"American Appeasement: The US-Israeli 'Special Relationship'"

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This paper focuses on a long-term and disastrous American policy of appeasement of foreign aggression. However, this is not your grandparents,' parents,' nor even your children's version of appeasement. Rarely has the term been applied as I use it in the paper that follows. I will make the case that US foreign policy toward *Israel* has been characterized by appeasement, a diplomacy that has only encouraged aggression, violation of international laws and norms, and fueled chronic international instability and warfare. This paper will focus on the foundations of the appeasement policy, from the creation of Israel in 1948 to the War of 1967 and its aftermath.

By examining a persistent foreign policy that might be labeled appeasement, yet has not been, I emphasize the constructed and highly politicized ways in which the trope has been deployed--and not deployed. Standing appeasement on its head illuminates the relationship between language and power in creating lessons and legacies of the past, as well as perceptions of friends and enemies in contemporary diplomacy. As critics loudly condemn the Obama administration for alleged appeasement of Iran in the recent nuclear non-proliferation agreement, the long history of US appeasement of Israel offers a critical analytic counterpoint to popular perceptions.

"Lessons of the Past"

"Appeasement" may well be the most pejorative trope within the lexicon of diplomacy. Over time the legitimacy of appeasement as a legitimate tool of diplomacy aimed at reducing tensions or promoting reconciliation among adversaries largely has been cast aside in deference to the entirely negative connotation. The term conjures up imagery of craven submission to a brutal aggressor in a naïve attempt at peacemaking. The Munich Conference of 1938, in which British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and other key leaders embraced Adolf Hitler's pledge that he would seek no further expansion of German power in Europe following the incorporation of the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia implanted a powerful "lesson of the past."[1] Throughout the postwar era the "Munich syndrome" reified an ironclad historical lesson that a diplomacy of appeasement would inevitably and invariably function not to contain but rather to encourage escalation and aggression. A sure sign of the trope's potency, appeasement even has its own symbol, the umbrella, as Chamberlain carried one throughout the Munich Conference.[2]

Journalists, historians, and politicians employed the lesson of appeasement of Nazi Germany to discredit interwar peace internationalism. In *The Twenty Years' Crisis* E.H. Carr condemned disarmament and arbitration as failed efforts to inject moral principles in the Hobbesian world of diplomacy. In *American Foreign Policy: Shield of the Repub*lic (1943) Walter Lippmann cited "the preachment and practice of pacifists in Britain and America" as "a cause" of the Second World War. "They were a cause of the failure to keep pace with the growth of German and Japanese armaments. They led to the policy of so-called appeasement."[3]

As professors, pundits and policymakers employed the Munich analogy to draw invidious lessons from the past, appeasement helped sanctify distinctions between "realism" and "idealism" in the formulation of postwar statecraft. The terms were of course narrative constructions but were often depicted as manifestations of objective reality. Under the dominant narrative so called realist foreign policies were championed whereas idealist diplomacy was increasingly viewed as irrational and likely to lead to war. Rather than the idealism of reckless pursuit of peace through appeasement the "lesson of the past" was that the realistic statesmen should confront aggressors with uncompromising military force. By the time scholars began to challenge and contextualize the conventional view of the Munich Conference and appeasement, the trope was firmly entrenched and readily applied.[4]

Since World War II the "lessons" of Munich have been repeatedly invoked and often used to justify military intervention.[5] In 1950 the outbreak of civil war in Korea prompted President Harry S Truman to draw parallels with Munich as justification for US intervention. "I remembered how each time that the democracies failed to act, it had encouraged the aggressors to keep going ahead," he wrote later in his memoirs. "Communism was acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen and twenty years earlier . . . If this was allowed to go unchallenged it would mean a third world war, just as similar incidents had brought on a second world war."[6]

The "appeasement bogey"[7] was bipartisan and thus repeatedly invoked by John Foster Dulles, the leading Republican internationalist and secretary of state under President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Dulles equated negotiating with communist countries with appeasement and steered Eisenhower clear of entering into meaningful diplomacy

with the Soviet Union and "Red" China. US leaders were not alone in invoking the Munich Syndrome. Winston Churchill blamed World War II on appeasement and Anthony Eden cited Munich as justification for the joint British-French-Israeli Suez invasion of Egypt in 1956. Democratic Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson employed the term in conjunction with the "domino theory" in reference to Vietnam. "We learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression," Johnson explained years later. "If I left that war and let the Communists take over South Vietnam then I would be seen as a coward and my nation would be seen as an appeaser."[8] Richard M. Nixon, who in the 1950s had labeled Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson "Adlai the appeaser" faced accusations of appeasement for pursuing détente with the Soviets and the Chinese in the 1970s.[9]

