

The reality of US-Israel relations—Part 3

Jean Shaoul
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This is the third of a three-part series. Parts one and two are published here.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the new Middle East

The dissolution of the Soviet Union removed the last external constraint on American power in the Middle East. With Moscow gone, regimes such as Iraq, Syria, and South Yemen could no longer balance between rival great powers; Washington emerged as the region's sole arbiter.

Far from inaugurating an era of peace, unipolarity freed the US to compensate for its long-term economic decline through unrestrained military force. Over the next three decades, it launched a chain of interventions—Iraq, Somalia, Yugoslavia, Iraq again, Libya, Yemen, and now Iran—that defined the new imperial order.

The Gulf War was the first expression of this shift. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990—undertaken under the illusion of tacit US tolerance—was seized upon by the Bush administration to reassert American dominance. Operation Desert Storm killed more than 100,000 Iraqi soldiers and shattered Iraq's infrastructure, with Bush vowing to return the country "to the pre-industrial age."

To preserve the Arab coalition, Washington forced Israel to remain on the sidelines, even withholding Identification Friend or Foe codes to prevent retaliation against Iraqi Scud missiles. Yet the US stopped short of regime change, fearing that a Kurdish or Shia victory would destabilise Türkiye. Instead, it imposed a decade of sanctions and no-fly zones that devastated Iraqi society while keeping Hussein weak.

As the International Committee warned in its 1991 call for a World Conference against Imperialist War and Colonialism, the collapse of the USSR and the Gulf War did not signal the triumph of liberal capitalism but the end of the post-war order and the beginning of a new epoch of war and recolonisation.

Bush proclaimed a "New Middle East Order" built on a permanent US military presence in the Gulf, nuclear non-proliferation, and an Arab-Israeli settlement based on "land for peace."

Washington forced Israel to attend the 1991 Madrid Conference, withholding \$11 billion in loan guarantees and demanding a halt to settlement expansion, while excluding the Palestine Liberation Organisation from the joint Jordanian/Palestinian delegation and pushing the UN to revoke its 1975 "Zionism is racism" resolution.

Madrid failed to produce an agreement, but it opened the road to the 1993 Oslo Accords—the political framework through which the US sought to stabilise its dominance and manage the Palestinian question through a fragmented, dependent Palestinian Authority (PA) under Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, the dominant faction in the PLO.

The Oslo Accords: pacifying the Palestinian question

The Oslo Accords served US imperialism as a temporary mechanism for managing, not resolving, the Palestinian question that has historically been the single most powerful mobilising force for anti-imperialist sentiment across the Arab world and, increasingly, globally. Every massacre, siege, settlement expansion, abuse and mistreatment generates mass outrage that threatens to destabilise Washington's client regimes. The solution from Washington's perspective was a containment operation, while advancing several other imperialist objectives.

Oslo's fundamental achievement, from America's standpoint, was converting the PLO from an armed national liberation movement into a subcontracted security apparatus. Arafat, in exchange for the fiction of eventual statehood, agreed to recognise Israel, renounce armed struggle, and—crucially—guarantee Israeli security. The Palestinian Authority that emerged was not an embryonic state but a police force suppressing Palestinian resistance on Israel's behalf, while enriching a thin layer of the Palestinian bourgeoisie via "developmental aid". Oslo served to tame the most radical of the Arab nationalist movements and put it to work for the occupation it had pledged to end.

Oslo was also driven by Israeli capital's need to break out of national autarky and integrate into the wider Middle East economy in the era of globalisation. Labour leader Shimon Peres stated the objective with brutal candour in 1992: "We do not want a peace between nations. We want a peace between markets".

A Palestinian mini-state—non-contiguous, economically dependent, providing cheap subcontracted labour—was the price of that integration into European Union and Arab markets. Palestinian workers would be excluded from Israel and replaced by even cheaper and more defenceless Asian migrants, while Palestinian consumers and territory would provide a captive market. This was colonial economics dressed in the language of peace.

For Washington, Oslo served another vital diplomatic purpose. It would provide the Arab bourgeois regimes with political cover for their collaboration with US imperialism. The Arab ruling classes in Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia could point to the "peace process" as evidence that Washington was not simply an unconditional backer of Israeli expansionism, making it easier to justify their own normalisation with Israel and their alignment with US strategic goals.

