

December 30, 2016 – THE UNITER AND THE UN

Always a uniter, the president has united Ted Cruz and Lindsay Graham; two men who can't stand each other. And he has united many Democrats with Republicans. And some in the liberal media are joining with right-wing scribes in almost universal condemnation of his attack on Israel. Even Debbie Wasserman is in high dungeon. For an example of liberal media scorn for the president, here's Josh Kraushaar of National Journal:

At his year-end press conference, President Obama said he wanted to play a leading role in rebuilding the Democratic Party. But in a sign of how Obama's progressive ideology blinds him to political reality, his administration's final act before the new year put his party in an even deeper hole.

By declining to veto a resolution condemning Israel at the United Nations, Obama underscored how out-of-step his views are from the rest of the country—and on this issue, even with his own party. Allowing the anti-Israel resolution to pass was widely condemned, by both the incoming Republican administration and the most influential Democrat in Congress, incoming Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. Jewish groups across the ideological spectrum criticized the decision in harsh terms, while even dovish Democrats such as Ohio's Sherrod Brown distanced themselves from the Obama administration's action. Former DNC chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, who supported Obama's controversial Iran nuclear deal, called the U.N. resolution an “irresponsible action [that] moves us further away from peace and hastens the likelihood that we lose the trust of our allies around the world.” She called the Obama administration's abstention “reckless.” ...

... At a time when Democrats are trying to win back voters that abandoned them in this year's presidential election, they can't afford to alienate a bedrock constituency of their party. But that's exactly what Obama's last-minute slam of Israel threatens to do. It's no coincidence that Obama waited until after the presidential election to take a final slap at Israel, knowing full well that it would have damaged Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. ...

... Just look at the 2018 Senate map to get a sense of how politically reckless Obama's decision could be for his party. Sherrod Brown is one of the top Democratic targets in two years, and he is facing a Jewish Republican with close ties to the pro-Israel community (Josh Mandel). Brown, despite being a critic of Israeli settlements, was one of the first Senate Democrats to urge Obama to veto the “one-sided” resolution before it passed. Representing a state that Trump carried by 8 points, Brown is expected to face a competitive reelection and will need to run up his margins around Cleveland, home base of the state's Jewish community. ...

... Spending his final weeks in office attacking Israel is a fitting coda to the Obama's second-term strategy of pushing the Democratic Party as far to the left as possible. Indeed, it takes a lot of chutzpah for Obama to say he wants to help rebuild the Democratic Party when he's busy burning it down. His Israel policy will serve as a compelling case study of how the Democratic Party infuriated a crucial part of its base without getting anything in return but ideological self-satisfaction.

Steny Hoyer, House Democratic Whip, is fed up. Ed Morrissey with the story. *In about two hours, John Kerry will deliver a speech at the State Department to outline the Obama administration's plan for a peace settlement between the Israelis and Palestinians. Needless to say, the Israelis aren't happy about it, Republicans are furious about it — and even some Democrats want Kerry and the White House to shut up. Rep. Steny Hoyer, the House Democratic whip, lashed out at Kerry and the Obama administration for reversing decades of American policy on peace negotiations: ...*

And Alan Dershowitz, previously enamored with the administration's willingness to govern against the will of the people, like with obamacare, continues with his abuse of the president.

... The bad news is that no future president, including President-elect Trump, can undo this pernicious agreement, since a veto not cast can never be retroactively cast. And a resolution once enacted cannot be rescinded unless there is a majority vote against it, with no veto by any of its permanent members, which include Russia and China, who would be sure to veto any attempt to undo this resolution. Obama's failure to veto this resolution was thus a deliberate ploy to tie the hands of his successors, the consequence of which will be to make it far more difficult for his successors to encourage the Palestinians to accept Israel's offer to negotiate with no preconditions. ...

... Before the enactment of this resolution, I was not in favor of Trump immediately moving the US embassy to Jerusalem. I advocated that such a move should take place in stages, over time, and with consultation among America's Muslim allies in the region. But now that the UN has made it a continuing international crime for there to be any Israeli presence in disputed areas of Jerusalem, including areas whose Jewish provenance is beyond dispute, there is a need for immediate action by Trump, upon taking office, to untie his hands and to undo the damage wrought by his predecessor. Congress will surely approve such a move, since the overwhelming majority of its members disapproved of the American decision not to veto the resolution, and since, in 1995, Congress enacted a statute, signed by President Clinton, declaring that the "United States maintains its embassy in the functioning capital of every country except in the case of our democratic friend and strategic ally, the State of Israel" and urged "the United States [to] conduct official meetings and other business in the city of Jerusalem in de facto recognition of its status as the capital of Israel."

