

THE INCOHERENT PAX AMERICANA

BEYOND THE PRESENT UNPRODUCTIVE APPROACH

TO CONFLICT SOLVING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Peace perspectives start to glow in the horizon. That is at least what appears to be the belief of the bellicose side to the conflict. Even apparently good intended America seems to be falling in the carefully crafted scheme of would be innocence. In one of their recent joint press declarations in Washington, on April 19th 2002, jovial U.S. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and no less satisfied Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Perez have unabashedly dared discussing what they intend to be a new “framework for solving the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians”, mainly articulated around urgent humanitarian issues. One might wonder then about what has happened to the previously adopted political frameworks that diplomats and various level negotiators spent a lot of valuable time hammering? Have they also perished with the numerous innocent Palestinian victims crushed under the Israeli war machinery?

The Israeli tanks, mass destruction weapons and bulldozers have partially finished what evidently appears to be a carefully planned and efficiently implemented new “peace vision”. Aren’t the Palestinian widows and orphans “peacefully” burying now the calcinated bodies of their relatives instead of continuously “arousing terror among innocent Israeli civilians”? Aren’t the captives of the Bethlehem Cathedral of Nativity, cradle of Jesus Christ, finally enjoying the peace and restfulness that the Tsahal is gratifying them with for better meditation conditions? Isn’t all this a significant sign of “détente” that can positively encourage negotiations for the newly planned Oslo Round of discussions “of humanitarian aid to be provided to the Palestinians” and that both

Powell and Perez were apparently proud to announce to the bewildered representatives of the media present that Friday afternoon in the Harry S. Truman Building Lobby?

What else would these demanding Palestinians expect again from the world community that "long time peace seeking" Sharon hasn't offered them? Food? Shelter? Protection? Haven't they got it all under the rumbles of ravaged Palestinian camps? Most Israelis and, to a certain extent, many American observers seem to be putting all the blame on the Arab side. For these current event speculators, totally ignorant or voluntarily avoiding to recall the recent history, consecutive to the Lord Balfour appeal and the various phases of the Palestinian drama, present P.L.O. leadership is certainly not rendering a positive service to its people by not abiding to Israeli diktat. The constant refusal by these Palestinian leaders of "permanently renewed Israeli peace initiatives"(sic) and, to a certain extent, to the U.S. "policy of good will"(re-sic), clearly affected by the active Jewish lobby at various levels of the American hierarchy, clearly hinders any progress towards peace. To all these people, Arafat blew it all by bluntly turning down the proposals made to him in Camp David II. As if it were a take it or leave it attitude, stemming from demonstrated field victory, the Arabs would then just have to lump it so long as they cannot do much about changing it. Subsequent events then all appear as punitive corrections to an undisciplined child. That is pushing the arrogance too far. An Arab saying clearly states that trimmed trees grow bigger anyway. Policy makers for the area really have to beware of the forms of explosion that can result from constantly renewed frustration.

Excellent illustrations of reverse style driving have been offered by the shrinking prospects for peace since the first Oslo Agreement and Madrid talks. What once was a "Political Oslo Round" is progressively decaying into a new "Humanitarian Oslo Round", mostly concerned with begging help for what is unashamedly presented by the west as needy Palestinians. Even the relatively satisfactory Mitchell Plan seems so far behind after the recent escalation of tension in the region. What can the prospects be now that the un-healing wounds have further been murderly deepened? One dare not venture any suggestion or proposal. No trends can presently be predicted. Neither can any logical pattern stand any more as of any utile indication to the objective analyst.

In this context of grief and anger, chances for mutual trust appear to be really slim. Yet, one hopefully last recourse can still be called upon to bring about peace to the region. Not so much that all parties do trust that country. The Arabs have numerous good reasons to defy its objective handling of the conflict. Yet, it still remains the only capable force to impose its vision of peace, were that vision to ever approach acceptable objective positions. Yes, there remains only one superpower in the international arena. And its duties as such put a heavy historic burden on America and on its policy makers with respect to the implementation of a just and durable peace in these holy lands. Yes, the U.S. is still, for a while,

the only capable force of peace instauration in the area. Action must start without any further delay. The U.S. image in the Arab and Islamic world has been harmed sensibly enough that the growing feeling of injustice may alarmantly turn into potentially harmful sources of hatred. The price America is paying for its longstanding unconditional support of Israel is just not worth it.

