



The dispensability of the Abbas Regime

When Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Defence Minister Ehud Barak are not demonising Iran and its leadership, their colleague Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman starts talking, or even better, writing bizarre things. In a letter to the Middle Eastern Quartet (US, Russia, EU and UN) he called for the ousting of Palestinian "President" Mahmoud Abbas whose term has already expired in 2010.

The letter is a hodgepodge of statements about Mahmoud Abbas' alleged shortcomings and of Israel's alleged concessions. Beyond that the letter is plainly embarrassing. That the former Moldovan bouncer and today's settler (Lieberman) has such a political leeway shows that Netanyahu is not in charge of his cabinet. After the child has already fallen into the well, Netanyahu and Barak declared that Lieberman's position is not that of the Israeli government. In an orderly functioning democratic political system such a minister would be dismissed.

Historically, the Israeli leadership has always sought to damage the reputation of any Palestinian leader, regardless how harmless he was. Yassir Arafat was not only depicted as a "terrorist" but also as "Hitler"! Not to speak of other racist characterizations attributed to him. The hand-tame Mahmoud Abbas, who was pushed against Arafat's will into the position of Prime Minister, was cartooned by Ariel Sharon as "plucked chicken" after he became "President" of the Palestinian Authority. It should be noticed that Abbas negotiated the Oslo Accords and the infamous "Beilin-Abu Mazen agreement". Abbas was formerly better known by his *nom-de-guerre* Abu Mazen.

Brighter Israelis than Lieberman know that Abbas is Israel's best shot in town. He is the perfect "prison-warden". He follows Israel's and US orders and protects Israeli colonizers against the wrath of his own people. He initiated the putsch against the only democratically elected government in Palestine on behalf the US and Israel. Having such an obedient servant, why does Lieberman want Abbas to be removed from office? Does he want Hamas instead? Israel together with the Western powers and the fundamentalist reactionary Arab regimes want to get rid not only of the secular Syrian regime but also of the secular Palestinian one. From Tunisia to Iran, the region would be controlled by Islamic Wahhabi fundamentalists.

At first sight, this seems absurd and would not appear to be in the interest of the West and Israel. But after second thoughts, this alliance makes some sense. After Qatar subsidized the transfer of the Hamas political bureau from Damascus to Doha, Hamas has become politically tame. After the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood has made its peace with the US and got its political share of the lucrative Egyptian cake, Hamas "radicalism" does not anymore look as frightening to the West as the Israelis claim. The terror image of Hamas, created by Israeli *hasbara* (propaganda), led to political impasse that was detrimental to Western interests.

The US Empire has finally come to terms with Islamic fundamentalism after Saudi Arabia and Qatar made it palatable, though with one exception: Iran. Here comes the doctrine of sectarianism into play. The US Empire tries to balkanize the Middle East along sectarian lines in order to control the newly formed small entities. This doctrine appears successful in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. It looks promising in Syria and is expected to be implemented later in Iran. Then perhaps it will also be applied

to Russia and China.

In this Machiavellian power game, the question of Palestine vanishes from the agenda of Western neocolonialists and its fawning corporate media. For the moment, Israel's colonization of the remnants of Palestine can continue without impediment. But the ghosts that haunt Israel's unjust grip of the homeland of another people will not disappear, whatever its cheerleaders tell their audience.

Or does Lieberman want to get rid of Abbas hoping that Hamas will take over the West bank and establish a "terrorist regime"? In case of an attack on Iran, would this not be another chance to drive the Palestinian people out from what is left of Palestine? When a so-called new historian calls the Palestinians "barbarians", Israeli politicians name them a "cancer" and others call for transfer ("ethnic cleansing"), would an attack on Iran not be the "right" moment to implement such a radical and criminal plan?

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