Obama's ill-advised, lame duck, and undemocratic effort to tie his successor's hands must not be allowed to destroy the prospects for a negotiated peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Paul Mirengoff with more.

Critics of President Obama's decision not to block (and, perhaps, to advance) the U.N. Security Council resolution condemning Israel say that it was solely an attempt to harm Israel — an effort motivated by vindictiveness and/or raw ideological dislike of Israel. Those who disagree with this assessment should be able to point to a positive objective Obama reasonably could think his decision might advance.

In theory, I can think of two possibilities. First, he might have thought that passage of the resolution would advance the "peace process." Second, he might have thought that passage

would at least lead to the curtailment of new building in East Jerusalem and the “West Bank,” which might eventually increase the likelihood of a peace agreement. There isn’t even the theoretical possibility that the U.N. resolution will cause Israel to tear down existing settlements absent a peace agreement, and I don’t believe that even Obama has called on Israel to do this.

It’s clear, however, that the passage of the U.N. resolution won’t advance either objective. If anything, it may retard them. Obama could have no rational basis for thinking otherwise. Thus, we must conclude that he was, in fact, motivated by vindictiveness, raw ideological dislike of Israel, or both. ...

... Obama, the petulant ideologue, ...

Turning our attention back to the UN, Slate's Jonathan Katz has a history lesson on the tracking of infectious disease in the 19th century as those results provide background for methods used to find the causes of the cholera epidemic in Haiti; Which was started by UN peace keeping forces; facts hidden by the UN, the U. S. Center for Disease Control, and the current administration. This is a good example of the danger posed by the UN. Time to ask them to move their headquarters to some other country. And time to get them off the U.S. gravy train. In WashingtonLand, \$8 billion is not a lot of money, but it is \$8 billion less we have to borrow every year. Ten years from now we probably will have saved over \$100 billion in total. As Everett Dirksen would say, pretty soon we are talking about a lot of money.

Last Friday, a friend doing research at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta sent me a photo of a (map on) display at the CDC’s in-house museum. She thought I’d be interested because it had to do with the cholera epidemic in Haiti, which I lived through at its beginning and have been reporting on ever since. ...

... Now let’s go to the second map, the inset at the bottom right—the little beige street grid: This is the most famous map in the history of public health and one of the most important in the history of science. It was drawn in 1854 by John Snow, a Victorian anesthesiologist and polymath who, faced with one of the many catastrophic cholera outbreaks that plagued London in the 19th century, decided to figure out what caused it, scientifically. (At the time, most people thought cholera—a bacterial disease—was a product of either bad odors, moral and physical weakness, or the wrath of God.)

To do so, Snow went to Golden Square in the working-class Soho neighborhood and took a census of how many people had died in each house from cholera. Then he put them on the street map: one bar for each death. He found a pattern: The bars (deaths) were all clustered in one area, and as you got closer to the center of that area, the bars got longer. Most of the longest bars were next to a water pump on Broad Street, marked here: ...

... In fact, despite making the direct analogy between Snow’s map and the Haiti map, the CDC display does not indicate a source of the epidemic at all.

Why not? A spokeswoman for the CDC says in an email that the Haiti map was devised "to optimize response activities on the ground." Mapping the origin of the epidemic, she says, "was not germane to the purpose."

That's one answer. Another is that the CDC knows as well as anyone else that the source—that unidentified spot beside the red triangle, the Broad Street pump of Haiti—was a U.N. peacekeeping base. This one....

The U.N. soldiers at that base had just arrived from their home country, Nepal, where a cholera outbreak was underway. Thanks to negligent sanitation practices, such as the open dump pits above, there was a multiplicity of ways that their choleraic feces could have gotten from the base into the river, including latrine pipes leaking over a drainage canal that emptied into the river.

However it happened, from that very spot, that cholera strain—the same strain found in Nepal, which had never been seen before in Haiti, ever—spread throughout the country. By January 2011, the date given for the map, it had been well-established—mainly through my reporting and the work of French epidemiologist Renaud Piarroux—that this was the case.