Time is ripe for a Pax Americana to forcefully pave its way into a compulsory acceptance by all belligerents in the area. President George W. Bush has proven himself to be a strong leader. Not that the world intrinsically perceives him as such; but the thing is just that contemporary events pushed him to wear the aura of a winner. No one can however defy his chivalrous attitude in the anti-terrorism crusade. Neither can any one ever dare recall his nonetheless apparent ignorance of world affairs management during the recent decades. His demonstrated naïve perception of the universal arena sharply contrasted for a while with the brilliant moves that effectively led the U.S. to unquestionable world leadership. Forgotten are the times when, during his electoral campaign, he didn't even recall some names of fundamental U.S. policy allies in Asia. Observers seem also willing to forget his evident confusion of basic economic terminology while recently addressing the Japanese Prime Minister during a State visit to Tokyo.

It has constantly been proven that bringing relief and happiness to others makes them more willing to think highly of oneself. Positive moves glow better on the agenda than any grief generating policies or attitudes. The rest of the world seems to be ready to abide by whatever stew good old uncle Sam might serve to his starving guests. All potential super powers seem to have given up the leadership contest.

In this context, a lot of thanks have to be made by contemporary America to the once prestigious soviet leader Michael Gorvatchev. Just by himself, he has played the game so well that soviet desertion of the international arena has left behind numerous perplexed orphans. Long before the game was over, all his midfields and quarterbacks gained their locker rooms leaving no resistance to the multiple touch downs successfully carried out by the remaining team in the field. Neither Boris Eltsin nor Vladimir Putin have ever shown signs of any potential "Peredyshka" capable of ever allowing any catch up with the lost field generated by the "Perestroïka".

One might also wonder where does Europe stand vis-à-vis the ongoing world chess game? There was a time when daring French President Charles De Gaulle declined the NATO umbrella over his country and reluctantly stood firm to all US and Soviet pressures. French diplomacy tried then to assert itself in a certain role-playing in the world arena including the Middle East. Yet, that too has vanished now. Even the European newly born baby is still in the cradle for all its conceiving parents to even dream of weighing heavy enough in the decision-making arena. European diplomats still suffer from the blunt refusal their initial

moves towards the occupied territories were faced with by the Israeli authorities of occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

Even giant China has not moved a finger nail to try helping stop the ongoing Middle East turmoil. Still busy mourning its glorious past in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, it also wonders if Tricky Dick hadn't trapped it for ever through his widely media covered ping pong games. Its expectative attitude towards major world events tends also to continuously delay its once announced revolutionary upheaval.

Other than these deceptively silent powers, despite their incredible means for potential major role playing, the rest of the world doe not stand a chance of even tickling the present string pullers in the Middle East. What once was old time Nasser's and Tito's call for a third pressure force seems to have decayed in the shattered world of poverty stricken nations.

What is then left?

The law implementer that "Lucky Luke" Belgian cartoons wisely refer to as the lonesome cow-boy! Promoted to the rank of Sheriff, proudly wearing his law enforcement star, he can firmly, surely and decisively move into the troubled arena with his finger on the trigger, ready to bring about law and order. Not so much that the "Lucky Luke" adventures take place in Texas, but mostly because the present White House resident happens to be coming from that land of proud cow-boys.

Even before moving into office, it took President George W. Bush a few weeks and a couple of tricks to finally knock his Democratic Party opponent down. His controversial call upon the much discussable Florida ballot sensibly altered his image as a great world leader that his function was inviting him to be. For many observers, the tragic September 11th attack on the World Trade Center not only marked a turning point in world wide history, but also offered President G.W. Bush and his military intelligentsia with a valuable asset to reinsert his token as a major key player in world strategy. America was cowardly hit within its own territory. This had never happened before. The star spangled banner, floating over the World Trade Center, was sadly torn down. American pride and honour were altered. There could be no other way to revive old time American values than an all made military solution. His father did it before him in Irak. And it seemed to have worked well. He himself carried his military crusade out in Afghanistan. And it seems to be bringing about positive results so far. Of course long range U.S. diplomacy had firmly paved the way for such successes. Previous recent Republican Presidents such as old Tricky Dick and good old Ronald Reagan had put intensive efforts to allow for such a visible position in world leadership. That makes the burden even heavier to carry by President George walker Bush in order to keep up with the same quality standards. Later

on, Democratic Presidents such as Jimmy Carter and no less cunning Bill Clinton made smart moves towards the Middle East issue. More recently, U.S. wise management of the Yugoslav crisis brought definitely the world behind the U.S. striking potentials. George W. Bush had it all set for further development and increase of U.S. world leadership. Has he succeeded so far in doing so?