Few could match Ronald Reagan's attachment to the Munich analogy, which he repeatedly invoked both before and during his presidency. At his stirring address in October 1964 at the Republican national convention, Reagan declaimed, "Every lesson of history tells us that the greater risk lies in appeasement, and this is the specter our well-meaning liberal friends refuse to face—that their policy of accommodation is appeasement, and it gives no choice between peace and war, only between fight or surrender." Nearly twenty years later, in his March 1983 "evil empire" speech before the National Association of Evangelicals, he reiterated the ironclad lesson of the past: "If history teaches anything, it teaches that simple-minded appeasement or wishful thinking about our adversaries is folly. It means the betrayal of our past, the squandering of our freedom." Reagan eventually negotiated with the Soviets under Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership, which precipitated right wing cries of appeasement.[10]

Both Presidents Bush invoked appeasement to justify wars in Iraq. "Appeasement does not work," George H.W. Bush declared in the run-up to the Persian Gulf War. "As was seen in the 1930s, we see in Saddam Hussein an aggressive dictator threatening his neighbors."[11] Appearing before the UN in 2002 to promote another war with Iraq, George W. Bush declared, "Had Saddam Hussein been appeased instead of stopped [in 1991], he would have endangered the peace and stability of the world. Yet this aggression was stopped."[12] Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney and other administration officials repeatedly invoked the specter of appeasement to justify the Iraq War. "We need to remind everybody that tyrants don't respond to any kind of appeasement," National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice declared. "Tyrants respond to toughness. And that was true in the 1930s and 1940s when we failed to respond to tyranny, and it is true today."[13] Between the Bush presidencies Secretary of State Madeleine Albright invoked appeasement in reference to Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic to justify President Bill Clinton's decision to unleash the punishing NATO bombing of Serbia.[14]

Israel and Israeli leaders seemingly have been immunized from the otherwise ubiquitous Munich analogy. Israel, however, fits a set of criteria for "aggressor states," which typically are motivated by greed or insecurity or a combination of the two.[15] Religious motivations or fanaticism and visions of cultural superiority and national destiny can also motivate aggressor states. Israel fits all of these criteria. Certainly the European migrants who forged the Zionist state had every reason to feel insecurity in the wake of the Nazi genocide targeting Jews. While this is not the place to consider psycho-historical forces, clearly the traumas unleashed by the Nazi genocide profoundly influenced the aggressive character of the subsequent state of Israel. Key leaders such as

David Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin, both Poles, understood the horrors of European anti-Semitism all too well and meant to respond aggressively to any perceived threat to the Jewish people. Both also believed deeply in a biblically sanctioned destiny to forge an expansive Jewish state in the holy land with Jerusalem as its eternal capital. Greed complemented religious destiny in driving Israeli settler colonialism, which required the removal of the indigenous population to make way for a chosen people carrying out a sacred cause.[16] Israel, in sum, reflects the key traits of an aggressor state.

The United States has repeatedly responded to Israeli aggression and violations of international law and norms with a diplomacy of appeasement. And true to the ironclad lesson of the past, appeasement has only encouraged and deepened Israeli aggression and violation of Palestinian human rights. It has also led to chronic instability and regular outbreaks of war.

American Appeasement of Israel

A foreign policy of appeasement materialized at the outset of the U.S. relationship with the new state of Israel. In May 1948, as civil tumult escalated between Arabs and Jews in the former British mandate of Palestine, the State Department called for a ceasefire, extension of the mandate, and negotiations, all of which the Jewish Agency rejected. Led by Ben-Gurion and bolstered by the *Haganah*, the hyper aggressive Jewish defense forces, Israel proclaimed its independence and proceeded to crush and expel its outmanned Palestinian and Arab adversaries.