Since the first days of the epidemic, the U.N. has tried to cover up what it did. ...

... The CDC, a U.S. government agency, discouraged journalists from asking about the epidemic's origin, telling them that pinpointing the source, Dr. Snow-style, was "not productive," "not central," and would likely never happen. Its epidemiologists did provide a key detail early on, when they identified the strain in Haiti as having a recent South Asian origin—meaning it could have come from Nepal and not from South America, Africa, or anywhere else cholera was circulating at the time. But after that, the CDC refused to take environmental samples from around the base or test the soldiers during the small window when doing either would have been worthwhile. All of this detailed in a damning new book by Ralph R. Frerichs called Deadly River: Cholera and Cover-Up in Post-Earthquake Haiti. ...

... The U.N. itself has never accepted any responsibility for the outbreak. The head of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti at the time, Edmond Mulet, has been continuously promoted, even as he dissembles publicly about the facts of the case. He is now Ban Ki-moon's chief of staff. ...

... In fact, the epidemic continues in Haiti. Neither the U.N. nor its donors are anywhere close to raising the \$2.27 billion it says is required to build the clean water and sanitation infrastructure needed to end it. Meanwhile, a lawsuit against the U.N. itself, in which Ban and Mulet are named defendants, is wending through U.S. federal court. The U.S. Justice Department has appeared at each session to argue on behalf of the U.N., against the Haitian victims. ...

National Journal

Obama's Parting Shot Against His Party

By thumbing his nose at Israel as he leaves office, the president shows he didn't learn anything from this year's election.

by Josh Kraushaar

At his year-end press conference, President Obama said he wanted to play a leading role in rebuilding the Democratic Party. But in a sign of how Obama's progressive ideology blinds him to political reality, his administration's final act before the new year put his party in an even deeper hole.

By declining to veto a resolution condemning Israel at the United Nations, Obama underscored how out-of-step his views are from the rest of the country—and on this issue, even with his own party. Allowing the anti-Israel resolution to pass was widely condemned, by both the incoming Republican administration and the most influential Democrat in Congress, incoming Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. Jewish groups across the ideological spectrum criticized the decision in harsh terms, while even dovish Democrats such as Ohio's Sherrod Brown distanced themselves from the Obama administration's action. Former DNC chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, who supported Obama's controversial Iran nuclear deal, [called the U.N. resolution](#) an "irresponsible action [that] moves us further away from peace and hastens the likelihood that we lose the trust of our allies around the world." She [called](#) the Obama administration's abstention "reckless."

It's not hard to understand why Obama's decision drew such a sharp response. Support for Israel, while slipping among the most liberal Democrats, is bipartisan and widespread. A [Pew Research Center's April 2016 survey](#) showed that 54 percent of Americans sympathize with Israelis, while just 19 percent favor the Palestinians—a historic high in approval for the Jewish state. GOP backing for the Jewish state is near-universal, and Democrats favor the Israelis over the Palestinians by a solid 14-point margin, 43 to 29 percent.

The only demographic or partisan group that holds negative views of Israel are self-described liberal Democrats, whose support for the Palestinian cause has spiked from 21 percent to 40 percent in the past several years. Obama's clashes with Israel over the Iran nuclear deal and settlements have turned the liberal wing of his party against Israel, but he hasn't been successful in persuading anyone else to follow suit.

At a time when Democrats are trying to win back voters that abandoned them in this year's presidential election, they can't afford to alienate a bedrock constituency of their party. But that's exactly what Obama's last-minute slam of Israel threatens to do. It's no coincidence that Obama waited until after the presidential election to take a final slap at Israel, knowing full well that it would have damaged Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. Even though most Jews will continue to vote Democratic, small-scale defections among Democratic voters who care about Israel can make a big difference in states with sizable Jewish populations, such as Florida, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. Trump's narrow margin of victory in all three states is a reminder that every vote counts. It simply makes no political sense to gratuitously alienate a constituency that could spell the difference in a close race.

Just look at the 2018 Senate map to get a sense of how politically reckless Obama's decision could be for his party. Sherrod Brown is one of the top Democratic targets in two years, and he is facing a Jewish Republican with close ties to the pro-Israel community (Josh Mandel). Brown, despite being a critic of Israeli settlements, was one of the first Senate Democrats to urge

Obama to veto the “one-sided” resolution before it passed. Representing a state that Trump carried by 8 points, Brown is expected to face a competitive reelection and will need to run up his margins around Cleveland, home base of the state’s Jewish community.

