

War Against the People

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Israel, the Palestinians
and Global Pacification

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Introduction: How Does Israel Get Away With It?

This book began with a question that many activists like myself have asked over the years: How does Israel get away with it? In a decidedly post-colonial age, how is Israel able to sustain a half-century occupation over the Palestinians, a people it violently displaced in 1948, in the face of almost unanimous international opposition? Why, indeed, does the international community tolerate an unnecessary conflict that not only obstructs efforts to bring some stability to the wider Middle East, a pretty important geo-political region in which the United States and Europe are fighting a number of wars, but one that severely disrupts the international system as a whole?

Various common-sense explanations have been put forth, primarily the clout wielded by the Jewish and Christian fundamentalist communities in the US. The perception that Israel is one of “us,” a white Global North nation fighting Muslim terrorism and sharing “our” moral values, plays a role as well. During the Cold War, when Israel was already a major regional military power, the case was made that Israel served US interests. “A part of the Nixon Doctrine,” Chomsky reminds us,

... was that the U.S. has to control Middle East oil resources—that goes much farther back—but it will do so through local, regional allies, what were called “cops on the beat” by Melvin Laird, Secretary of Defense. So there will be local cops on the beat, which will protect the Arab dictatorships from their own populations or any external threat. And then, of course, “police headquarters” is in Washington. Well, the local cops on the beat at the time were Iran, then under the Shah, a US ally; Turkey; to an extent, Pakistan; and Israel was added to that group. It was another cop on the beat. It was one of the local gendarmes that was sometimes called the periphery strategy: non-Arab states protecting the Arab dictatorships from any threat, primarily the threat of what was called radical nationalism—independent nationalism—meaning taking over the armed resources for their own purposes. Well, that structure remained through the 1970s.¹

Support for Israel gained new traction after 9/11, when it was argued that Israel provided critical support in America's War on Terror.

All this might partially explain continued American support for Israel, but even here is an enigma: America's continued role as Israel's main patron appears to actually conflict with its wider interests in the Middle East. In 2006, the Iraq Study Working Group co-chaired by former Secretary of State James Baker stated flatly:

The United States will not be able to achieve its goals in the Middle East unless the United States deals directly with the Arab-Israeli conflict ... To put it simply, all key issues in the Middle East—the Arab-Israeli conflict, Iraq, Iran, the need for political and economic reforms, and extremism and terrorism—are inextricably linked.²

A few years later, in March, 2010, General David Petraeus, then head of the Central Command whose area of responsibility includes the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that

The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests in the AOR [Area of Operations]. Israeli-Palestinian tensions often flare into violence and large-scale armed confrontations. The conflict foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel. Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of U.S. partnerships with governments and peoples in the AOR and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilize support. The conflict also gives Iran influence in the Arab world through its clients, Lebanese Hizballah and Hamas.³

And the pattern goes on. In 2013 the Obama Administration declared Israel a "major strategic partner," even as the Israeli government was deliberately and with open disdain torpedoing Secretary of State Kerry's peace initiative.

And Europe? Can we explain the EU's consistent up-grading of its relations with Israel, including the funding of major Israeli weapons projects through its Horizon 2020 program, solely by guilt over the Holocaust? Can that explain NATO's designation of Israel as a major non-NATO ally? How

to explain Israel's acceptance into the OECD, the exclusive club of advanced economies, despite a human rights record that should have excluded it?

How, indeed, do we explain the ever-closer relations of many countries to Israel that traditionally supported the Palestinians? India and China, which until the 1990s did not even have diplomatic ties with Israel, are now among its chief trading partners, particularly in the military and security sectors. In 2007 Israel became the first country outside of Latin America to be affiliated with MERCOSUR, the continent's emerging common market.

What is the genuine *quid pro quo*, the Big Reason for supporting Israel even among countries with no Jewish or Christian Zionist lobby? No less to the point, why did Israel itself reject the two-state solution? The intractable enmity of the Arab world changed dramatically with the peace agreement with Egypt in 1979, the PLO's acceptance of the two-state solution in 1988, the Oslo negotiations of the 1990s and a subsequent peace agreement with Jordan, all culminating in the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. Even today, amidst the meltdown in the Middle East, the Palestinian Authority and the Arab League still seek a two-state solution that would leave Israel intact and secure, and Egypt remains Israel's best friend (after the American Congress). How do you explain Israel's rejection of these opportunities? It cannot be explained by security. On the contrary, the IDF would have remained as strong as ever, the only major concession being a measly 22 percent of the country with little if any security value.

I began to look outside the box of the Occupation itself. I noticed that Israel has diplomatic relations with 157 countries, and virtually all the agreements and protocols Israel has signed with them contain military and security components. I also noted that Saudi Arabia no less had initiated the Arab League's Peace Initiative in 2002, despite an almost atavistic rejection of Israel's religious ideology. From those tiny threads, it dawned on me that when military relations are mixed into the diplomatic stew, new, surprising and seemingly impossible constellations emerge. As I began to trace Israel's military relations more closely, another picture emerged in which Israel was actually a regional hegemon accepted as such—or at least related to as such—by the other countries of the region and beyond. Israel's position in the world could not be explained by normal international relations; again, most countries strongly *oppose* its Occupation policies. Nor could lobbies or the Holocaust explain it.

