

The Lack of Implementation of United Nations Security Council's 242 Resolution: The Constructivists' Delusion and The Marxist and Realists Explanation.

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Introduction

The United Nations Security Council's Resolution 242 was unanimously passed in 1967 after the end of the Arab-Israeli Six Day War. Resolution 242 asserted that Israel must remove its military occupation of Palestine and respect Palestine's sovereignty. 40 years later Resolution 242, from here on referred to as the Resolution, has still not been enforced. Instead, the situation in Palestine has consistently worsened, leaving one to wonder what the role of the United Nations is in regards to this dire issue. The following essay will analyze why the United Nations has not implemented the Resolution by drawing upon Constructivist, Realist, and Marxist explanations of the role of international organizations (IOs). After reviewing the data and empirical evidence pertinent to the issue, this essay will attempt to prove that while Constructivism has short glimpses of validity in explaining UNSC's shortcomings in enforcing the Resolution, Realism and Marxism are significantly more convincing in explaining why Palestine, in spite of the Resolution, continues to be the subject of increasing Israeli domination.

Constructivism: The IO as a Persuasive Institution Towards Peace

Constructivists see a lot of value in the Resolution because they see it as an influential and persuasive tool in shifting Israeli policy towards Palestine. Therefore, Constructivists would argue that the Resolution was responsible for Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005. They may argue that IOs build international consensus and thus influence state action. Hence, in this case, the IO pressured Israel to end its occupation via the Resolution, resulting in the withdrawal from Gaza which saw the extraction of the military occupation as well as the removal of all 7,826 settlers from within the Gaza Strip¹. Constructivists would also argue that the Resolution was a building block for additional international consensus and action for further influencing Israel's change in behavior. They

¹ Miller 2006. 643.

may argue that one of the best examples of this kind of change was the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993 which, for the first time, saw the leaders of both Palestine and Israel come to the negotiating tables to speak about the occupation and settlements. Constructivist would argue that this was a tremendous accomplishment for the IO and displayed its ability to influence states through the Resolution, raising awareness about the issue and thus creating a forum and movement towards a peaceful resolution².

Constructivism: The IO as a Rhetorical Tool and of Not Having Much Practical Value

However, what is disregarded in this argument is that even during those peace accords, new settlements continued to be built and old ones were expanded which was utterly unproductive and violated the most basic principle of the summit itself³. Simply put, the facts on the ground largely discredit the Constructivist's arguments and bring to disrepute the IO's contribution towards real significant and lasting change in Palestine. The facts show that while disengagement did take place in Gaza, the 7,286 settlers only for accounted for 1.7% of the total Israeli settler population in Palestine in 2005 which was 423,900⁴. Furthermore, contrary to the Resolution, Gaza did not regain its sovereignty as Israel still controlled all of Gaza's borders, air spaces, coastal waters, water supplies, energy supplies, and aid entering the region, rendering Gaza to be virtually a prison⁵. Another fact which makes the emphasis Constructivists put on the progress made by the Gaza disengagement as of having little practical value lies in the fact that those settlers removed from Gaza Strip were relocated to new, old, and expanding settlements within the West Bank. Therefore, the settlement issue outlined by the IO did not improve at all. What also challenges the genuine nature of the disengagement is the fact that only one year after the disengagement from Gaza, the total number of settlers grew to 443,045⁶; an increase of almost 20,000 settlers from the year before. The number of new settlers and settlements continues to grow every year and has done so since 1967.

² Zunes 2001, 66.

³ Prusher 1997, 1.

⁴ Foundation for Middle East Peace, 2006.

⁵ Falk 2005, 6.

⁶ Foundation for Middle East Peace, 2006.

Realism: Israel as a Tool for American Might in the Region

Realists, on the other hand, argue that the IO is a tool of the hegemony, utilized towards the hegemony's own ends. Thus, Realist would see the lack of the Resolution's enforcement as being beneficial to the interests of the United States. This immediately raises two questions. First, what does the US have to gain from keeping the Resolution immobilized and second, how is the US impeding on UN efforts to implement the Resolution?