Sen. Bill Nelson of Florida represents a state with the [fourth-largest share of Jewish voters](#), and was notably silent in the run-up to the UN resolution. Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania has been a reliable supporter of Israel, but his vote for the Iranian nuclear deal and inability to persuade Obama to change course at the UN will be a tailor-made issue for a Republican opponent. Sens. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, Claire McCaskill of Missouri and Tim Kaine of Virginia also face the challenge of defending the Democratic Party’s record on Israel to disillusioned Jewish communities in their home states.

In addition, Obama’s positioning on Israel threatens to undermine his party’s fundraising capabilities. Clinton’s five biggest financial backers in the presidential campaign were Jewish, [according to an analysis by *The Times of Israel*](#), with Democratic megadonor Haim Saban an outspoken advocate for the Jewish state. But pro-Israel Democratic donors will now have second thoughts about writing big checks to party organizations. For over five years, the Democratic National Committee was led by Wasserman Schultz, a reliable advocate of Israel’s interests. If Rep. Keith Ellison of Minnesota, one of Israel’s leading critics in Congress, becomes the new party chairman, it will freeze up once-reliable donations from pro-Israel Democrats.

At a time when the country is badly polarized, President-elect Donald Trump will find backing Israel to be a risk-free way to win bipartisan support. Expect the incoming administration to woo Democrats, including Schumer, in condemning the UN resolution and rallying support behind Israel. Obama’s going-away shot at Israel raised the profile of an issue that had been dormant—at a time when much of the Middle East is burning—and needlessly handed Trump an early political victory. It fits a pattern of Obama pushing Democrats to get out front of unpopular issues—*Bulworth* moments, as former Obama adviser David Axelrod dubbed them—regardless of the political consequences.

Spending his final weeks in office attacking Israel is a fitting coda to the Obama’s second-term strategy of pushing the Democratic Party as far to the left as possible. Indeed, it takes a lot of *chutzpah* for Obama to say he wants to help rebuild the Democratic Party when he’s busy burning it down. His Israel policy will serve as a compelling case study of how the Democratic Party infuriated a crucial part of its base without getting anything in return but ideological self-satisfaction.

Hot Air

[Hoyer to Kerry: Shut up; Update: Russia says nyet?](#)

by Ed Morrissey

In about two hours, John Kerry will deliver a speech at the State Department to outline the Obama administration’s plan for a peace settlement between the Israelis and Palestinians. Needless to say, the Israelis aren’t happy about it, Republicans are furious about it — and even some Democrats want Kerry and the White House to shut up. Rep. Steny Hoyer, the House

Democratic whip, [lashed out at Kerry and the Obama administration](#) for reversing decades of American policy on peace negotiations:

Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), the Democratic whip in the House of Representatives and the second- highest ranking Democrat in leadership, released a blistering statement Tuesday night calling on the Obama administration to cool it.

"Now, it is my understanding that Secretary Kerry, in the last few days of this Administration, intends to outline the parameters of an agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This flies in the face of the United States's longstanding position that such a formulation should be reached only through negotiations by the parties and not by the United States, the United Nations, or any other third party," Hoyer said.

"I urge Secretary Kerry and the Administration not to set forth a formula, which will inevitably disadvantage Israel in any negotiation," Hoyer added.

Israeli Cabinet official Gilad Erdan [mocked Kerry's move](#) as both "pathetic" and "un-democratic":

In a radio interview, Erdan said Kerry's speech was part of a broader effort to hinder the incoming administration of Donald Trump, who has signaled he will have much warmer relations with Israel.

"This step is a pathetic step. It is an anti-democratic step because it's clear that the administration and Kerry's intention is to chain President-elect Trump," Erdan told Israel Army Radio.

Erdan, a member of Netanyahu's Likud Party and inner Security Cabinet, said Obama administration officials are "pro-Palestinian" and "don't understand what's happening in the Middle East."

In the meantime, though, Benjamin Netanyahu asked Jerusalem's planning committee to [hold off on approvals for building permits in East Jerusalem](#) until after Kerry speaks:

With applications for 492 building permits in the urban settlements of Ramot and Ramat Shlomo on its agenda, members of Jerusalem city hall's Planning and Building committee said a planned vote was cancelled at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's request.