Israel, it seemed, was succeeding in parlaying its military and securocratic prowess into political clout, in pursuing what I now call *security politics*. The Occupied Palestinian Territories, I now understood, did not pose

a financial burden on Israel or an unwanted source of insecurity and conflict. Indeed, the opposite was the case. Without an occupation and an interminable conflict, how would Israel sustain its strong international standing? The Occupation represents a *resource* for Israel in two senses: economically, it provides a testing ground for the development of weapons, security systems, models of population control and tactics without which Israel would be unable to compete in the international arms and security markets, but no less important, being a major military power serving other militaries and security services the world over lends Israel an international status among the global hegemony it would not have otherwise. Israel is a small country scrambling to carve out a niche in the transnational military-industrial complex. Where would it be without the Occupation and the regional conflict it generates?

Looking out of the box even further, I saw that Israel would be an ideal vehicle for entering a world of military systems I knew nothing about—C⁴ISTAR-capable weapons, full-spectrum dominance, COMINT/SIGINT/OSINT/HUMINT, phased-array radar, avionics, electro-optically guided missiles, ground moving target indicators, securocratic systems of control—and the science behind it, literally “rocket science.” It’s a world with a tremendous impact on our lives, much of it obvious. Politically, armed forces determine the power of countries, classes and cliques to rule violently over lives, lands and resources. Economically, militaries and domestic security constitute a 2.25 trillion dollar a year industry. Socially, wars, soldiers and police militarize our cultures, as does the very presence of arms. Some 875 million “small arms” are found in the world, 650 million (almost 75 percent) among civilians, 40 percent of those (270 million) in the hands of Americans.⁴

But this global pacification industry, as I call it, threatens us in fundamental ways not immediately obvious. As this book will show, global systems of control and the weapons that comprise them are becoming totalizing in their power, their development carried out by the brightest scientific minds in cutting-edge labs supported by hundreds of billions in corporate and government funds. GNR, the fusion of genetics, nanotechnology and robotics into lethal, self-replicating nanowarriors endowed with enhanced artificial intelligence, is a leading field in military research, yet how many peace and human rights activists—including me—even understand its implications? What do we know about the military or security, or, for that matter, about modern weapons and tactics? Speaking for myself, I couldn’t have told you the difference between a howitzer and

a mortar, and the intricacies of C⁴ISTAR systems still baffle me. To be sure, a vast literature on weapons, war and policing is available, but it is not very critical (the writings of P.W. Singer, Jeremy Scahill and a few others aside). And how many of us spend much time in the “Military History” section of the bookstore? The militaries of the world and the technologies of control they are spawning hardly register on our low-tech radars.

Critical analysts and activists, to be sure, regularly point to the deleterious effects of militarism (less so policing), but we have little idea of how securitization actually works. Few of us have military or police backgrounds, and most of us come out of the social sciences or humanities, not the “hard” sciences. C.P. Snow’s “two cultures” have come home to roost. We of the social sciences have little if any idea of what is being cooked up by the mad scientists of our defense-related universities and corporate research centers, while they, unencumbered by the problematics of progressive political analysis or social movements, pursue research or commercial projects with little concern over how their research or products will be used.

This book attempts to bridge these gaps, while pushing global pacification into the center of left politics. It deserves to take its place alongside other key transnational movements of counterhegemony such as transnational labor, feminism and the environment.⁵ Because securitization represents the enforcement arm of transnational capitalism, ensuring the smooth flow of capital and resources while addressing “challenges” to its hegemony, I begin by placing the pacification industry in its global context, that of the capitalist world-system. Within that framework I examine how “hegemony,” a fluid, seemingly benign and unobtrusive form of domination, aspires to securitization and pacification. In order to “nail down” this slippery yet vital force at different levels of the world-system—the ruling “core,” a semi-periphery of relatively strong states and the peripheries—I identify several fundamental “hegemonic tasks,” each calling for a different constellation of military, security and police structures, together with appropriate weapons and systems of control. Since my analysis revolves around pacification, I focus in particular on “securocratic wars.”

This book, then, sets out to address six major concerns.

First, to lay out the aims and structure of the global pacification industry and how it operates through securocratic wars. This I do in Chapter 1.

Second, to examine “security politics” and its role in international affairs. I begin with the questions, “How does Israel get away with it?” and “Why does Israel want to get away with it instead of obtaining peace

and security?” Taking as my vehicle for examining the global pacification system a small but pivotal military power, Israel, I show, through its need to strategically “niche-fill”, the contours of the world’s arms and security industries. Chapters 2 and 3 examine Israel’s place in the wider scheme of global pacification.

