

Human Rights & Human Welfare

Volume 7

Issue 5 *June Roundtable: An Annotation of "On Israel, America and AIPAC" by George Soros*

Article 1

6-1-2007

June Roundtable: Introduction

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/hrhw>



Part of the [Human Rights Law Commons](#), [International Law Commons](#), [International Relations Commons](#), [Near and Middle Eastern Studies Commons](#), and the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2007) "June Roundtable: Introduction," *Human Rights & Human Welfare*: Vol. 7: Iss. 5, Article 1.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/hrhw/vol7/iss5/1>



All Rights Reserved.

This Roundtable is brought to you for free and open access by the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Human Rights & Human Welfare by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu, digitalcommons@du.edu.

June Roundtable: Introduction

Abstract

An annotation of:

“On Israel, America and AIPAC” by George Soros. New York Review of Books. April 12, 2007.

Keywords

Human rights, United States, Israel, Palestine, American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)

Copyright Statement / License for Reuse



All Rights Reserved.

Publication Statement

Copyright is held by the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver. User is responsible for all copyright compliance.

[**“On Israel, America and AIPAC” by George Soros. *New York Review of Books*. April 12, 2007.**](#)

An Annotation:

This month’s Roundtable panel addresses a hotly contested, deeply emotional and politically crucial issue in the worlds of foreign policy and academia: Are Israel’s supporters in the United States contributing positively or negatively toward peace between Israel and the Palestinians? The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) advocates a Zionist position through its support of perpetual regional Israeli military dominance and economic sanctions directed toward Israel’s enemies, rather than constructive political engagement. On the other end of the spectrum are anti-Zionists who propose equally extreme positions utilizing sensationalist rhetoric, inflammatory metaphors (genocide and ethnic cleansing) and unrealistic political solutions (complete withdrawal to pre-1967 borders and unrestricted right to return for Palestinian refugees).

Somewhere lost between these two untenable positions is a workable policy. However arriving at this middle-ground will require a renewed, patient and frank dialogue motivated by clear headedness and willingness to compromise. As a result, we find before us one of the greatest questions facing modern politics: How do we—those who advocate for a peaceful settlement and the protection of human rights—embolden the marginalized, moderate voices who are straining to be heard in an arena dominated by impassioned polemics?

“The Palestine problem does not have a purely military solution. Military superiority is necessary for Israel’s national security, but it is not sufficient.”

Unrelenting devotion to a heavy-handed policy toward the Palestinians is the cornerstone of AIPAC’s advocacy. The failure of Israel and the West to acknowledge either a Hamas-led or unity Palestinian government has resulted in a further deterioration of the security situation and humanitarian conditions in the Occupied Territories. Yet, after nearly 60 years of perpetual strife and few signs of progress, proponents of this position refuse to consider alternatives. Furthermore, this ineffectual methodology has been exported and used by U.S. forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia, as well as by Israel against Lebanon in the summer of 2006. The notion that complex political struggles can be remedied or extinguished with externally-imposed brute force has repeatedly proved both antiquated and futile. How will any of these seemingly intractable conflicts be resolved when decision-makers are unwilling to imagine other, more nuanced and more creative, options?

“AIPAC under its current leadership has clearly exceeded its mission, and far from guaranteeing Israel’s existence, has endangered it.”

The true test as to the merit of AIPAC’s advocacy is whether the resultant policies have accomplished their intended goals. Are Israelis being kept safe? Is the state of Israel’s national existence secured? Are the current policies sustainable for the short- and long-term? To the extent that the solutions to any—or all—of these policy questions might be unfavorable to Israel, serves to underscore the necessity for current policies to be openly, yet cautiously, reconsidered.

“The current policy is not even questioned in the United States. While other problem areas of the Middle East are freely discussed, criticism of our policies toward Israel is very muted indeed.”

Moving forward, the question at the heart of the issue is whether critics of this monolithic policy will be given the opportunity to speak freely and offer alternative policy prescriptions that demonstrate greater respect for democracy and human rights, and provide the basis for lasting Israeli security. However, the constant charge by defenders of the current policy has been to equate criticism of Israeli policy with anti-Semitism. In truth, some anti-Zionist detraction is indeed driven by intense ethnic hatred, and the oppressive behavior of the Israeli government and military has further fueled anti-Semitic sentiment. Leveraging this fact, AIPAC and its supporters frame all anti-Zionists as anti-Semitic, thereby discouraging—especially in the United States—the type of open criticism of Israel’s policies found within Israeli popular media. By stifling critical discussion of the issue, there can be no hope for progress toward peace in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Indeed, the only way to mediate the extreme voices on all sides of this issue and to empower moderate positions is to expand the space in which alternatives can be freely explored.

~ The Editors