The panel's chairman, Meir Turgeman, said at the session that Netanyahu was concerned approval would have given Kerry "ammunition before the speech". ...

"The prime minister said that while he supports construction in Jerusalem, we don't have to inflame the situation any further," Hanan Rubin, a member of the Jerusalem municipal committee told Reuters, citing Kerry's upcoming speech.

The panel meets regularly and the building projects could come up for a vote at a future session.

Barack Obama came into office [fumbling on the issue of settlements](#), and it looks like he's determined to go out in the same manner. His unilateral demand to a halt in settlement building gave the Palestinians yet another excuse to demand concessions ahead of negotiations, which made it even more difficult for negotiations to even begin. Rather than recognize his error,

Obama has spent the last eight years doubling down on it, going as far as to [assert that Israel would have to return to its pre-1967 borders](#) in any settlement — another statement that gave Mahmoud Abbas a concession ahead of the talks.

In this case, though, Kerry's attempt to force Israel into Obama's peace plan will be as pathetic as Erdan notes. The Obama team has spent all of its political capital in Israel after trying to rig their March 2015 election and then stabbing Israel in the back this month at the UN. Donald Trump will eclipse the Obama policies with those more supportive of Israel. The likeliest direct outcome of Kerry's speech won't be a new round of peace talks, but the shift of the US embassy to Jerusalem and the end of any pressure at all to stop settlement expansion. Beyond that, Kerry and Obama may have given Republicans the opening that they have long desired to reduce ties to the UN and focus on direct, bilateral diplomacy.

Don't expect Kerry to take Hoyer's advice, but also don't expect anyone to really take Kerry and Obama seriously from now on either.

Update: It looks like [Russia's not happy](#) about this either, according to Ha'aretz:

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov rejected U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's proposal that the Quartet – the United States, Russia, the UN and the European Union – adopt the principles he will present in his speech on the Israeli-Palestinian in Washington on Wednesday afternoon. ...

"Lavrov warned against the impact of the U.S. domestic agenda on the Middle East Quartet and the UN Security Council," the ministry stated. "He spotlighted harmful attempts to use these platforms for the Democrats' and Republicans' bickering."

Lavrov's statement echoed some of the fears that have been voiced in recent days by the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem that the Obama administration would likely make additional attempts to advance international steps on the Palestinian issue before Donald Trump becomes president on January 20.

Jeff Dunetz notes the [strange-bedfellows aspect](#) of this development:

It is a bit strange that Russia is protecting the Jewish State from anti-Israel actions by the American president and secretary of state.

The Russian foreign minister's statement echoed the fears raised [at Lidblog yesterday](#) that Obama/Kerry will make additional attempts to cut Israel's negotiating position and/or impose an unfavorable solution on the Jewish State before Donald Trump becomes president on January 20. ...

Kerry is also expected to push back at Israel's claims that last weeks UNSC resolution was planned by Kerry, despite [Egyptian evidence that the claim is true](#).¹ Kerry is also expected to claim will stress that the American move in the Security Council was not unprecedented and that the decision not to veto the resolution "did not blind side Israel."

I doubt highly that he'll mention that no other administration allowed a resolution to be passed claiming that the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem was Palestinian, and that all settlements are illegal.

It's at least *curious* that Russia would object after voting to do essentially the same thing at the UN Security Council. Perhaps they're just getting tired of the Obama administration's temper tantrums, or maybe they realize the obvious — that this is going to make negotiations even more difficult than they already are. I'm betting, though, that Russia is actually playing for inside position as the "honest broker" at future Israeli-Palestinian peace talks at the expense of the US, an opening that Obama and Kerry are about to provide.

Boston Globe

The Consequences of not vetoing the Israel resolution

by Alan M. Dershowitz

AMID THE CONTINUING controversy over the Obama administration's refusal to veto the Security Council's resolution regarding Israeli "settlements," it is important to understand why Israeli leaders across the political spectrum as well as American supporters of Israel — including many who oppose settlement expansion and favor a two-state solution — feel so negatively about this resolution.

Its text states that "any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem" have "no legal validity and [constitute] a flagrant violation under international law." This resolution is not, therefore, limited to settlements in the West Bank. It applies equally to the very heart of Israel.