Not for the last time Israel expanded the land available for settler colonization through warfare and subjugation or removal of the indigenous population. Contrary to a deep-seated mythology, Israel enjoyed a military advantage and faced no threat of being

driven "into the sea." Moreover the Arab states were disunited but not altogether

intransigent. Most were willing to recognize Israel and compromise on borders, but they

did insist on the return and resettlement of some of the 750,000 refugees who had been

driven out of Palestine.[17] As the removal campaign accelerated in the summer of 1948,

the Swedish diplomat and UN emissary Count Folke Bernadotte called for a ceasefire, the

return of Palestinian refugees, and the internationalization of Jerusalem. The Zionist

terror group Lehi assassinated him in September.[18]

The Israelis stepped up the removal campaign backed by sometimes-

indiscriminate violence to create more "facts on the ground," the preeminent tactic of

settler colonial expansion. The Zionists accelerated destruction of villages "with the

specific aim of invalidating any discussion on the subject of refugees returning to their

houses, since their houses would no longer be there." Areas such as the Galilee, once

almost exclusively Palestinian, were now occupied by Israelis. Jewish forces also took

villages in southern Lebanon and summarily executed scores of their residents.[19]

By this time the United States had emerged as the leading power in the world and

had displaced Britain as the principal benefactor of the new Israeli state. Religion and

settler colonialism help explain the American affinity for Israel. Like the emerging

Jewish state, the United States had cemented its independence by driving out "savage"

foes to claim a chosen land, under God.[20] In addition to the American cultural affinity for

settler colonialism, the Jewish Lobby had begun to make an impact by the late 1940s.

"The Zionists played a major role in the political struggle to gain President Truman's

backing for a Jewish state in Palestine," Zvi Ganin points out. Jacob Blaustein, president

of the American Jewish Congress, lobbied persistently and effectively with Truman, as

did Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis. Finally, Chaim Weizmann, who became Israel's first president, personally lobbied Truman for uncritical US support.[21]

Truman, like many Americans, was sincerely sympathetic to the horrifying plight of European Jews under the Nazi genocide. Neither was he unmindful of the Jewish vote in New York as his underdog 1948 election bid unfolded. Like millions of Americans Truman was a devout Christian, a lifelong Baptist, intimately familiar with biblical stories (Truman boasted that he had twice read the Bible cover to cover). In going against Israel, the President seems to have decided, he would be going against God. "Truman's biblical background at least predisposed him to favor prompt recognition," Irvine Anderson argues.[22]

Only forces as powerful as the Bible and the nascent Israel Lobby could trump Truman's respect for George C. Marshall, the World War II hero and now the president's secretary of state. Joined by the State Department regional experts, the Department of Defense, and indeed virtually the entire foreign policy establishment, Marshall sharply opposed recognition of Israel citing the destabilization of the Middle East region that it was bound to provoke. But Truman made a domestic political adviser, his fellow Missourian Clark Clifford, the point man on Israel. Clifford marshaled a lawyer's brief in which he "provided arguments in the vocabulary of national security" to promote a policy of "political expediency." Addressing concerns about access to Mideast oil, Clifford argued that the Arabs would have little choice but to sell the Americans oil under any circumstances. Adding an Orientalist flourish, Clifford declared that the United States should not put itself in the "ridiculous role of trembling before the threats of a few

nomadic desert tribes." The buck then stopped with Truman as an epoch of U.S. appeasement of Israeli landed expansion began.[23]

By granting immediate recognition to Israel, and essentially acquiescing in the expansion of the borders well beyond those granted under partition, the United States replaced the British as the chief enabler of the Israeli settler colonial state. On May 14, 1948, the Israelis declared independence in the midst of the ethnic cleansing campaign against the Palestinian Arabs. With the endorsement of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union, the UN General Assembly voted 33-13 in favor of recognition.