Likewise, the primary purpose of Oslo's hollow successor, the 2003 Road Map, was to provide cover for the Iraq War and allow the Arab regimes to defend their acquiescence in the invasion to their populations.

This "peace" was structurally incapable of delivering either Palestinian self-determination or alleviating the Palestinians' miserable living conditions. It was not designed to. Israel continued expanding the settlements throughout the 1990s, more so than in the preceding 26 years. It seized control of water and other resources, built bypass roads, and installed more than 600 checkpoints that crippled Palestinian movement and economic life.

Oslo provided the diplomatic cover for this dispossession and impoverishment. The PA became a byword for corruption and collaboration. The Second Intifada, which erupted in September 2000, was the Palestinian masses' verdict on the Accords. When the Camp

David talks collapsed in 2000 and the Intifada began, Oslo's function was exhausted. Managed pacification was replaced by the post 9/11 doctrine of reshaping the entire Middle East by force, including the greenlighting of yet greater violence against the Palestinians.

The “war on terror” and Israel

After 9/11, George W. Bush used the “war on terror” to normalise pre-emptive war and regime change, beginning with Afghanistan and Iraq. This was the declaration that open-ended military force would now be the routine instrument of US foreign policy. Israel naturally welcomed the shift.

Barely a month after invading Afghanistan, Bush unveiled the “axis of evil”: North Korea, Iran, and Iraq—the last two oil-producing states that resisted US hegemony and supported the Palestinians. The list soon expanded to Cuba, Libya, and Syria. The US now claimed the right to attack any state that obstructed its global dominance.

Israel moved rapidly to insert its own conflict into this new framework. It insisted that the US and Israel were fighting the same war, recasting Palestinian resistance as part of the global jihadist threat. Netanyahu declared on 9/11 that the attacks would “generate immediate sympathy” for Israel, while Israeli officials folded Hamas, the bourgeois clerical group affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood, all the Palestinian armed groups and Hezbollah in Lebanon into the same category as Al-Qaeda. This ideological manoeuvre aligned US national security doctrine with Israel's position during the Second Intifada.

Ariel Sharon, by this time prime minister of Israel, became one of the most vocal international supporters of the US drive to war in Iraq, despite Iraq's shattered condition after a decade of sanctions and Israel's 1981 destruction of the Osirak reactor. He helped manufacture a pro-war consensus inside Israel that contrasted sharply with mass opposition across Europe and North America.

Israel did not formally join the 2003 invasion, but it supplied intelligence, logistics, and political support. US interrogation and torture methods used in Iraq—including at Abu Ghraib—drew directly on Israeli precedents. As in 1991, Washington excluded Israel from the “Coalition of the Willing” to avoid embarrassing its Arab allies, who publicly denounced the war while privately providing bases, overflight rights, and counter-insurgency cooperation.

US-Israel integration deepened across every major security domain: counterterrorism, Homeland Security, urban warfare, cyber operations, intelligence coordination against Iran in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, regional missile-defence integration, and joint exploitation of eastern Mediterranean gas. After 9/11, Israel became structurally embedded in the American security architecture—the forward base and strike arm for the coming confrontation with Iran.

The function of Israel's suppression of the Palestinians for US imperialism

After 9/11, the Bush administration's doctrine of reshaping the Middle East by force—and the Arab regimes' acquiescence to the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—allowed Israel to abandon the Oslo fiction of “negotiations” and replace it with open militarism: sieges, assassinations, curfews, and regime-change operations aimed at crushing Palestinian resistance once and for all.

Bush signalled the shift immediately. In March 2001 he told Sharon he would not “try to force peace,” effectively giving Israel a free hand. Sharon responded with the first airstrikes on PA targets since 1967 and a wave of incursions across the West Bank. When Sharon formally repudiated Oslo in December 2001, the Arab regimes issued ritual protests but took no action.

In 2002 Washington installed Mahmoud Abbas as Palestinian Prime Minister under the “Roadmap for Peace,” to sideline Arafat and create a Palestinian leadership willing to act as Washington's enforcer. The Roadmap served as diplomatic cover for Arab support for the coming Iraq war.