Before June 4, 1967, Jews were forbidden from praying at the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest site. They were forbidden to attend classes at the Hebrew University at Mt. Scopus, which had been opened in 1925 and was supported by Albert Einstein. Jews could not seek medical care at the Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus, which had treated Jews and Arabs alike since 1918. Jews could not live in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem, where their forbearers had built homes and synagogues for thousands of years. These Judenrein prohibitions were enacted by Jordan, which had captured by military force these Jewish areas during Israel's War of Independence, in 1948, and had illegally occupied the entire West Bank, which the United Nations had set aside for an Arab state. When the Jordanian government occupied these historic Jewish sites, they destroyed all the remnants of Judaism, including synagogues, schools, and cemeteries, whose headstones they used for urinals. Between 1948 and 1967 the UN did not offer a single resolution condemning this Jordanian occupation and cultural devastation.

When Israel retook these areas in a defensive war that Jordan started by shelling civilian homes in West Jerusalem, and opened them up as places where Jews could pray, study, receive medical treatment, and live, the United States took the official position that it would not recognize Israel's legitimate claims to Jewish Jerusalem. That is why it refused to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. It stated that the status of Jerusalem, including these newly liberated areas, would be left open to final negotiations and that the status quo would remain in place. That is the official rationale for why the United States refuses to recognize any part of Jerusalem, including West Jerusalem, as part of Israel. That is why the United States refuses to allow an American citizen born in any part of Jerusalem to put the words "Jerusalem, Israel" on his or her passport as their place of birth.

But that has now changed with the adoption of the Security Council Resolution. The UN has now determined that, subject to any further negotiations and agreements, the Jewish areas of Jerusalem recaptured from Jordan in 1967 are not part of Israel. Instead, according to the resolution, they are territories being illegally occupied by Israel, and any building in these areas — including places for prayer at the Western Wall, access roads to Mt. Scopus, and synagogues in the historic Jewish Quarter — "constitutes a flagrant violation under international law." If that indeed is the status quo, absent "changes . . . agreed by the parties through negotiations," then what incentives do the Palestinians have to enter negotiations? And if they were to do so, they could use these Jewish areas to extort unreasonable concessions from Israel, for which these now "illegally occupied" areas are sacred and nonnegotiable.

This is what President Obama has wrought in his ill-advised refusal to do what American presidents have done for decades: exercise their veto in preventing biased, destructive, and one-sided resolutions from being enacted against Israel by the automatic anti-Israel majority that exists in every institution of the UN.

The bad news is that no future president, including President-elect Trump, can undo this pernicious agreement, since a veto not cast can never be retroactively cast. And a resolution once enacted cannot be rescinded unless there is a majority vote against it, with no veto by any of its permanent members, which include Russia and China, who would be sure to veto any attempt to undo this resolution. Obama's failure to veto this resolution was thus a deliberate ploy to tie the hands of his successors, the consequence of which will be to make it far more difficult for his successors to encourage the Palestinians to accept Israel's offer to negotiate with no preconditions.

The good news is that Trump can ameliorate the effects of this resolution immediately upon assuming office. He can do so by officially recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving its embassy there. This would dramatically demonstrate that the United States does not accept the Judenrein effects of this bigoted resolution on historic Jewish areas of Jerusalem, which are now forbidden to Jews. The prior refusal of the United States to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to move its embassy there was based explicitly on the notion that nothing should be done to change the status quo of that city, holy to three religions. But this resolution does exactly that: It changes the status quo by declaring Israel's de facto presence on these Jewish holy sites to be a "flagrant violation under international law" that "the UN will not recognize."

Since virtually everyone in the international community acknowledges that any reasonable peace would recognize Israel's legitimate claims to these and other areas in Jerusalem (and indeed, to settlement blocks in close proximity to Jerusalem), there is no reason for allowing the UN resolution to make criminals out of every Jew or Israeli who sets foot on these historically Jewish areas.

Before the enactment of this resolution, I was not in favor of Trump immediately moving the US embassy to Jerusalem. I advocated that such a move should take place in stages, over time, and with consultation among America's Muslim allies in the region. But now that the UN has made it a continuing international crime for there to be any Israeli presence in disputed areas of Jerusalem, including areas whose Jewish provenance is beyond dispute, there is a need for immediate action by Trump, upon taking office, to untie his hands and to undo the damage wrought by his predecessor. Congress will surely approve such a move, since the overwhelming majority of its members disapproved of the American decision not to veto the resolution, and since, in 1995, Congress enacted a statute, signed by President Clinton, declaring that the "United States maintains its embassy in the functioning capital of every country except in the case of our democratic friend and strategic ally, the State of Israel" and urged "the United States

[to] conduct official meetings and other business in the city of Jerusalem in de facto recognition of its status as the capital of Israel."