Israel stonewalled UN mediation at the Lausanne Conference (1949), rejected U.S. pressure to compromise and instead provocatively announced relocation of the capital to Jerusalem. By the time of the ceasefire in January 1949, the infant state had increased in size from the 55 percent under the UN partition to possess 77 percent of the former British Mandate. With some 750,000 Palestinians driven out, a census conducted in November 1948 counted 782,000 Jews to 69,000 remaining Arab residents in the new Israel. The Zionists had orchestrated a population shift of dramatic proportions through a concerted campaign of ethnic violence. By the end of 1949 the Jewish population soared to one million, a third of those having entered the country in the past eighteen months, now coming mostly from the Near and Middle East rather than from Europe. Through determination, deft modernist diplomacy, and sometimes-indiscriminate violence the new state of Israel had transformed the Zionist project from fantasy into reality.[24]

American Appeasement and the War of 1967

A generation after the founding of Israel, the pivotal appeasement moment in U.S.-Israeli relations came during and after the War of 1967. Israel does not bear sole

responsibility for the outbreak of what Israelis call the Six Day War, but the Zionist state ultimately initiated the direct hostilities and ultimately chose to go to war rather than pursue diplomatic efforts to avoid it. The war had profound consequences, ensuring generations of conflict and cementing US appeasement of Israel.

Arab-Israeli tensions and conflict had persisted throughout the 1950s, including brutal Israeli reprisals over Arab cross-border "infiltration," which Israel depicted as an existential threat but which overwhelmingly involved returning refugees and social migrants who were typically unarmed yet often killed anyway. In October 1953 future Israeli leader Ariel Sharon led the most egregious assault, which resulted in the deaths of more than fifty innocent civilians in the village of Qibya.[25] Three years later Israel, Britain, and France launched a surprise attack in an effort seize control of the Suez Canal from Egypt. A livid President Dwight D. Eisenhower forced the allied withdrawal from Suez, with the Israelis holding out the longest and demanding security guarantees before they would pull back.

Committed to a policy of global containment of communism, the Eisenhower administration tried to play more of an even hand with Israel in order to avoid driving Arab states into the Soviet camp. Eisenhower's effort to challenge the US appeasement policy encountered strong opposition in Tel Aviv and in the United States. "Except for Israel," the President complained in July 1958, "we could form a viable policy in the area."[26] Meanwhile, Palestinians gradually mounted an international campaign of publicity and resistance to Israel spearheaded by the Palestine Liberation Organization, formed in 1964.[27]

The Kennedy and Johnson administrations strove to support Israel while at the same time avoiding alienating Arab states and driving them into the Soviet camp. "It was crucial that we not become so openly Israel's champions as to force the Arabs to line up overtly with Moscow," as diplomat Robert Komer put it in May 1964. "The one thing we ask of Israel is not to keep trying to force us to an all-out pro Israeli policy." Washington supported Israel in water diversion projects at the expense of its neighbors and dealt arms to Arab states as well as Israel in an effort to maintain balance, an approach that brought sharp protests from Tel Aviv.[28]

Arab-Israeli tensions escalated over a variety of issues including disputes over water rights, repression of the Palestinians, and a brutal Israeli surprise assault on the Jordanian controlled West Bank village of Samu on November 13, 1966. The unprovoked attack replete with tanks killed dozens of Jordanian soldiers, destroyed forty-one houses, and sharply increased tensions. Israel subsequently deliberately provoked conflict with Syria, an escalation that Avi Shlaim describes as "the single most important factor in dragging the Middle East to war in June 1967." Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser sought to preserve his status as the acknowledged leader of the Arab world by responding to the Israeli aggression without however going to war. After sending Egyptian military forces into Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, Nasser made the fateful mistake of closing the Gulf of Tiran to Israeli shipping. His action provided Tel Aviv with a *casus belli* that it would not let pass.[29]

During the buildup to the 1967 war the Johnson administration urged restraint, making clear that Washington's position was that Israel should avoid going to war. Johnson repeatedly assured the Israelis of US support in reopening navigation of the

straits by diplomatic means. Johnson advised Eban on May 26, "We will pursue vigorously any and all possible measures to keep the Strait open." The Israelis insisted that they were under threat of imminent attack from the Arab states, which both Soviet and American intelligence confirmed was not the case. "The US assessment does not agree with that of the Israelis," Johnson told Eban. "Our best judgment is that no attack on Israel is imminent and, moreover, if Israel was attacked our judgment is that the Israelis would lick them." Johnson stressed that Israel should not "make herself responsible for initiating hostilities." The president declared and then reiterated, "Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go it alone."[30]

