



THE TRUTH ABOUT AMERICA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE-EAST

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The American grand plan of transforming the Middle-East is partly aimed at improving their friend's strategic position. Notwithstanding the US's consistent diplomatic support, it has vetoed more resolutions than the combined total vetoes of all other Security Council members. It blocks Arab states' efforts to place their friend's nuclear arsenal on the IAEA's agenda.

Of US aid dispensed, the friend is the only recipient that is exempt from accounting for how it spends it. The largest beneficiary of direct economic and military aid, it is said to receive a fifth of the US foreign aid budget. This itself is remarkable, as the friend has been a wealthy developed state on par with any major European state for many years. On top of that, it receives high quality intelligence that is denied to even the NATO allies, while quietly supporting development of its already significant nuclear strength.

These policies derive primarily from domestic politics and major pressure groups within the US. While the US has no vital interest within the friend's geographic boundaries or compelling humanitarian reason for such support, the so-called moral platform of "spreading democracy" and nuclear non-proliferation or indeed neutralising "weapons of mass destruction" sound increasingly farcical. On the contrary, it has ignited unrest in the simmering region, a raging civil war in Iraq, and sky-rocketing fossil fuel prices.

Furthermore, it has jeopardised international security, entrenched Western paranoia, and inflamed Arab and Islamic opinion against primarily the US.

We must ask why the US chooses to compromise the world's future in order to promote the minority interests of a community that is less than 3% of the US population and insignificant in terms of economic value.

The myth that the state in question lies alone and vulnerable amidst a sea of enemies and is constantly under threat of attack, invasion or destruction, is propagated, while in fact, it is by far the strongest military power in the region. Notwithstanding the fact that it is the only nuclear-armed state, its conventional weaponry is far superior to the combined strength of many of its neighbours. It is true also, that its nuclear arsenal is a motivating factor in Iran for

example wanting a nuclear deterrent against it.

America regularly cries foul about "terrorism" against it, not acknowledging that it is primarily due its condoning its friend's daily atrocities against the hapless Palestinians. This unjust and highly irrational support for regional hegemony only makes the rallying call of Osama bin Laden more attractive to extremists and even moderates throughout the region. Although "terrorism" has been made a dirty word that is associated with Islam, Muslims, Arabs, Palestinians etc, it has been a widely used tactic by a broad spectrum of political groups. It would certainly not be directed against the US and indeed the "West" if not for their "interests" in the region, which include colonisation of traditional Arab land, oppression of the Palestinians, control of petroleum sources, propping-up of pro-US dictatorships, bribery of heads of state and now, belligerent threats of overwhelming force and lawlessness, not to mention the debacle in Iraq, which has broken all previous US records for arrogance, intimidation and brutality.

The US is certainly not supporting an "under-dog" by its lavish largesse, promoted in the name of democracy. There are many other democracies with impeccable records of management, which scarcely receive a minute fraction of the aid it showers its friend with. Close examination will confirm that the large majority of anti-US governments have been elected by the best traditions of democracy, as evident in South America, Palestine, Iran etc. On the contrary, the pro-US states tend to be absolute dictatorships or quasi-dictatorships, namely, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Egypt etc.

So, in the absence of a humanitarian or strategic significance, America must accede to an internal force, which we will call the IS factor. This is nothing but convergent groups comprising members of the aforesaid minority, in the form of corporations, associations and individuals, who single-mindedly toil towards promoting US foreign policy towards its isolated friend. In fact, as the very absence of a direct reference to it in this article shows, there is a strong and perverse prejudice against being critical of it in this country also.

Among the groups that lobby for the IS factor are Christian evangelicals, members of the US Congress, media conglomerates, financiers, legal heavy-

weights and ambassadors, who directly or indirectly advance the expansionist policies of the US ally in the Middle East. Many are the faithful believers of a biblical prophecy of the chosen people, who inherit the Holy Land in its entirety. The shrewd manipulators leading them continue to propound that such an oppressive agenda is indeed God's will.