Firstly, an occupied Palestine at the mercy of Israel results in a stronger Israel with more reach and leverage in the Middle East. It is common knowledge that Israel is the US's most loyal and powerful ally in the Middle East, if not the world. Therefore, a stronger, more dominating Israel results in a more powerful US. Israel can thus be seen as a base for the US within the Middle East. Empirical evidence shows that it is just that. One blatant example proving this was seen during the Gulf War of 1991. During the time of the conflict, the US granted Israel \$650 million towards military spending and infrastructure specifically because of its plans against Iraq in the Gulf War⁷.

Furthermore, a strong US presence in the Middle East logically keeps the countries in the region in line with American foreign policy, creating a check and balance on Middle Eastern countries' actions. Therefore, the more powerful the US is in Israel, the more leverage it will have. Therefore, an occupied Palestine, contrary to the Resolution, empowers both Israel and therefore the US. This explains why the US has a strong military presence and bases within Israel, the most recent and significant example of which being the base built in Negev, Israel by the US in 2001 which cost over \$266 million⁸. Further US military presence and support for Israel will be revisited at length shortly.

Realism: US Interests in Keeping the Resolution Out and Israeli Occupation In

Those denying the Realist question would also question how the hegemon impeded on UN efforts to implement the Resolution. A study of the US's voting record within the UNSC quickly shines a bright light on US efforts to protect Israel from removing its occupation and maintaining Israel's dominating policy and tactics over Palestine. The US

⁷ Friedman 1991, A1.

⁸ New York Times. 2001.

has used its power of veto within the UNSC 81 times. Over half of those veto votes were used to save Israel from condemnation and essentially save Israel from having resolutions passed against it. These US vetoes in support of Israel, which amount to over 40, have almost completely regarded Israeli actions against Palestine⁹. The topics of the resolutions concerning Israeli action against Palestine have unanimously focused on the same issues outlined in Resolution 242: Israel's occupation of Palestine and lack of respect for its sovereignty. Clearly the US has been impeding on efforts to make the Resolution a reality.

Realism: The Power of Rhetoric

With these statistics taken into account, those still skeptical of the Realist argument may be left wondering why the US voted in favor of Resolution 242 in the first place if it is in its interest to have Israel occupy Palestine. Simply put, the IO does not necessarily have to be used by the hegemon in a fashion which allow the hegemon to enforce its influence militarily. The IO can also act as a venue for the hegemon to make political statements and maneuvers to give other states the illusion that it is in fact trying to act in favor of global interests or at least in line with the interests and opinions of the majority. Doing this allows the hegemon to avoid utilizing costlier tactics to achieve what it wants, that being having its own interests flourish. Therefore, in this context, voting in favor of the Resolution created the facade that the US was, and would be for years to come, opposed to Israeli aggression and occupation on paper while those exact policies of Israel would allow for US benefits. Such a tactic is not original or scarcely used. Essentially it is the policy of saying one thing and doing another. The most relevant and substantial example of the US adopting this same policy else where can be seen in its policies towards apartheid South Africa. On April 1st 1960, the US voted in favor of Resolution 134, deploring the apartheid government's racist policies. However, for over 30 the US continued to support the racist regime because it served both its economic interests as well as its anti-communist agenda¹⁰. In both cases, by saying one thing, that being supporting the Resolutions, and doing another, in this case continuing to act in its own interest and contrary to the Resolutions, the US was and has been able to pursue its own selfish ends with less opposition and criticism from the international community than if it were to not have signed on to the Resolutions.

⁹ Neff 2005, 14.

¹⁰ Thomson 2005, 230.

