

Palestine ← America → Israel: An Ambivalent Relationship

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Since the creation and recognition of Israel, America has played a key role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, this role has often been regarded as equivocal. One of the leading intermediaries between the Palestinians and the Israelis, America's role—up until the present—has been perceived as one that strives to heal the rift between the two people, mostly by negotiating cease-fire accords and peace treaties. On the other hand, America's continued financial and military assistance of Israel has contributed toward a more ruptured relationship between the two, and has cast an air of doubt on the credibility of that role. Indeed, much of the unease, and in recent years pronounced unrest, in the Middle East over America's intermediary efforts is attributed to its unconditional support of Israel, perceived as fostering not only the well-fare of the Israelis at the expense of the Palestinians, but perhaps America's own interests as well. Ironically, despite this ambivalence of intentions, America's role continues to be coveted by all parties concerned. This ambivalence is perhaps best shown by political cartoonists whose work constitutes a form of visual critique of America's brokering efforts in the peace process. Through the use of caricature, symbol, irony, and allusion, cartoonists hint at the double standard that is obviously at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This paper offers a critical reading of the work of different political cartoonists from the Middle East and the US—with particular emphasis on Joe Sacco and Naji Al Ali—who attempt to show the complex relationship between the trio: Palestinians, Americans, and Israelis, and the popular perception of the American role in the peace process. The paper will concentrate on political cartoons roughly covering the past thirty years in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.