While in any democracy, such as the US, lobby groups are free to influence government policy and public opinion, in this instance, it is greatly disproportional given the minute minority status this community represents, say compared to Cubans, Mexicans, American Indians, Mormons or Black Americans. While the larger groups are indifferent to the insidious nature of this factor, they are constantly fed a mix of potent cattle-feed that largely avoids factual realities in the region. Thus, they limit their demands to better unemployment benefits, residency status or equal rights and the like.

Consequently, the myopic public mind, awash with consumption and material necessities, languishes at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Any academic discourse is severely constrained, as discordant voices are immediately sanctioned, with career demotions and even harassment. The stranglehold on truth and justice for the truly oppressed and deserving, is further compounded by the immunity this friend's foreign policy and indeed its domestic policies enjoy in the face of uniform and unequivocal vetoing of opponents by the United States at world forums.

The world has for many years suffered immensely, especially the disfranchised masses in the dictatorships in the Middle East, due to the bribery, intimidation, blackmail and increasingly direct threats of 'punishment' for refusing to co-operate with this forcibly imposed status-quo.

While American corporations are also at the mercy of the extortionist bullying attributed to the IS factor, the lobby is now variously and subtly linked to the "Global War On Terror" which is portrayed in the West as a just cause, and firmly on the Western God's side. One need look no further than the number of deaths caused by the so-called crusaders of freedom and democracy in the many theatres they operate in, and compare them to the numbers of "terror" victims, to determine who is indeed more evil. I write these words at risk of being labelled an anti-Semite, Semites being those of Arabic or Jewish race. I suppose the outcome depends on which side is more powerful....

visit the six point put forward by the foremost minority leader since independence as basis for the resolution of the ethnic conflict. All these demands could be accommodated by the present Government of Sri Lanka without much disagreement from those who oppose reconciliation.

Let us briefly apprise the six principals:

1. The language: The Sinhala only act of 1956, which probably was the most contentious issue, had turned out to be a damp squib much before 1972 and had now been relegated to an act of tokenism. In the first decade of this millennium, Sri Lankans, both Tamil and Sinhala speaking, are not interested in symbolic gestures to stature of their language as long as their mother tongue is given sustenance and means to flourish by the state. The third language, mandatorily placed underneath the two official languages (swabhasa), in all official insignia, i.e., English, could, very well look after itself in this global village.

2. Constitutional guarantee of full citizenship: This issue was partly resolved by the Indo-Ceylon (Sirimavo-Sashthri) Pact of 1964. The remnants of the citizenship issue of Tamils of Indian origin was resolved by the Indo-Lanka (Sirimavo-Indira) Pact of 1974.

3. Secularism: Sri Lankan legislators do not have to look far and wide to be convinced of benefits of secularism. Neighbouring India, where more than a quarter of population belong to the majority religion, has flourished as a constitutionally entrenched secular state whilst Pakistan, as an Islamic republic, is tottering on the verge of being a failed state.

4. Fundamental rights: There will not be much opposition to any constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights to all citizens or even an introduction of a human rights charter.

5. Caste and untouchability: A legacy of Hinduism of the Indian mainland which has permeated into Hinduism and Buddhism and even into Christianity in Sri Lanka, the caste system and the degrading practice of untouchability, should have no place in a modern society. If required to be constitutionally outlawed, there will not be any opposition from the majority or minority communities.

6. De-centralised structure of government: The present provincial councils form of decentralisation of power may not have been an ideal form of devolution because as the TNA manifesto insists "devolution of powers should be over land, law and order, socio-economic development including health and education, resources and fiscal powers". However, these deficiencies could be ironed out in negotiations with those who demand more meaningful powers to minorities not only in the Northern Province but also in Eastern. It may be noticed that unification of Northern and Eastern provinces was not one of those demands. Now, the TNA is seeking a mandate for the unification of two provinces in forthcoming elections. Although they may get a mandate from the North, they will not receive any mandate from the East and therefore they will not legitimately be able to continue with that demand. A common agreement of representatives all communities may be sought for the resolution of the issue of the status of the Eastern Province.