

President Obama's broken Promises

As a non-US citizen, who has been following the US policy since I received my MA in International Relations at the University of Pennsylvania, I am dumbfounded by the behavior of US President Obama. I was very happy when the "boy-emperor from Crawford, Texas" had to leave office after eight years that were disastrous not only for the United States but also for the entire world.

I was never "infected" by the so-called Obama passion like many others in Germany. A young "star" out of nowhere is going to become US President, has never been convincing. Having experienced first hand the functioning of US society and US government, I believe nobody could be elected for the presidency in the US just by his mere talents. The will of the American people appears to me secondary in the electoral process. To believe in the "will of the American people" in this context appears to me naïve. The decisions who become US President must be presumed to be made by corporate interest groups by virtue of their real clout and dominance of the media. Ralph Nader calls Washington "corporate-occupied territory" and he continues saying that "every department agency controlled by the overwhelming presence of corporate lobbyists, corporate executives in high government positions, turning the government against its own people." Washington is swamped by lobbyists. That is why Obama has to make such strange decision like the latest US veto in the UN-Security Council concerning Israel's illegal colonial settlement projects.

Let me just scrutinize three of Obama's policies. As a candidate for the Presidency he campaigned rightly against President Bush's illegal war in Iraq and the prison-camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He called the Afghan war a "war of necessity", it seemed as if this war was a "good" one in contrast to the attack on Iraq which he designated as a "war of choice". He promised to end the war in Iraq and to close the prison-camp in Cuba. Both promises were broken. Not only is the war in Iraq continuing despite the withdrawal of some 50 000 combat troops, but by a sleight of hand renamed the same number of combat troops "military instructors", not to speak of tens of thousands of mercenaries who still remain there. When Obama speaks of a total withdrawal by the end of the year, no one should believe him. The military is already contradicting him. History shows that the US Empire will never withdraw voluntarily from a country that it attacked and occupied. The same will probably hold true of Afghanistan. The so-called war on terrorism will continue indefinitely until the human and financial costs will rise unbearably for all the Western occupying forces. As terrorism is a phenomenon that can arise anywhere and at any time, it can not be defeated. Therefore the "war on terror" is by definition an indefinite war.

Just recently, Obama signed an executive order, reaffirming George W. Bush's policy of indefinite detention for those held in Guantanamo Bay. He also revitalized Bush's infamous military courts, widely considered as

kangaroo courts. These courts do not stand for the rule of law but are rather a travesty of justice. Every American from the cradle to the grave cuts his teeth on the rule of law. Traditionally in the US, when the government cannot prove the guilt of a person before a court, the suspect has to be set free. But for alleged terrorists there seems to be no law, except arbitrary law as in Guantanamo or in the dungeons of the Bagram airbase in Afghanistan. To approve such a policy, one is justified to ask at which university President Obama taught constitutional law before he took office. Such a contemptuous disregard for justice is the most un-American attitude.

The third disappointment with, or should one say disaster of, the Obama presidency is its Middle Eastern policy, wrongly dubbed “peace process” and his policies towards the Muslim world. Unfortunately, this policy is not formulated independently by the US government as could be seen when the US put a veto in the UN-Security Council against its own policy that considered Israel’s colonial settlement project illegal. A UN resolution, criticizing in moderate language Israel’s colonial settlement policy, was vetoed by the Obama administration at the behest of the Israeli government and the Israel lobby in the US. The veto, 14:1; which even Germany – a staunch friend of Israel – supported, was defeated by the US. Before this shameful veto, the US criticized Israel’s policy in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). President Obama even tried to bribe the Netanyahu government to extend a nine month settlement stop for another three more month, but Israel denied the very generous offer that accompanied this demand.

A bankrupt United States government pledged to Israel 3.5 billion US-Dollars in addition to the regular annual gift of three billion; military hardware going into the billions; and an implicit veto for all future UN resolution perceived as “critical” by the standard set by the Israel lobby and the Israeli government. Masterfully, Netanyahu rejected the offer. Why should he have accepted it, since Obama had already abandoned his criticism of Israel’s illegal settlement policy!

Before Netanyahu made Obama look like a fool, he demonstrated already to Vice President Joseph Biden during his visit to Israel who is in charge of US Middle Eastern policy. Biden not only announced after arriving in Israel “Good to be at home!” but was then humiliated by Netanyahu, who announced the building of more illegal settlements in occupied East Jerusalem over which Israel claims to exercise “sovereignty” in violation to international law. Biden’s humiliation did not stop him supporting Israel with zeal. The question many ask is: How long will the US Empire be willing to be pushed around by its client state called Israel?

When the US Representative Ron Paul and his son, Senator Rand Paul, recently urged to cut not only social programs but also on foreign aid to Israel, the Israel lobby got alarmed and wrote a letter to Republican first-termers demanding that the aid to Israel should be exempt from budgetary cuts. Sixty-five out of 87

Republicans endorsed this demand, made by AIPAC, the major Israel lobby organization. The congressional freshmen knew that if they do not heed the wishes of that lobby, it might be their last Congress term. One of the Paul's emphasized how irresponsible it is to hand Israel three billion US-dollars annually for nothing while the US is financially bankrupt and must borrow money from the Chinese government to pass it on to Israel.

To get out of Israel's trap, the US administration should tie its aid to an absolute stop of the colonial settlement project, the respect of human rights and the adherence to international law. Israel is not a beacon to the West but rather a heavy liability because the US and other Western states are forced to pursue a policy of double standards by legitimizing Israel's unacceptable behavior. Professor William A. Cook puts Israel's "exceptionalism" in a nutshell when he writes inter alia that Israel rules by defiance of International Law while demanding all sister nations abide by the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It declares that a universal code for democracy be applied to all nations except Israel. The Israeli nation is the only one to have impunity before the international community. It negates its possession of atomic weapons, while it denies the right of other nations to develop an Atomic bomb including Iran that has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Agreement which Israel has not. Israel has been oppressing the Palestinian people for over 40 years, stolen their land and destroyed the Palestinian cultural heritage in their native land. Israel regularly attacks and invades its neighboring countries and destroys their infrastructure and killing thousands of people like in Lebanon or in the Gaza strip without being held responsible. This list could be perpetuated indefinitely.

Israel is considered a *bête noire* not only by the Arab world but also for the rest of the world, as reflected by an opinion poll conducted recently by the BBC. Israel came out pretty much at the bottom followed closely only by Pakistan, North Korea and Iran.

http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbc2011_countries/background.html

Considering Israel's political behavior and its current government's policy, the results are no surprising. For the West, the alliance with Israel is a heavy burden that cannot and will not be carried indefinitely.

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