Third, to survey some of the major weapons systems Israel develops, deploys and sells to the powers of the core and semi-peripheries, weapons inspired by the Pentagon’s overall aspiration to “Full-Spectrum Dominance and Control.” This I do in Chapters 4–6. My survey of Israeli weapons systems may strike you as somewhat descriptive and “catalogue-like,” but that’s because it’s necessary to lay out in some technical detail the weapons systems and technologies arrayed against us. How, exactly, do they control us, and where are weapons systems going?

Fourth, to examine Israel’s model of securocratic control, which I call its Matrix of Control over the Palestinians. This I do in Chapters 7 and 8. In Chapters 9–11, I go on to examine how Israel applies its Matrix and its weapons of suppression to countries on the peripheries of the world-system where the hegemons’ need for control is more of a securocratic than military nature.

Fifth, to explore how the ruling political and corporate classes within the core use Israeli weapons and tactics to maintain their own hegemonic positions at home, the subject of Chapter 12.

Finally, after raising the alarm as to the technologies and method of pacification available to the world-system’s hegemons, I offer suggestions as to how left and progressive activists can take the information and analysis I offer here and begin to integrate them into a more effective movement of resistance and counterhegemony.

This work is the product of an “activist-scholar.” Researching and writing a book such as this with minimal institutional support—including limited access to online resources—is not easy. In my case, the author is engaged full-time in running a grass-roots political organization (ICAHD, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions), resisting the Israeli Occupation “on the ground” (where the IDF often disrupts my work calendar), advocating for a just resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (I am completing this manuscript on a month-long speaking tour of Canada—in the winter!) and, always, scrambling for funds. But being “on the ground” is also a powerful place to be in terms of generating questions and issues that might not penetrate the university. Indeed, this project began in the ICAHD office in Jerusalem in a wide-ranging series of conversations with

Jimmy Johnson, now an activist in Detroit whose own writings on the arms industry have provided useful analysis for me and others.

I wish to acknowledge the readiness of Roger van Zwanenberg of Pluto Press in London to publish this work and the financial support the project received from the Pluto Educational Trust (PET). Appreciation also to David Shulman and the people at Pluto Press for shepherding this book through. Prof. Colin Green provided generous financial and logistical support for a two-month research stay in London. There John Chalcraft and Jonathan Rosenhead at LSE greatly facilitated my “guerilla research” and Brunel professor Mark Neocleous introduced me to the Anti-Security Project, which helped me flesh out the concept of “pacification.” Colin also arranged for me to spend time with Desmond Travis, my first opportunity to try out my ideas on a professional military person. On a subsequent trip to Ottawa, another member of the Anti-Security Project, Prof. George Rigakos, kindly invited me to speak at a seminar sponsored by Carleton University’s Department of Law and Legal Studies.

In Israel, I had the pleasure of getting to know Leila Stockmarr, a doctoral student at the London School of African and Oriental Studies (now known as SOAS) doing her dissertation on the private security industry of Israel. We spent hours sharing our analyses and attending the ISDEF International Defense and Security Expo in Tel Aviv. I also shared my analysis with Yotam Feldman, whose provocative film “The Lab” presages what I’ve written here; Prof. Eyal Ben-Ari who has written extensively on the IDF, and Elisha Baskin, who directs a critical Israeli arms monitor site *Hamushim* (“Armed”). Mandy Turner, director of the Kenyon Institute in Jerusalem and the source of extremely useful feedback and sources, chaired the session “Global Militarism and Violence in the 21st Century” at the ISA conference in San Francisco, the first time I presented my findings in an academic setting.

As the research began to take shape, I had the opportunity to discuss over several days a wide range of issues connected to world-systems analysis with Prof. Tom Reifer of the University of San Diego. Shir Hever, a long-time political colleague with whom I had discussed the project at various stages of its development, read the manuscript and kindly spent a day with me sharpening the analysis and sharing his valuable insights. Aneta Jerska, Coordinator of the European Coordinating Committee on Palestine (ECCP) and also, with me, a founding member of The People Yes! Network, has been instrumental in “translating” the information and analysis of this book into a website and other effective advocacy materials.

Otherwise, my work has been sustained by people close to me. Linda Ramsden, the director of ICAHD UK, has been a source of organizational, financial, political and moral support, a person who genuinely believed in the project and a key strategizer on how to move it forward after this book. My mentor, Anthropology Professor Emeritus Stan Newman, shared his sharp street-wise insights, analyses and criticisms, including his experiences as a policeman in Israel. And, as usual, my wife Shoshana enabled and critically enriched this work. My “kids,” Efrat, Yishai and Yair, always keep me politically honest and up-to-date. (Yishai is a senior editor of the *Ha'aretz* website in English, an invaluable resource). My grandchildren, Zohar, Alex and Nora, are the ones for whom I write, the ones that will inhabit the world of nanoweapons my “Sixties” generation has left for them. And, finally, I extend thanks to my “students,” the thousands of people who have heard my talks on one or another aspects of this research, for whom I’m grateful for the feedback and pushback, and to Richard Barnes for his keen proofreading.