Despite Johnson's admonitions Israel did decide to go it alone, unleashing its military forces on its Arab neighbors in a devastating assault that delivered a quick and unambiguous military victory on all fronts. By the time of the 1967 War Israel had developed an aggressive military strategy emphasizing preemptive strikes and rapid deployments to quickly subdue its enemies. Beginning on June 5 Israel implemented the strategy with a massive assault on Egyptian airfields, taking Cairo out of the war from the outset. After pummeling Egypt and Jordan, which recklessly had followed Nasser's lead in joining in the futile battle with Israel, the Israelis turned their attention to Syria with the goal of seizing the Syrian or Golan Heights. Israel "completely ignored" calls for a ceasefire by the UN, the United States, the Soviet Union, and myriad other nations and world leaders and instead went "smashing ahead," as the CIA put it, with the conflict.[31]

On June 8, 1967, Israeli air and naval forces attacked the *USS Liberty*, a naval intelligence vessel monitoring the conflict in international waters north of the Sinai Peninsula. Israel claimed that separate attacks from the air and the sea had resulted from

mistaken identification of the US-flagged naval vessel for an Egyptian ship. While much material remains classified in both Washington and Tel Aviv, evidence overwhelmingly suggests the attack was deliberate and probably motivated by an effort to head off international intervention and a ceasefire that might preclude the assault on Syria, which Israel feared the *Liberty* might have been in a position to monitor. Following the war Israel apologized and paid a series of indemnities for the families of the thirty-four men killed and 174 wounded but has steadfastly maintained that the assault on the virtually defenseless ship was a case of mistaken identity.

In a dramatic manifestation of the growing US policy of appeasement of Israel, the Johnson administration, which had called off US forces responding to the *Liberty's* desperate May Day plea for military assistance, formally accepted the Israeli explanation and did its best to downplay the assault. Despite its official acceptance of the Israeli explanation and various efforts to silence the victims and cover up the event, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and myriad other officials privately condemned the Israeli explanation as fictitious and acknowledged that the two separate attacks had been deliberate. At a special committee of the National Security Council on June 9 Clifford declared it was "inconceivable that it was an accident " and that the Israeli official explanation of "military recklessness" was "terrible." CIA Director Richard Helms also concluded that the attack had been deliberate. "I didn't believe them then, and I don't believe them to this day," Rusk wrote in his memoirs in 1990. "The attack was outrageous."[32]

Following the war the Johnson administration cemented the US foreign policy of appeasement by acquiescing to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories taken through

aggression in violation of the UN and international law. A keen supporter of Israel throughout his political career, Johnson while serving as Majority Leader of the Senate had condemned Eisenhower for pressuring the Israelis to withdraw from territory occupied in the Suez assault. Like Truman, Johnson was a southern Baptist whose religiosity provided a foundation for his support of Israel. Like millions of people around the world who were stunned by the traumas of World War II, Johnson empathized with the Jewish state in the wake of the Nazi genocide. But also like Truman, Johnson had political motives, as he cultivated Jewish support and hoped to dissuade liberal Jews who inclined toward criticism of the escalating war with Vietnam. Johnson sometimes linked "poor little Israel" with South Vietnam, as small states threatened with existential aggression.[33]

The pivotal moment of appeasement came after the war as the Johnson administration acquiesced to Israeli occupation of the territories seized during the conflict: East Jerusalem, the West Bank of the Jordan River, the Syrian Heights, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Gaza Strip. As many scholars have explained, most recently and most conclusively Avi Raz, Israel had no intention of relinquishing the occupied territories (OT), particularly the West Bank. Israeli leaders including Prime Minister Levi Eshkol wanted the "dowry" of the OT, as Raz puts it, without taking the "bride," namely the Palestinian Arabs who lived in the West Bank and other newly occupied territories.[34]

Following the War of 1967 the Israelis formally claimed to be open to a diplomatic settlement, a "land for peace" agreement in which Tel Aviv would withdraw from the OT in return for the Arab states' diplomatic recognition of Israel, but the offer was disingenuous. Israel instead meant to establish "facts on the ground" by authorizing

settlements in the West Bank, which Israelis referenced with the biblical names Judea and Samaria. After first assuring the United States that it had no "colonial aspirations," the Israelis moved to establish a continuing occupation of the Arab territories. On June 21 Eban advised US officials that the war would lead to "some kind of association between West Bank and Israel"; that it would be "natural thing" for the Gaza Strip to be part of Israel; and that "Israel completely rules out the possibility of re-dividing the city of Jerusalem."[35] From that point forward Israeli positions hardened and the occupation became permanent.