It is still too early to make sound judgements on this issue. But elements of appreciation can however be set forth based on the clearly perceivable all might attitude of militarization. No need here to speculate on any U.S. will to contain China and Russia by an increasing military presence in Caucasia and Georgia. Enough clues are offered by the observation of role playing in the Middle East. Exhibition of strength has proven to be productive in Serbia and Afghanistan. Will it prove the same effectiveness in the Palestinian occupied territories?

It may not be evident. The Middle East crisis is of a different nature!

It is definitely unwise to rely solely on a military approach with a people struggling for its independence and national identity. This only generates unpredictably worsening escalations. Colonial France once experienced it in its colonies. And so has Great Britain within its own home land of Northern Ireland. Neither to mention the counter-productive results of heavy B-52 bombing of North Vietnam.

The Middle East crisis, and most particularly, the Israeli Palestinian conflict had been heading for a while towards a peaceful settlement. The Oslo Agreement launched a positive dynamic towards a fragile but real peaceful coexistence. The Casablanca economic summit conference went even further through discussions of potential economic forms of partnerships involving neighbouring Arab countries of Israel. Clear signs of satisfaction were then perceived on Late Prime Minister Itshak Rabin and his Minister of Foreign Affairs Shimon Perez. Various businessmen from both sides had then carried projects with them in their briefcases. Where has all that optimism gone?

Later on, major U.S. efforts led to the Tenet Work Plan and to the Mitchell Peace Process, launched after the Mitchell Plan. Both parties seemed to have accepted to abide by their content. What then went wrong? Even President George W. Bush has gone a decisive step forward by being the first U.S. President who spoke of a new state in the Middle East due to be called "The State of Palestine"(ref. President's weekly radio address to the nation on April 20th 2002 as issued the same day by the Office of the Press Secretary of the White House), while he was also one of the very few people in the world daring to qualify Ariel Sharon as "a man of peace"(ref. Secretary of State Colin Powell's interview with Brit Hume's Fox News Sunday on April 21st 2002). Ambiguous declarations and blurred attitudes don't usually prove to help much. That is why a lot remains to be done before peace can become a reality in this troubled area!

The fact now is that the world knows who the real aggressor is in this conflict. Observers also depict whose stubborn attitude has been deepening the wounds even despite numerous U.S. calls for an immediate halt of the aggression, and a no less immediate need for a withdrawal from recently occupied territories, so that negotiations might resume in the perspective of more withdrawals from all occupied territories, a halt to violence by both sides and a sincere search for pacific coexistence.

Let's hope for a while that a new start can be launched. The U.S. will certainly need to play a determining role in bringing it about. Now only does it need to confine itself in a gap-bridging role, but decisive moves will need to be undertaken. The present ailing process will effectively gain from a more equilibrated U.S. attitude between the conflicting parties. It is clearly established and accepted by all that Israel is a strategic ally of the U.S. and such an alliance can in no way be infringed. But the Arab Umma too has friendship claims to set forth.

To mention just one example of Arab assistance and support to the U.S., let's not forget that there was time in the 19th century when the Sultan of Morocco had offered and carried out a protection scheme of the then vulnerable American fleet in the Mediterranean by the then strong Moroccan navy. Let's not also forget that the kingdom of Morocco has been the first country in the world to ever recognize the newly independent state of the U.S. as a sovereign country. Let's finally recall that the longest un-breached treaty in US history is that one signed in the 18th century by President George Washington with the Moroccan Sultan Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah of the presently reigning Alaouite Dynasty. It is certain that all other Arab states can align arguments in support of long lasting friendship ties with the U.S.A. That makes a minimum of 22 good reasons, not even counting those of other Islamic countries. Aren't the Arabs and the Moslems therefore entitled to a more comprehensive American attitude towards their concerns and doleances?

*Let's not ask from chairman Yasser Arafat more than what his present situation can allow him to fulfil. Demands for a clear condemnation of terror have been genuinely met by him. What has the outcome been then as a result? Not much so far. "Al Mukataa" is still besieged. The church of Trinity still lives with the fear of unpredictable developments. And so does the Al Aksa Mosque. More tension reduction needs to be imposed on Israel. The U.S. should be more demanding of Ariel Sharon and his cabinet. President Bush's attitude does not seem to be clearly defined in this respect. It is extremely instructive to analyse his smart avoidance to answer such pertinent questions of the media during the press briefing he held in the Oval Office on the 18th of April 2002 after Secretary of State Colin Powell's return to Washington from his Middle East peace mission: the President just stood up, walked away and cut the meeting short when such pertinent questions were asked to him of the kind like **"ARE THERE GOING TO BE ANY CONSEQUENCES FOR ALL PARTIES NOT RESPONDING TO YOU***

IMMEDIATELY?” or “DO WE BACK UP OUR THREATS WITH CONSEQUENCES EVER?” or “DO WE EVER TELL THEM WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THEY DON’T?”