In 2004 Bush issued written guarantees to Sharon that marked a historic shift in US policy: recognising that major settlement blocs would remain part of Israel, rejecting the right of return, and affirming Israel's right to act “by itself” even in areas it withdrew from. Armed with these assurances, Sharon carried out the unilateral “disengagement” from Gaza—not a step toward peace, but a move to reduce the cost of occupation while freezing negotiations on refugees, borders, and Jerusalem.

When Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian elections, the US refused to accept the result. It organised a \$1.27 billion plan to arm Fatah strongman Mohammed Dahlan to overthrow the elected government. When Hamas pre-empted the coup and took control of Gaza, Washington backed Israel's blockade—cutting off food, medicine, electricity, and water—with Egypt's active participation.

The US fully supported Israel's 2008–09 assault on Gaza, viewing the destruction of Hamas as part of its broader project to build a “New Middle East” and weaken Iran and Syria. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the PA were direct accomplices, terrified that Hamas' electoral victory had shown that a popular resistance movement could challenge their own rule.

Under Obama, US military aid rose to \$3.8 billion annually, with expanded cooperation on missile defence and major funding for Iron Dome. Trump went further: cutting all funding to Palestinian institutions, recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital, endorsing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and orchestrating in 2020 the Abraham Accords—the normalisation of Israel with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco.

This formalised what had long been an open secret: the extensive covert commercial, intelligence and military cooperation between the Gulf States and Israel, now legitimised in the service of Washington's “maximum pressure” sanctions regime against Iran. It ended even the pretence that Arab regimes conditioned relations with Israel on Palestinian rights. It consolidated a US-led anti-Iran axis and aligned the Gulf States with Washington's broader confrontation with China.

None of the signatories moved to void the Accords after Israel's 2023 assault on Gaza. Jordan, Egypt, and the Gulf states ensured that energy supplies to Israel continued uninterrupted.

When the October 2023 genocide began, the Biden administration's immediate deployment of warships to the eastern Mediterranean made clear that this was a joint US-Israel offensive. Washington provided intelligence, logistics, and a \$14.3 billion emergency weapons package, while using its veto at the UN Security Council to block ceasefire resolutions. Gaza became a tactical laboratory for US-Israel military doctrine: urban warfare, surveillance, drone operations, and missile-defence systems tested in real time.

Every Israeli assault—in Gaza or the West Bank—served US strategic interests. Israel was given a free hand because each operation advanced the broader project of remaking the Middle East under US hegemony. The 2023 genocidal war signalled to Iran, China, and Russia that the US had no “red lines” and would tolerate mass killing to assert dominance.

But this was always a relationship of mutual dependence. Israel required US financing and protection to survive; the US required Israel as its indispensable enforcer, subcontractor, and regional attack dog. What

united them was the shared class interest between US imperialism and its regional proxy in crushing any challenge—Palestinian, Arab nationalist, Iranian, or working-class—to their domination of the most strategically vital, oil-rich region on earth.

The wars on Lebanon to degrade Iran’s regional network

In 2006, Israel launched a 34-day assault on Lebanon that was explicitly aimed at eliminating Hezbollah, an Iranian ally, as a military and political force. It was a carefully planned component of the US strategy for regional restructuring, which the WSWS described as “a continuation and escalation of the imperialist geo-political restructuring of the Middle East and Central Asia that began with the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.” The immediate military goal — crushing Hezbollah—was the prelude to confronting Syria and ultimately Iran. The US actively blocked ceasefire efforts, with Condoleezza Rice’s visit deliberately delayed, giving Israel maximum destruction time.

The war devastated Lebanon and displaced more than a million people, but it failed to achieve its strategic aims. Hezbollah survived, mobilised mass popular support, and forced a ceasefire. The war did, however, accelerate the development of missile-defence systems that became central to US–Israel military cooperation.

