPAC loves so much. Whisper that something bad is happening in America, too, that people are becoming fed up with Israel’s refusals. A false friend would give a drug addict more and more money, and the addict would thank him for it. A true friend would send him to rehab, and the addict would be angry. The occupation addict is in need of a true friend, one that would send her to rehab. AIPAC, and the United States along with it, has opted to be the false friend – and that’s as anti-Israel as it gets.**

UNQUOTE

Whatever the reason for it – empathy with the Palestinian claim for justice or not – a significant shift in American public opinion really does seem to be underway. Staying with Gideon Levy’s analogy, this might explain why President Obama felt free enough to suggest to occupation addict Netanyahu that he and Israel should consider rehab.

Obama did so in an interview with Jeffrey Goldberg for *Bloomberg View* shortly before he received Netanyahu in the White House. Obama’s message to Netanyahu via Goldberg included the statement that **“There is a limit to the power of the man who bears the title leader of the free world.”**

And he explained what he meant with these words. “If Israel sees no peace deal and continued aggressive settlement construction”, and “if Palestinians come to believe that the possibility of a contiguous sovereign Palestinian state is no longer within reach, **then our ability to manage the international fallout is going to be limited.**”

We do not know whether or not Obama had the balls to say this to Netanyahu face to face, but even if he didn’t, Netanyahu would still have got the message.

Akiva Eldar's interpretation of Obama's message to Netanyahu via Goldberg was that he, the president, "is sick and tired of fighting on Netanyahu's behalf vis-a-vis the Europeans and **automatically vetoing (in the UN Security Council) their proposals condemning the settlements.**"

But there was more to Obama's message than that. He was effectively saying that if Israel continues to be opposed to peace on terms the Palestinians can accept, **no occupant of the White House will be able to protect Israel from the tightening noose of isolation and sanctions.**

My guess is that Obama, unwilling to confront the Zionist lobby and its allies head on by taking to the bully pulpit and going over the heads of Congress, is entertaining the hope that when he has to admit that Secretary of State Kerry's peace process was a mission impossible, and then as the BDS (Boycott Sanctions and Divestment) campaign gathers global momentum with the real potential to make Israel's Jews feel the pain, a majority of them will say to Netanyahu: "**Enough. We insist you that be serious about peace with the Palestinians on terms they can accept.**"

That could happen. What Obama called the "international fallout" if Israel stays on its present course could cause a majority of Israeli Jews to want to save themselves from Zionism. But...

Something else could also happen. A rising global BDS tide could be counter-productive. It could reinforce what very many Israeli Jews have been conditioned to believe by Zionist propaganda and result in them saying something like: "**This proves that the world hates Jews. World go to hell!**" And that, no doubt, would set the stage for a final Zionist ethnic cleansing of Palestine followed, most likely, by the transformation of the rising global tide of anti-Israelism into anti-Semitism. (That might be what Zionism wants in order to go on justifying, if only to itself, its reason for being).

For the sake of discussion let's suppose that, at a point, reason prevails and the clear and present danger of isolation and sanctions does cause a majority of Israeli Jews to demand peace on terms the Palestinians could accept. The question that would then arise is this. **Could Netanyahu or any other Israeli prime minister deliver?**

If the statements of the leaders of the racist and neo-fascist tendency in Israel (secular and religious) can be taken at face value, the answer is "**NO!**" They are totally opposed to an Israeli withdrawal from more or less all the occupied West Bank to create the space for a viable Palestine state with East Jerusalem its capital and/or Jerusalem an undivided city and the capital of two states. And they will never, ever, agree to one state with equal rights for all because that would mean the end of Zionism.

My conclusion? It's great news that a significant shift of American public opinion is underway, but it may very well be that it's too late to stop a Zionist-driven countdown to catastrophe for us all.

As I said at the end of my last post, I would like to be proved wrong.

*Footnote*

In a most remarkable article for *Ha'aretz* on 7 March, Daniel Blatman, a history professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, called on American Jews to end their silence "and co-operate with the shrinking groups of Israelis who have not yet lost hope that it's possible to stop this downslide towards the abyss." The headline over this piece was **If I was an American Jew I would worry about Israel's racist cancer.**"

That caused me to wonder what I would be thinking and feeling if I was a Palestinian. This question first entered my mind a few days ago as I was watching the images of *Five Broken Cameras*, the Oscar-nominated film documenting the struggle of the West Bank village of Bil'in against Israeli occupation and continuing settlement expansion. It was screened on BBC4. (Broadcast to a small audience and starting at 10.30pm, but it was transmitted. I imagine Zionism's watch dogs here in the UK were furious)..

I entertained the thought that if I was a Palestinian I would hate Israeli Jews and not want peace with them. The fact that this is **NOT** the mindset or the position of the vast majority of the occupied and oppressed Palestinians, meaning that what they hate is not Israel's Jews but Zionism, is a tribute to their humanity. **Zionism assisted by the persecution of Jews on and off down the centuries (mainly by Europeans not Arabs) has stripped most Israeli Jews of their humanity. They need to claim it back if there is ever to be peace based on an acceptable amount of justice for the Palestinians.**