

The Middle East and the Left of “equal distances”*

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While after the UN resolution to send a ‘peace’ force to Lebanon consisting of contingents from the armies of several members of the transnational elite and its allies, the brutal bombings against civilians (including thousands of cluster bombs which even now claim new civilians’ lives^[1]) have ceased, another war is still raging. This is the ideological war of the transnational elite and its ideological commissars which aims –with the assistance of the bogy of ‘terrorism’ (see the latest attempt to create panic among air travellers^[2]), to either gain the support of the peoples of the West to its endless wars and the Zionist attacks, or, at least, to gain their tolerance with the purpose of creating a ‘consensus of equal distances from oppressor and oppressed’. In this ideological war are enlisted not only the usual ideological commissars but also the reformist Left and the mainstream Green movement (which up to date has supported, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, all the wars of the transnational elite, from Kosovo and Afghanistan up to Iraq and the war against ‘terrorism’), as well as most ‘libertarian’ currents. Of course, this may simply represent a (flawed) ideological choice, equivalent to the one made by social-democrats in support of the First World War, or of some ‘libertarians’ against resistance movements or national liberation movements in the past, on the grounds that their struggle did not have the characteristics of a class struggle, or that the outcome of such wars could not be a liberatory society but some sort of a new totalitarian regime (e.g. the Vietnamese movement) etc!

It might therefore be worthwhile to examine the myths on the basis of which this ‘Left’ has adopted a stand of ‘equal distances’ from the oppressor (Zionist Israel) and the oppressed (Lebanese and Palestinian resistance), condemning both the former (on account of the ‘disproportionate’ violence they used) and the latter (on account of their ‘unprovoked’ attack) and usually ending up with a demand for the ‘cessation of hostilities’ and the despatch of a ‘peace’ force in Lebanon –where the transnational elite hopes that, with the help of the Christian Lebanese and the like, it could de-activate Hezbollah and set the foundations for a new protectorate in the area. It should be noted that this ‘Left’ did not even insist on sending a similar force to Gaza, where the Zionist atrocities still continue, recognising indirectly that Palestine is an ‘internal affair’ of Israel, i.e. some kind of Zionist feud!

First myth: anti-Zionism is a disguised anti-Semitism. However, if pre-WWII anti-Semitism, with its racist and religious colourings which led to the savageries of German national socialists, was indeed—as aptly described by August Bebel, a ‘socialism of the fools’, today, this characterisation fits well to the implicit, or sometimes explicit, pro-Zionism of the ‘equal distances’ Left. Particularly so when, even after almost 60 years of continuous violence, this “Left” has yet to realise that the direct or indirect cause of the

cycle of violence in the Middle East is Zionism – i.e. a racist ideology aiming at establishing a ‘pure’ Jew state in Palestine^[3]. This, despite the fact that at the time of this State’s creation in the late 1940s, this development was highly anticipated by the anti-Zionist Jewish Left (Hannah Arendt, et. al.) and is confirmed by the corresponding Left of today (Oren Ben-Dor^[4], et. al.). Still, the reformist Left and the mainstream Green movement do not hesitate to characterise Manichean this sort of analysis, whereas through their supposedly sophisticated analysis, they rush to identify anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism and reject the only just solution on Palestine: the creation of a single Arab-Jewish state, as a first stage towards a confederal Inclusive Democracy of the peoples living in the area, as well as of the millions of Palestinian refugees who have been ‘ethnically cleansed’ from their homes. The inevitable conclusion of the reformist Left’s analysis is that the only ‘viable’ way out of the crisis is a ‘two-state’ solution. Still, one really wonders how significant analysts of the reformist and ‘libertarian’ Left like Chomsky do not realise that this simply means, given the balance of power that has been established in the Middle East in the post-war period, the co-existence of an all powerful Zionist state with a Palestinian protectorate!

Second myth: the Arab-Israeli conflict does not concern the internationalist Left, which should not care about the conflicts between reactionary nationalisms, but only about social struggles of class nature. However, as a significant Marxist historian of Jewish origin put it:
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“On the face of it, the Arab-Israeli conflict is only a clash of two rival nationalisms, each moving within the vicious circle of its self-righteous and inflated ambitions. From the viewpoint of an abstract internationalism nothing would be easier than to dismiss both as equally worthless and reactionary. However, such a view would ignore the social and political realities of the situation. The nationalism of the people in semi-colonial or colonial countries, fighting for their independence must not be put on the same moral-political level as the nationalism of conquerors and oppressors. The former has its historic justification and progressive aspect which the latter has not. Clearly, Arab nationalism, unlike the Israeli, still belongs to the former category

In fact, as the same historian stressed (emphasising that he was speaking as a Marxist of Jewish origin, whose next-of-kin perished in Auschwitz), our judgment should not be clouded by emotions and memories, even invocations of Auschwitz to blackmail us into supporting the wrong cause. Similarly, in the libertarian Left, Bakunin adopted the view that anarchists should support the nationalist struggle of Poles against the Tsarist empire, although of course he vehemently condemned all kinds of nationalisms, on the grounds that the common urgent enemy was the Tsarist empire, whose destruction got priority over any class struggle in the narrow sense of the word.^[6] Presumably, Bakunin could not foresee at the time that, after almost 150 years, today’s so called ‘anarchists’ would adopt a stand of ‘equal distances’ from both the oppressor and the oppressed, clearly incapable of seeing that the main enemy of any anti-systemic movement today can only be the transnational elite and its Zionist branch –the main supports of the New World Order.