Marxism: The Military-Industrial Complex and its Influence over Government Policy

Marxists argue in a similar way, but substitute the hegemonic state with economic elites. To Marxist, the IO is a vehicle for the bourgeoisie to pursue their interests. Thus, an explanation is needed which identifies how neglecting the Resolution and maintaining a powerful, armed, and occupier Israel benefits the economic elites. Firstly, we must look at the military-industrial complex of the US. This sector of the US economy is not only a profitable one, but a powerful one as well. As is common knowledge, money can often buy influence, and the American political system is no exception to this time-tested practice. Low estimates show that in 2004, the arms industry provided \$13 million dollars to political candidates and more specifically \$766,355 for George W. Bush's and \$399,000 for John Kerry's election campaigns¹¹. It is only rational to think that whoever comes into power, which in this case it turned out to be Bush, would have ties to those in the arms industry which aided their campaign and would thus be somewhat influenced by those who helped them get into power and at least to some degree work to forward their supporters' interests. Needless to say, the arms industry makes its profits from selling arms and this theme of supporting politicians dates back to as early as the Eisenhower administration. In 2007 Northrop Grumman Corporation received a \$175 million contract to build laser defense systems in Israel. In 2005 Boeing, one of the US's biggest arms manufacturer, landed a \$640 million contract with Israel, selling it AH-64 Apache Longbow attack helicopters¹². In 1999 Lockheed-Martin won a contract to supply Israel with F-16 Fighter Planes worth over \$2.5 billion. Such politically-tied business transactions are vast and have a very long history.

The other fold of these business transactions involves those politicians and governments which the arms industry supported. Not only do the arms manufacturers gain permission from government to conduct their business, but essentially they benefit from the American governments creation of markets for them. This is done through US foreign aid. While such aid to Israel has a long and expensive history, a recent example of it will suffice in explaining the argument. Before 1998 Israel received an annual military grant worth \$1.8 billion, funded by American tax-payers' money. By 2006 the amount had been raised to \$2.28 billion¹³. However, what has remained unchanged for all the decades which the US

¹¹ World Policy Institute, 2004.

¹² Rivers 2005, 25.

¹³ McArthur 2006, 17.

has been funding the military of Israel is the policy that %75 of the military grants it gives to Israel must be spent in the US's arm industry. In 2007 alone Israel was granted a \$30 billion over a decade purely for its military¹⁴. A simple equation shows that American tax payers' dollars are being sent to Israel to be spent in American companies which benefit the elites of those companies. It is easy to see how a conflict torn, occupied Palestine and military-ready Israel benefits economic elites. In other words, according to a Marxist argument, the Resolution not being implemented benefits the arms industry which thrives on conflicts which call for arms, as it increasingly continues to do so in the case of Israel.

Marxism: Protecting Capitalist Oil Interests in the Region

Other economic elites who would also benefit from an occupied Palestine and therefore a more powerful and heavily armed Israel are those in the American oil industry. Hostile and non-complying Middle Eastern countries can be a cause of capital losses; therefore, a big and powerful Israel acts as the companies' muscle in the region. Marxists would argue that these economic elites see a more powerful and overreaching Israel as a check on the actions of regional, oil-rich countries as they would have pressure on them to act in accordance with US oil interests because failing to do so could mean military attacks. Some would argue we have witnessed such attacks very recently. Moreover, in the 2000 elections alone the American oil industry gave George W. Bush \$25.6 towards his presidential campaign and the democrats over \$5 million, once again giving business influence over government¹⁵. Others would argue that the first Gulf War also exemplified the US's readiness to use military force to protect oil interests which obviously benefit the industries' elites. Clearly there exists an intricate, influential, and consistent relationship between US foreign policy and the interests of the powerful capitalist class.

Conclusion

After reviewing the relevant data, it is hard to find an explanation for 40 years Palestinian oppression under Israeli occupation which does not involve selfish class and state interests. The fact that the Palestinians' quality of life has continued to increasingly worsen due to the 40 year old military occupation renders most optimistic views and explanations of

¹⁴ Erlanger 2007, A6.

¹⁵ Stone 2001, 33.

why Resolution 242 has not been implemented almost completely unsound. This, coupled with empirical evidence that there are states as well as individuals actively benefiting from maintaining Israel's occupation, gives great weight to both Realist and Marxist interpretations as to why a resolution which was unanimously passed in the United Nations Security Council continues to be blatantly disregarded. The United States and its powerful business and economic elites have the leverage to see Resolution 242 be implemented. Sadly, these same actors are the greatest beneficiaries of, and reason behind, maintaining the status quo.

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