

ISSUE STATEMENT

Foreign Policy – The Middle East

puppeteer-puppet relationship. Or, would The Post prefer using the descriptor "dominant-subordinate?"

The New York Times columnist and Middle Eastern Specialist, Tom Friedman, used stronger words than "puppet" when on February 9th, he wrote: "Mr. Sharon has the Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat under house arrest in his office in Ramallah, and he's had George Bush under house arrest in the Oval office. Mr. Sharon has Mr. Arafat surrounded by tanks, and Mr. Bush surrounded by Jewish and Christian pro-Israel lobbyists, by a vice president, Dick Cheney, who's ready to do whatever Mr. Sharon dictates . . . all conspiring to make sure the president does nothing."

When AIPAC works to obtain a recent 407-9 vote for a House of Representatives' resolution which supported the latest Sharon strategy and rejected any mention of an independent Palestinian state, how would you describe such a surrender of the privately held positions of many Representatives, favoring a two-state solution?

Half of the Israeli people and over two-thirds of Americans of the Jewish faith believe the conflict can only be settled by allowing an independent Palestinian state together with a secure Israel.

Four hundred American rabbis, including leaders of some of the largest congregations in the country, protested the Israeli government's house demolition policy. Hundreds of Israeli reserve combat officers and soldiers signed a declaration refusing, in their words, "to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people." www.seruv.org.il

That these and many other Israeli and American peace advocates with impressive political, business, academic, military and intelligence

ISSUE STATEMENT

Foreign Policy – The Middle East

experience, receive no hearing in official Washington is further indication of a serious bias inside both political parties. George W. Bush is a messianic militarist with a tin ear toward these courageous collaborators in peace. And what is John Kerry's problem? He told us he has "many friends" in the broad and deep Israeli peace movement. Yet, Mr. Kerry issues a pro-Sharon statement that in its obeisance goes to the right of Bush.

Given that your editorial did not have any problem with these views, why do you object to a description of AIPAC as an awesome lobby on Capitol Hill, labeling it "poisonous stuff?" AIPAC has worked hard over the years to enlist the support of both Christians and Jews. Its organizing skills are the envy of the NRA and other citizen groups. Muslim-Americans are trying to learn from its lobbying skills to produce a more balanced Congressional debate on Middle Eastern policies. How does acknowledging such an achievement "play on age-old stereotypes?" The bias may be in your own mind.

Sincerely,
Ralph Nader

Debating Israel August 19, 2004

To the Editor:

It is difficult to find an acceptable language with which to criticize the hard-line policies of successive Israeli governments. Ralph Nader is charged (Washington Post Editorial, August 14, 2004) with anti-Semitism for speaking of the Israeli government and the Israeli Jewish lobby as "puppeteers" and American politicians as "puppets" by the same people who charge

ISSUE STATEMENT Foreign Policy – The Middle East

Arafat and the Palestinians of being the "puppeteers" who mastermind votes critical of Israel in the General Assembly and in the Security Council of the United Nations.

The danger of anti-Semitism is a red-herring in a country in which the two major parties and their presidential candidates – cheered on by Christian Zionists -- are competing for first prize in championing the cause of Sharon.

It is an open secret that the Israeli-Jewish lobby is among the most influential lobbies in Washington and beyond. Indeed, the leaders AIPAC and of the Conference of Presidents of Major American first to make this claim. What is so distressing is that these leaders arrogate to themselves the right to be more Catholic than the Pope in their support of Israeli hard-liners but also far more hard-line than most American and Israeli Jews. Indeed, the likes of Ronald Lauder and Malcolm Hoenlein never accepted Oslo and the principle of "land for peace."

The American supporters of the Peace Now and affiliated peace organizations in Israel are frozen out of these Jewish-American organizations.

In any case, the accusation of anti-Semitism is a tried and effective tactic for silencing criticism or opposition to the policies of Israeli governments and of American administrations.

The Nader campaign is a natural home for American Jews committed to the peace process who are appalled at Kerry's efforts at out-Bushing Bush on the Israeli question and many others. It is neither Jewish nor Democratic to stifle debate with false charges of anti-Semitism.

Arno J. Mayer

Arno J. Mayer is professor emeritus of history at Princeton University and the author of "Why Did Not the Heavens Darken?: The 'Final Solution' in History."

ISSUE STATEMENT Foreign Policy – The Middle East

Below is the complete letter Ralph Nader sent to the Washington Post in response to an editorial criticizing his comment that Israel is a puppeteer of the US government. When it published the letter on August 21st, the Post edited out the 4th to 6th paragraphs. These are important paragraphs illustrating that Nader's positions are consistent with those of many Israelis and American Jews. These paragraphs highlighted the views of the Refuseniks, members of the Israeli Defense Force who refuse to participate in the occupation of Palestinian territory; and the views of over 400 rabbis who criticize the demolition of homes of hundreds of Palestinians. They also highlighted Senator John Kerry's failure to face up to the human rights abuses of Israel.

Below that is another letter the Post refused to publish that highlights how charges of anti-semitism are used to stifle debate on Israel-Palestine in the United States.

Nader Continues to Urge Peace in Middle East

Dear Editor

Your editorial's (Aug. 14th) juxtaposition of my words, taken from my statement which was rooted in an advocacy for an Israeli-Palestinian peace, with a passage from a domestic group, rooted in prejudice, was shameful and unsavory, at the very least. Suffice it to say that your objection to my description of the need to replace the Washington puppet show with the Washington Peace Show serves to reinforce the censorious climate against open and free discussion this conflict in the U.S., as there has been among the Israeli people. When Israelis joke about the United States being "the second state of Israel," it sounds like they are describing a