Israel persisted in its efforts to eliminate Hezbollah. Throughout the 2010s, it conducted thousands of airstrikes in Syria targeting Iranian-backed forces and Hezbollah supply lines, acting as Washington’s air force against the Iranian axis of resistance. In 2024, Israel returned to the task with far greater ferocity: a systematic campaign of assassination of Hezbollah’s entire senior command structure, culminating in the killing of its leader Hassan Nasrallah on September 28, 2024.

Some 85 bombs—the majority US-supplied 2,000-pound bunker-busters — were dropped on central Beirut. Netanyahu ordered the strike from New York City, the day after delivering a speech at the UN General Assembly explicitly framing Israel’s campaign as the construction of a “new Middle East” aligned with US strategic interests against Iran, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. The WSWS wrote that this was not Israeli unilateralism but an operation of US imperialism, “Netanyahu’s government, funded and armed by the United States, is not an independent actor but functions as America’s proxy.”

In March this year, Israel again attacked Lebanon as part of the wider US confrontation with Iran, deploying the same tactics used in Gaza—mass displacement and aerial bombardment—while seeking to push Hezbollah north of the Litani River. The broader US objective remains the same: reshaping the regional balance of power. Israel’s leadership, meanwhile, is using the conflict to pursue its territorial ambitions and consolidate a Greater Israel.

Policing the broader region: Syria and the “Axis of Resistance”

Israel has not only carried out operations directly against Iran; it has functioned as Washington’s forward strike force against the entire “axis of resistance” the US seeks to destroy. During the US–Gulf–Türkiye campaign to topple the Syrian government, Israel launched hundreds of airstrikes on Syrian military sites, airfields, weapons depots, and the bases and convoys of Iran and Hezbollah—the decisive external force in Syria since 2013.

It effectively acted as air support for US-backed opposition militias,

while providing medical and logistical aid to armed Islamist groups in the Golan Heights. These operations were coordinated with US forces in eastern and northern Syria, which shared intelligence with Israel.

The aim was explicit: prevent Iran from consolidating its position in Syria as a counterweight to US regional dominance. Israel also destroyed Syria’s alleged nuclear reactor at al-Kibar in 2007—an operation the Bush administration was unwilling to carry out itself but sanctioned Israel to perform, preserving the US–Israeli nuclear monopoly. The strike was immediately used by Washington as a warning to Tehran: this is what awaits your nuclear facilities.

The 2023–24 Israel–Hezbollah war reshaped the Syrian battlefield. Hezbollah was forced to divert fighters, commanders, and logistics back to Lebanon’s southern front. Its reduced presence created a temporary vacuum in northwest Syria just as Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Sunni Islamist militant group and al-Nusra offshoot, was consolidating control over Idlib.

With Hezbollah tied down and regional actors focused on preventing a wider Israel–Iran confrontation, HTS faced fewer constraints. This indirect but decisive shift helped HTS tighten its grip and contributed to the collapse of the Syrian regime in December 2024.

After HTS seized Damascus, Israel continued its long-standing objective of weakening and fragmenting Syria. It backed minority groups against a centralised state—the Druze in the southwest and the Kurds in the northeast—until Washington forced it to withdraw support for Kurdish forces during the Syrian army’s offensive to reintegrate the autonomous region.

Iran and the Deepening US–Israel Security Alignment

The US-led invasion of Iraq—whose unintended consequence was to expand Iran’s regional influence—made Iran the focus of US strategy. This shift accelerated Israel’s integration into the American military-security system and pushed Iran towards deeper ties with China, now Washington’s principal global rival.

Once Iran was placed in the “axis of evil,” Washington drove a series of UN sanctions against its nuclear programme, despite no evidence that it had violated the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Obama escalated this pressure in 2012 by targeting Iran’s energy sector and central bank, threatening any state that bought Iranian oil with exclusion from the US-dominated financial system.

Trump intensified the confrontation: tearing up the 2015 nuclear deal, reimposing sweeping sanctions, designating the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp (IRGC) a terrorist organisation, and ordering the assassination of Qasem Soleimani in 2020.

Alongside these overt measures, the US and Israel waged a long “shadow war” to cripple Iran’s nuclear and military capacity: the Stuxnet cyberattack on Natanz; assassinations of scientists and IRGC officials; sabotage of military and energy infrastructure; and attacks on Iranian shipping. This was a joint campaign of military, technological, and economic containment—cementing Israel’s role as Washington’s frontline enforcer.