Over time Israel, with support from the Johnson administration, blamed the Arabs for the absence of peace, citing the famous "three No's" issued at an Arab summit in Khartoum in September 1967: no peace, no recognition, and no negotiations with Israel. The Three No's were provocative and ill advised yet also misleading, as Arab policies had in fact changed as a result of the humiliating defeat at the hands of Israel. As the Johnson administration acknowledged, despite the three No's, which were issued in the context of the continuing Israeli occupation, the consensus Arab position had changed from calling for the liquidation of Israel to seeking a diplomatic settlement in which Israel would gain recognition in return for disgorging the OT and accommodating a Palestinian state and the return of at least some of the 750,000 refugees. The Israelis, however, emphasized allegedly implacable Arab hostility to the existence of the Zionist state while playing off Jordan's King Hussein, who sincerely pursued a negotiated settlement.[36]

The United States ultimately acquiesced to Israeli intransigence in response to UN Security Council Resolution 242, a land for peace formula approved on November 22

under which Israel would withdraw from the OT in return for Arab recognition. Egypt, Jordan, and Israel formally endorsed Resolution 242, but the Israelis soon claimed the resolution's reference to "the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war" did not mean specifically "the" territories it had just seized. In reality there was nothing unambiguous about Resolution 242, including the provision for the "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict."[37]

Tel Aviv's thinly veiled justification for rejecting a viable international settlement of the conflict reflected the same tactics Israel employed in fending off American efforts to commit Israel to nuclear non-proliferation. Beginning with the Kennedy administration the Israelis gladly accepted American military assistance, including tanks and aircraft, in return for supposedly signing on to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The Israelis secretly developed nuclear weapons capability anyway in blatant violation of their pledges to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. As Rusk bluntly observed in 1965, Israel had "deliberately misled us initially about the nature of the nuclear facility at Dimona therefore we must assume Israel intends to make its decisions on whether to produce nuclear weapons without consulting us." Rusk urged a policy in which "we should press Israel now for acceptance of [International Atomic Energy Agency] safeguards," adding "there is great urgency about this matter in view of the disturbing signals we've been getting from Israel."[38]

By 1969 it was too late. "Underneath the official posture, our intelligence indicates that Israel is rapidly developing a capability to produce and deploy nuclear weapons," diplomat Joseph Sisco observed. The only possibility of deterring Israel would be to make clear that development of a nuclear weapons capability would precipitate a

"fundamental change in the US-Israel relationship."[39] Rather than confronting Israel the

United States opted for appeasement. Washington acquiesced to the tortured *ex post facto*

Israeli explanation that it had meant only that it would not "introduce" nuclear weapons

into the Middle East by means of publically stating that it had developed the capability.

In other words, Israel would cultivate nuclear weapons but not admit that it was doing so

and this, Israeli leaders said, was what they meant by accepting non-proliferation.

It seems reasonable to term the US policy of acquiescence to Israeli nuclear

proliferation and territorial aggrandizement in violation of international law as a

diplomacy of appeasement. This policy enabled the Israelis to begin to cement their

control over the OT by authorizing settlements of *Eretz Yisrael*, or the greater biblical

Israel, in the West Bank. From this point forward Israeli religious fanaticism--a

phenomenon typically associated in Western discourse exclusively with Muslims--

precluded a settlement of the conflict. US acquiescence to Israeli landed expansion in

direct violation of international law and UN Resolution 242 cemented for the long term

the appeasement policy. As a result of conquests in the War of 1967, the Israeli state

assumed control over 90,000 square kilometers of territory compared to 20,000 square

miles prior to June 1967.[40]

Overwhelming US public support for Israel lay behind the US appeasement

policy. In the midst of the War of 1967 opinion polls showed an almost twenty to one

ratio of pro-Israel sentiment in the United States. Race and religion anchored American

perceptions of Arabs as backward, untrustworthy, and prone to violence whereas the

