

partition plan, highlighting the marriage of convenience between European desires to rid themselves of the Jewish "refugee problem" and Zionist ambitions for territory.

In the final three chapters, Kattan focuses on the Zionist conquest of Palestine, the Palestinian refugee problem, the creation of the State of Israel, and its subsequent admission to the UN. Refuting claims by veteran Israeli lawyers, Kattan correctly notes that the birth of Israel was one of the twentieth century's last examples of a successful *conquest* and not a case of holding onto territory as is often claimed by Israeli scholars. Kattan examines Israel's obligations as a UN member, properly noting that "Israel had made a declaration to the UN General Assembly committing itself to return, repatriation and compensation [of refugees] in the context of an overall peace settlement. Israel's membership in that organization is predicated on reaching an agreement on these issues" (p. 237). On the issue of territory, Kattan concludes that "it was never envisaged that the 1949 ceasefire lines would become Israel's permanent borders. Rather, Israel was required to negotiate over them and was being subjected to pressure to relinquish its control over the territories it captured beyond the 1947 UN Partition Plan's boundaries in the envisaged Arab state" (p. 238). Later, he outlines how the United States capitulated from these requirements in the face of Israeli intransigency.

From Coexistence to Conquest provides a cutting examination of the role of power in the formation and development of international law. Its strength lies in its unique use of new information, data, and archival materials to examine the legal history leading up to events. But the book, while conveying dense legal analysis, does so in an accessible way, making it appealing to lawyers and nonlawyers alike.

Kattan's analysis of Israel's use and abuse of international law to achieve its goal of conquest begins and ends with observations on the peace process: "[I]t is rather paradoxical that today the reverse of what was promised to Lord Rothschild in 1917 has transpired: instead of there being a Jewish national home in Palestine, as envisaged by the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, we essentially have a situation where a 'Palestinian national home' may be established within a Jewish state" (p. 5). He concludes, "[I]n the end it is unlikely that a lasting

peace would subsist unless it is based on equity, justice and principles of international law, which have been sidelined throughout the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the detriment of all concerned. In the absence of such conditions any peace agreement is doomed to fail" (p. 261).

U.S. IMPERIALISM

Palestine, Israel and the U.S. Empire, by Richard Becker. San Francisco: Party for Socialism and Liberation Publications, 2009. ix + 165 pages. Appendices to p. 212. Endnotes to p. 227. Index to p. 233. \$17.95 paper.

Reviewed by Joel Kovel

Richard Becker's *Palestine, Israel and the U.S. Empire* is a succinct yet ambitious study of the conquest of Palestine eventuating in the formation of the State of Israel, and of the history of Palestinian resistance to this development. The narrative covers the whole twentieth century and extends to the present, and its point of view is strongly pro-Palestinian and politically alert. Its chief merit is an uncompromising look at the potent role played by U.S. imperialism in the history and behavior of the State of Israel. This is refreshingly different from customary views of the Jewish state that regard Zionism and its triumph in Palestine through the lens of Jewish history and abstract from the great power relations that necessarily condition the fortunes of a settler-colonial society like Israel. I have already endorsed Becker's book for this reason. But I had to set aside some qualms in doing so; and while I would not change my overall assessment, I welcome this opportunity to correct the balance.

The problem derives from Becker's heavy-handed and mechanical view of imperialism. Thus, asking a hackneyed question: "[D]oes the pro-Israel lobby—or Israel itself through the lobby—control and direct U.S. policy in the Middle East? To put it another way, does the tail wag the dog? Is it really conceivable that a small, dependent country should call the shots for the most powerful

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empire in the history of the world?" Becker replies, as he must, with a hackneyed answer: "The answer to all of these questions is no. Israel is part of the U.S. global empire, not the other way around" (p. 9).

The notion seems to be that imperial designs are self-evident and elementary—"Let's dominate the world, lads!"—and mere reflexes of the expansive power of empire. It does not seem to occur to Becker, a writer and commentator on Middle Eastern affairs, that imperial interests require passage through human beings who must interpret them and who routinely differ among themselves in doing so. In other words, ruling classes can have sharp differences that are expressed in struggles over policy.

Crucially, Becker passes over the period when the United States first advanced the interests of the nascent Israeli state in 1947 and rushed to recognize it upon its declaration of statehood in 1948. The incident has the clarity of compression, owing to the fact that for "United States" here, we can insert Harry S. Truman, whose dislike of Jews was of anti-Semitic proportion (see his memoirs) but was overridden, first, by his Protestant-Zionist belief that they were divinely entitled to their state in Palestine, and second and more significant, because he had become bankrolled by wealthy Zionists after the death of Roosevelt (who would have almost certainly not supported a Zionist state in Palestine). Truman was bitterly opposed by George Marshall and James Forrestal, his secretaries of state and defense, who foresaw the chaos and fanaticism that lay ahead were Israel to become a U.S. client. The latter and their faction lost out, and their defeat still resounds, even though the battle continues. All these men were imperialists but they had different interpretations of what would best advance empire, which entailed different views about Israel and different relations with the U.S. Jewish community.

In any case, the ascendancy of Zionist influence on U.S. foreign policy was not inevitable but contingent and has depended on the internal dynamics of U.S. society, especially its Jews, as much as, if not more than, the manipulations of Israel itself. Becker does not bother at all to develop this theme. In his eagerness to indict U.S. imperialism, he ignores that the world's Jews have had some say in the fortunes of the Jewish state and that a

dominant fraction has been very attentive to building structures within the United States advantageous to Israel. No conspiratorial process is at the root of this, though conspiracies and shenanigans of all kinds have abounded throughout the branches of Zionist power in civil society (the media, academia, churches, etc.) and state and in their complex interactions. These have all been conditioned by a tectonic shift in the social role of the United States' Jews as they overcame their historical discrimination, moved markedly to the political right, developed powerful Zionist cadres (the history of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee is a juicy, malodorous, and still largely untold story), and spawned a small but enormously influential group of neoconservatives. The ultra-Zionism of this potent minority fits into the pattern of Jewish assimilation as a whole. Moreover, it has meshed with the ultra-Zionism of their gentile counterparts since the mid-1980s to lock into place an unprecedented "Zionification" of U.S. society and state.

With this structural change, the interpenetration of the security apparatuses of the two countries becomes inevitable, most glaringly in the 1996 report, "A Clean Break," which Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, David Wursmer, and other senior aides to Donald Rumsfeld and Richard Cheney prepared for Benjamin Netanyahu. It advocated, among other things, the invasion of Iraq, and its essential features were soon directly transmitted by the Israeli prime minister to the U.S. Congress. No crude "dog-tail" metaphor can grasp this relationship and its many political implications, which require a deep understanding of the logic of Zionism as it shapes empire.

NATIONAL INTERESTS

Jewish Power in America: Myth and Reality, by Henry L. Feingold. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008, xiv + 159 pages. Index to p. 164. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Lenni Brenner

No mincing words: the only good thing about Zionist professor Henry Feingold's

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