The alignment became explicit in 2024, when Israel’s strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus triggered direct Iranian retaliation. The US mobilised immediately: CENTCOM assembled a multinational air-defence coalition, with the UK, France, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE providing intelligence, airspace, and logistical support. Israel’s defence now operated inside a US-centred regional security system.

The point was driven home in June 2025, when Israel attacked Iran’s nuclear facilities during US–Iran talks. The US defended Israel,

intercepted Iranian missiles, provided intelligence and logistics, and ultimately carried out direct strikes on Iran's underground nuclear sites—targets beyond Israel's capabilities. Iran responded by striking a US base in Qatar, after which Washington imposed a ceasefire. The Gulf states again supplied bases, intelligence, and airspace; NATO powers offered political and logistical backing. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz captured the essence of the operation: Israel was doing the West's "dirty work."

The present conflict, launched jointly by the US and Israel on 28 February, is the fullest expression of this integration. All the Gulf states except Oman have opened their bases, intelligence networks, and airspace to Washington; NATO states have provided political and indirect military support.

Taken together, these developments show how Israel functions as Washington's forward agent within a US-directed regional security architecture. The US determines the scale, duration, coalition, and political framework of operations—and orders ceasefires. Israel is not even a party to the US–Iran negotiations that will determine the terms of any settlement.

This makes clear that the US–Israel war on Iran is not the product of Israeli scheming or lobbying networks, but of the crisis of the global imperial order. To reduce a world-spanning confrontation to the manoeuvres of a state of ten million people is to mistake the shadow for the substance. The driving force is the strategic logic of US imperialism, desperately seeking to reassert control over energy, raw materials, investment routes, trade corridors, and geopolitical chokepoints as its dominance erodes on every front except the military.

Israel acts within this architecture as a junior partner whose actions reinforce Washington's aims—not as a puppet-master capable of steering the world's largest military and financial power into war.

Conclusion

Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* remains the indispensable framework for understanding the present world crisis. Imperialism is not simply colonial aggression or great-power bullying; it is a specific stage of capitalist development defined by monopoly, finance capital, the export of capital, international cartels, and the division of the world among the major powers—a division that can be altered only through violent redivision. It is not a policy choice but the structural logic of capitalism once it outgrows the limits of the nation-state.

Lenin wrote that the changing economic, financial, military strength of competing capitalist states constantly destabilises any imperialist "balance." The rise of Germany shattered the equilibrium of the early twentieth century; the rise of China after the collapse of the Soviet Union has played the same role in the twenty-first. The drive toward war flows from this objective contradiction, not from the decisions of individual leaders.

Lenin also insisted that imperialism produces "reaction all down the line" at home. Monopoly capitalism requires repression, censorship, and the curtailment of democratic rights. The vast sums funnelled to Israel—\$158 billion since 1948, \$3.8 billion annually today, plus emergency supplements—represent a direct transfer from social needs to militarism and the arms industry.

The repression of pro-Palestinian protests on US campuses, the criminalisation of dissent, the banning of student groups, and the threats of deportation in Germany are part of the same process: using the Israel–Palestine conflict to justify the expansion of the repressive apparatus against a working class entering into struggle over wages and

conditions.

Lenin's analysis was rooted in the recognition that capitalism had entered an epoch of systemic crisis and decay, in which the socialist transformation of society had become an objective necessity. From this analysis flows the strategic conclusion. No appeal to the capitalist state, no invocation of the "rules-based international order," and no campaign to reform US foreign policy by reducing Israeli influence can halt the descent toward world war. The mass demonstrations of 2003 did not stop the invasion of Iraq; the global outcry against the Gaza genocide did not stop it; nor did appeals to the International Court of Justice or International Criminal Court. Imperialism cannot be pressured into peace.

What is required is the construction of an international movement of the working class, armed with a socialist and internationalist programme, directed against the capitalist system that is the root cause of imperialist war, and led by the revolutionary party of the Fourth International. Only the independent mobilisation of the working class on a world scale can put an end to the barbarism now unfolding and open the road to a socialist reorganisation of society.



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