Third myth: the irrational character of religious movements like those of Hamas and Hezbollah has no relation to the struggle for individual and social autonomy since religion is a basic element of heteronomy. On the basis of this myth, some in the libertarian Left adopt a policy of ‘equal distances’, if not a policy of support of the transnational elite as

expressing in some way Western rationalism! This, despite the fact that, as the leader of Hezbollah declared very recently,^[7] Islamist movements like Hezbollah are an integral part of the anti-imperialist struggle and not just religious movements. Still, the reformist Left, instead of enlisting in the common struggle against the main present enemy of any radical social or antisystemic movement, i.e. the transnational elite and the socio-economic system that it expresses —leaving the issue of religious irrationalism, as well as that of the class character of the movement, until after the external oppressor has been ousted from Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine etc— chooses the convenient option of enlisting in the struggle against 'irrational' terrorism. Similarly, 'anarchists' condemn the resistance organisations (i.e. the peoples' resistance to the New World Order) because they are not revolutionary socialist enough, instead of joining up with them in the common struggle against the transnational elite, without of course having to adopt the same methods which these organisations have adopted and which have no place in societies which do not face occupation and similar forms of oppression. This is, for instance, the case of an anarcho-syndicalist approach^[8], which is supposed to differentiate itself from the reformist Left but ends up with the same conclusions, i.e. both the transnational elite and the Hezbollah movement are put in the same bag and equally condemned. In this argument, the resistance movements are condemned, because they are not in favour of revolutionary, internationalist socialist-anarchism. However, such a position clearly implies that the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples should not be effectively supported in their struggles against the oppressor if they make the mistake of supporting Hezbollah and Hamas correspondingly, instead of waiting for the development of anarchist movements in the area, which would unite Arab and Zionist proletarians against their common capitalist enemy! Clearly, such a stand represents an indirect support for an 'equal distances' approach (even if it rhetorically declares its solidarity to the struggles of the peoples involved which is not extended however to their organisations!), and, through the use of a pseudo-revolutionary logic, ends up directly undermining the growing peoples' resistance against the New World Order and indirectly supporting the transnational elite in its struggle to impose it.

Fourth myth: the war in the Middle East is intra-imperialist and not anti-imperialist. This is because Iran and Syria which support Hamas and Hezbollah consist of sub-imperialisms that aim at the redistribution to their benefit of the military and economic power in the broader Middle East area. In the context of this sort of 'analysis', two basically underdeveloped countries at the economic and the military levels are upgraded into imperialisms, which, together with Russia and China (whose economic elites are completely dependent on the internationalised market economy) constitute a new international balance of power that justifies the 'equal distances' stand!

Fifth myth (supported usually by Greens): every form of violence (including the revolutionary one) reproduces the culture of violence and power relations. The obvious implication of this supposedly pacifist approach is that peoples should not resist the oppressor's violence, or even systemic violence^[9], ending up with perpetuating present power relations...

* The above text is a significantly extended version of an article which was first published in the

fortnightly column of Takis Fotopoulos in the mass circulation Athens daily *Eleftherotypia* on 2/9/2006

- [1] Ben Russell, "Israel is accused of targeting civilians", *The Independent* (31/8/2006).
- [2] The data given by Craig Murray are indicative as well as frightening: more than 1,000 British Muslims have been arrested under anti-terrorist legislation, but only 12% have been charged. Of those charged, 80% were acquitted. Most of the few convictions - just over 2% of arrests - are nothing to do with terrorism, but some minor offence the police happened upon while trawling through the lives they have wrecked, 'The timing is political', *The Guardian* (18/8/2006).
- [3] See '[Palestine: the hour of truth](#)', *The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (January 2006).
- [4] See '[Zionism and the transnational elite](#)', *ID Newsletter* # 35 (7 August 2006).
- [5] Isaac Deutscher, «On the Israeli-Arab War», *New Left Review* I/44 (July- August 1967).
- [6] G.P. Maximoff, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (1953), pp. 38-43.
- [7] See the Nasrallah interview in *Counterpunch*, 17/8/2006. Although this interview was subsequently denounced by Hezbollah as a fake this may reflect more internal conflicts on whether *Nasrallah* went too far to the Left in this interview rather than actual events, particularly so since the denouncement did not come from Nasrallah himself. However, as Professor Idris Samawi Hamid, who teaches at the Department of Philosophy at Colorado State University put it, "There is nothing in it that conflicts with the revolutionary Shi`i ideology of the Hawzah", and he concluded: "As a professor of Shi`i studies and philosophy I can confidently state: A careful study of this interview shows that, even if it is fake (possible but unlikely), the faker has a very strong knowledge of Islamic revolutionary discourse and the mindset of Sayyid Hassan. There is not a single sentence that is out of place." Alexander Cockburn, 'About That Nasrallah Interview', *Counterpunch*, 26-27/8/2006.
- [8] See Wayne Price, '[Lessons for the anarchist movement of the Israeli-Lebanese War](#)', *Anarkismo.net* (25/8/2006).
- [9] See for analysis of these distinctions, '[The global 'war' of the transnational elite](#)', *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (July 2002).
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