Israelis, mostly Europeans, were credited with taking civilization to an unruly land, much

as the Americans had done in settling their own "frontier." Millions of American

Protestants joined Jews in support of Israel's claim to the biblical holy land. US media and public opinion emphasized Arab terrorism and refusal to recognize Israel, downplaying Palestinian statelessness and often-disproportionate Israeli state violence. Moreover, in the wake of the 1967 war, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), founded in 1951, emerged as one of the most powerful lobbies in Congress.[41]

While Israel easily fended off the Johnson administration, Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry A. Kissinger, preoccupied with great power diplomacy and the Vietnam War, lacked enthusiasm for a Middle East peace accord. Kissinger, a German born Jew whose family had been victimized by the Nazi genocide, undermined Secretary of State William Rogers' peace plan based on Resolution 242. In the wake of another Arab-Israeli war in 1973, President Jimmy Carter presided over a separate peace between Israel and Egypt in 1978, including turnover of the Sinai Peninsula, but Carter's quest for a comprehensive settlement collapsed as a result of Israeli intransigence. The Likud Prime Minister Begin, who had been a terrorist in the *Irgun* during the British mandate, was wholly committed to *Eretz Yisrael* and thus had no intention of following through on his pledge at Camp David, Maryland, to allow for "Palestinian autonomy" out of respect for "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people."[42]

Underscoring the bi-partisan character of American appeasement, the Reagan and Clinton administrations reinforced the U.S.-Israeli "special relationship" hence the "peace process" stagnated during their presidencies. Both administrations changed official US policy by calling into question the fundamental illegality of the Israeli occupation under international law. Both accelerated arms shipments and enabled violent retribution against Palestinians and neighboring Lebanese. Between Reagan and Clinton

and in the wake of the Persian Gulf War, President George H.W. Bush sought to revive the land for peace formula in pursuit of a comprehensive settlement. Bush met rejection from the Israelis as well as the Israel Lobby in Congress and as a result suffered a sharp drop in Jewish support in his failed bid for reelection in 1992.[43]

Especially in the wake of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush gave Israel virtually carte blanche to crack down internally with ongoing campaigns of expanding settlements, uprooting, killing, walling off, and incarcerating thousands of Palestinian Arabs. In 2006 Israel launched a second brutal assault on Lebanon. Under Sharon's leadership Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, which it then cut off, isolated, and repeatedly attacked with disproportionate and often-indiscriminate force following the free election of a Hamas-led government in Gaza.[44] American appeasement enabled and accompanied all of these actions while US foreign assistance to Israel soared to new heights. From its beginnings in 1962, American military aid to Israel has amounted to nearly $100 billion. The United States has been regularly transferring military assistance of about $3 billion annually.[45] The United States thus not only appeases Israeli violent oppression, it finances it. The few politicians and diplomats who might be inclined to criticize Israeli actions refrain from doing so in the face of broad public support and the potential wrath of the Israel lobby.

Few wielded the appeasement metaphor more effectively than Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who repeatedly invoked the lesson of the past in opposition to the Iran nuclear non-proliferation agreement. In the annual Holocaust Remembrance Day observance in April 2015, Netanyahu declared, "Democratic governments made a critical mistake before World War II and . . . they are making a

grave mistake now too . . . Just as the Nazis aspired to crush Civilization . . . while

annihilating the Jewish people, so to does Iran strive to gain control of the region . . . with

the explicit intent of obliterating the Jewish state."[46] Exploiting to the fullest the leverage

provided by American appeasement, Netanyahu went over the head of President Barack

Obama, the fourth US president after Eisenhower, Carter, and Bush I who attempted to

propel Israel toward a settlement of the Middle East conflict. Supported by virtually all

Republicans as well as many "liberal" Democrats, Netanyahu spoke before Congress in

March 2015 to condemn the Obama administration-led effort to forge a nuclear non-

proliferation agreement with Iran. He then declared at the eleventh hour of a tight but

ultimately successful reelection bid that "droves" of Palestinian Israelis were converging

on the polls and that if reelected he would not support the creation of a Palestinian state.[47]

When the Obama administration eventually concluded the executive agreement

on non-proliferation with Iran, Netanyahu, seemingly every Republican in Congress, and

liberal Democrats like Chuck Schumer of New York condemned the accord. It was, they

said, a simple case of appeasement, which as "history tells us" serves only to further the

course of conflict and aggression.

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