

## Say No Evil, Hear No Evil, Know No Blame

What Is Not Being Discussed During the 2008 Presidential Debates

I find it difficult to understand how both political parties can simply divide the Middle East into two spheres -- the democratic loving, pro-Israel, anti-terrorist world, and everyone else -- mainly those who take our petrodollars and "don't really appreciate us".

My gosh, how would you feel, if the world's most powerful nation were the best friend of your region's worst enemy? What would you think, if this same powerful nation stood by while its best friend ravaged your closest neighbor? Could you think better of this nation were it to protect one of your neighbors from aggression by another neighbor and then turn around and invade that other neighbor without proper cause? Would your feelings change if this same powerful nation were to flaunt nearly every attempt on the part of the UN to bring about peace in your region and then blame you for the despicable action of a small group of people, whom you yourself do not like?

Is it so difficult for my fellow Americans to understand that friendship is not something that can be purchased with petro-dollars and arms sales?

In the same breath that both the Democratic and Republican Parties find the genocide in Darfur, Sudan abominable, they say nothing about the Israeli occupation of Palestine. This is no less absurd! The Israeli economy is not growing because it is a democracy; rather, it is growing because North America and Europe keep it financially afloat while it continues to breed unrest in the Middle East region through its decade-long devastation of the Palestinian economy. The social, political, and economic spill-over into other nations of the region is well-known and documented and a constant source of tension among those who "don't really appreciate us".

What I would like to hear in the final presidential debate is just what makes Barack H. Obama and John S. McCain think that Israel is such an important ally for the US? Please allow me to help guide these two in their answers with a short series of additional questions:

Does being a democracy justify military occupation, non-ratification of the world's only non-proliferation treaty, and unprovoked, preemptive, military incursions into neighboring countries? Does being a democratic country also legitimize turning every nation in a region on whom the US and our allies depend for energy into peoples that "do not like us very much". Finally, just what is so good about a nation that depends on US financial hand-outs for the purchase of European goods, while the US economy's trade deficit looms ever larger?

Indeed, the matter is far worse than merely borrowing money from China to pay for Middle East oil; it is also a matter of borrowing from China to pay for Israeli aggression in Palestine and all of the bad PR that comes with it for the US in the Middle East. Both the Democrats and the Republicans claim that they do not ever want to experience another holocaust, and both sides claim that genocide and ethnic cleansing are wrong. Unfortunately, neither side does anything very productive to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Even when they condemn it, as the American government frequently has, what does it propose to do about it? Obviously this is where the current administration has failed -- like so many administrations before it.

During the September 29 - October 3, 2008 work-week, while 98% of the American public debated the fate of their own economy, the United States Congress paused for a two-day holiday -- Rosh Hashanah.

Rosh Hashanah? Is this an American holiday? Well, er, ... yes, sort of . . . .

This is a day on which fewer than two percent of all Americans celebrate the beginning of the world as they know it -- not one that many Americans have ever known, but surely one with which a very large number of those who "don't really appreciate us" are very familiar. Is it the Chinese New Year? Nice try, but no. Have

you got it yet? Shhhh, I better not say it, because were I too tell, I would likely be accused of being anti-Semitic and subject to all sorts of anonymous harassment.

Barack H. Obama talks about the American middle class, social inequality, and the freedoms we love so dearly, and John S. McCain talks about Congressional corruption, greed on Wall Street, and national security. When is either going to talk straight, or even talk at all, to the American public about any part of the Middle East, but Iraq?

Obama and I agree that Iraq was an incredibly stupid diversion. We also agree that we missed our target in Afghanistan. I also agree with John McCain that we cannot simply pack our bags in Iraq and move to Afghanistan. But, what about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Most everyone agrees on a two-state solution, but which of the two candidates has the road map to get there?

Even if the United States could miraculously free itself of Middle East oil, its allies in both Europe and East Asia would not be able. Japan, America's best friend in East Asia, is the world's second largest importer of Saudi oil. To the best of my knowledge South Korea imports all of its petroleum and natural gas. Anything on its way to Europe from Indonesia must pass through the Suez Canal, and Russia has its own political agenda. North Sea oil is hardly enough to satisfy the growing needs of an ever-expanding European Union. Moreover, crushing Al Qaeda in Central and South Asia will not bring an end to terror in the Middle East while the Hamas and the Hezbollah are a different order of political organization with a highly localized agenda that would not even involve the US, if the US were simply to drop its ardent support of Israeli aggression in Palestine.

Bringing the Green Revolution home is a great idea and even trendy, if only the American government could create sufficient demand for its goods and services. Not only will this revolution be tough to implement with an already over-extended budget and crippled economy, but it will not bring an end to the Middle East crisis and America's military involvement in the Middle East.

Both presidential candidates condemn special interests. Nevertheless, many Congressmen and -women sat on the sidelines while two percent of all Americans celebrated the birth of a different nation with their Israeli brethren while the United States of America floundered during the worst financial crisis since the beginning of the Great Depression. The last time I looked Tel Aviv and New York were waving different national flags.

So, when is either candidate going to talk straight about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and America's need for Arab friendship? Osama bin Laden is surely a messenger of evil tidings, but killing the messenger will neither extinguish the message, nor its reason for being sent. Nor will being quiet about a root cause of America's troubled security solve very much. There are no innocent by-standers in a democracy.

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