If mutual trust is to be recovered and reached again by the parties, it necessarily needs to be earned first and foremost by the U.S. as a major partner of good will in this conflict; its position needs therefore to be clearly and primarily defined on its own, and later on within the U.N. system, vis-à-vis the reported violations of human rights in the area. To quote just one single unbiased American source, one might refer to U.S. representative to Jenin after the reported massacres, Assistant Secretary Bill Burns who clearly stated that “I just think that what we’re seeing here is a terrible human tragedy. It is obvious that what happened here in the Jenin camp has caused enormous human suffering for thousands of Palestinian citizens”. Needles to further comment this issue. Only action will help define the positions of the parties involved and/or concerned with the conflict. Meanwhile, all must abide to a common engagement of never allowing it again.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon can play a major and positive role in generating global respect for his person and massive satisfaction among both his supporters and opponents. This can occur if he were to demonstrate to the whole world his innocence of the crimes constantly attributed to him. This document might well fall within his reach. I certainly hope so. If it were the case, and you were to read it, Mr. Prime Minister, please allow me to modestly advise that you courageously put an end to the multiple accusations affecting your person. You are a soldier! Sorry! An officer! A superior officer! Aren’t you? The honour due to the military titles honestly and painfully earned as well as the respect owed to the uniform and medals proudly worn imply the courage to stand up to one’s convictions. Take the challenge of putting a final end to the ongoing accusations of war crimes held against your person. Pay a courtesy visit to Carla Del Ponte in the Hague as any other honest and innocent world citizen would! What have you got to lose if you can prove to be right? Can you imagine yourself all cleared from the accusations constantly troubling your quietude? Not only would your scores in the polls sharply arise within your country, but your personal popularity in the world will enormously gain from the impact of a soundly established innocence from abusive accusations. Who knows? Even the road to the prestigious function of U.N. Secretary General, in charge of implementing world peace, might become wide open to compensate for the present sorrow of your unjustly martyred innocence. But...were they in the Court to find you guilty of any of the Sabra and Chatilla slaughters or, more recently of the Jenine apocalyptic invasion, your courage as a soldier will then have to prevail! Just give it a try!!!!

For its part, America can also positively contribute to effective peace keeping by going beyond its limited desire to consider setting mere monitors or observers in the area: the experienced atrocities call for real and efficient peacekeeping troops. Once the conflict calms down sensibly and the risks of new violence have

been deferred, an observation team can then be productive. But in the context of muscle exhibition, only stronger muscles can prove to be of a dissuading effect.

For all these purposes, the U.S. needs to show more toughness in dealing with both parties to the conflict. The need is now insistently urging for a more engaged style of diplomacy. Classical type diplomacy no longer works in modern world stubbornness. New realities need to be faced with newly forged diplomatic styles. Diplomatic respect of national sovereignty has been breached anyway by the same U.S. superpower under other circumstances. Why is it then observing a frigid attitude in the Middle East context? America needs to knock virulently on the table for better respect of the values it stands for: "liberty and justice for all". It needs to knock on the table harder and harder to get these bad boys again to willing to adopt reasonable attitudes towards an even sharing of the cake. Statements like "Israel has lost all moral authority in this conflict" pronounced by U.N. envoys to the area speak clearly for themselves (as quoted by CBS's Ms Borger in Secretary of State Colin Powell's interview in the program "Face the Nation", broadcast by CBS on Sunday, April 21st, 2002). Then, and only then, can a potential "Marshall Plan" like scheme prove to be of any efficiency in fostering lasting peace through economic support of newly coming Palestinian State bound to live in peace with its Israeli neighbouring State. The endorsement of Saudi Crown Prince Abdallah's proposal by all Arab member States of the Arab League is in itself a strong and convincing clue of Arab good intentions. President Bush's recent meeting with him in Crawford (Texas) let the two leaders to "share a vision" as declared by President Bush himself who clearly stated also that he was "confident we could work together to achieve peace". Yes, Mr. President, you are with the right man. Many Arabs can confidently state with no hesitation that "that man is our man.....He can do it". Let's all work together towards a new peace of the braves potentially leading to an independent State of Palestine in its authentic boundaries and with "Al Qods Charif" as its capital.

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