Obama's ill-advised, lame duck, and undemocratic effort to tie his successor's hands must not be allowed to destroy the prospects for a negotiated peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Power Line

Obama's vindictiveness and anti-Israel ideology drove the U.N. resolution

by Paul Mirengoff

Critics of President Obama's decision not to block (and, perhaps, to [advance](#)) the U.N. Security Council resolution condemning Israel say that it was solely an attempt to harm Israel — an effort motivated by vindictiveness and/or raw ideological dislike of Israel. Those who disagree with this assessment should be able to point to a positive objective Obama reasonably could think his decision might advance.

In theory, I can think of two possibilities. First, he might have thought that passage of the resolution would advance the “peace process.” Second, he might have thought that passage would at least lead to the curtailment of new building in East Jerusalem and the “West Bank,” which might eventually increase the likelihood of a peace agreement. There isn’t even the theoretical possibility that the U.N. resolution will cause Israel to tear down existing settlements absent a peace agreement, and I don’t believe that even Obama has called on Israel to do this.

It’s clear, however, that the passage of the U.N. resolution won’t advance either objective. If anything, it may retard them. Obama could have no rational basis for thinking otherwise. Thus, we must conclude that he was, in fact, motivated by vindictiveness, raw ideological dislike of Israel, or both.

There is no reasonable basis for believing that the U.N. resolution will halt settlement building activity. [The New York Times](#) reports that, the resolution notwithstanding, Israel is going to build new housing in East Jerusalem. The city intends to approve 600 housing units in the predominantly Palestinian-populated eastern section of town on Wednesday in what a top official called a first installment on 5,600 new homes.

The U.N. resolution isn’t even calculated to deter such building. It’s a blanket condemnation of all settlements. Israel is equally condemned whether it builds new housing for its citizens or not. No rational nation would stop building under that circumstance. Obama is too smart to believe otherwise.

If anything, now that it’s damned if it builds and damned if it doesn’t, Israel has all the more reason to build.

There is also no reasonable basis for believing that the U.N. resolution will advance the “peace process.” The resolution will cause Palestinians to believe they can get what they want with regard to the disputed territories through the “international community” rather than by making concessions in direct negotiations with Israel. This is unrealistic.

It will also cause Palestinians to take an unrealistic view of what they can get under any circumstances. If “international law” now holds that Israel’s presence in East Jerusalem and the disputed “West Bank” is unlawful, why settle for anything less than the elimination of that presence?

Woe betide any Palestinian leader who advocates that his people agree to take less than what the U.N. says they are entitled to.

I’m not just speculating here. Consider what the Palestinians plan to do with the U.N. resolution. According to [the New York Times](#):

Palestinian leaders made clear that they would use the resolution in international bodies to press their case against Israel. With the imprimatur of a United Nations finding of illegality, they said they would campaign to require that other countries not just label products made in the settlements, but ban them.

“Now we can talk about the boycott of all settlements, the companies that work with them, et cetera, and actually take legal action against them if they continue to work with them,” Riad Malki, the Palestinian foreign minister, was quoted as saying by the Palestinian news media.

He outlined other steps the Palestinians could now take, using the resolution to press the International Criminal Court to prosecute Israeli leaders, file lawsuits on behalf of specific Palestinians displaced by settlements and urge the international authorities to determine whether Israel is violating the Geneva Conventions.

“We are looking to devise a comprehensive vision, and hopefully 2017 will be the year when the Israeli occupation ends,” Mr. Malki said.

(Emphasis added.)

The last sentence is pure fantasy — a fantasy that precludes true negotiation, as Obama surely understands.

Nor, once the fantasy dissolves, will the resolution advance negotiations. If products made in the settlements are banned in many countries, this will hurt the settlers. But not as much as tearing down the settlements and forcing settlers to relocate would.

Eventually, the Israeli economy may feel some squeeze, but surely not enough to induce a retreat to anything like the old, untenable borders that the Palestinians, backed by the U.N. and its anti-Israel resolution, will insist upon.

As [Charles Hill](#) says:

The reality undergirding the two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinians is that there must be, in direct negotiations, an agreed trade-off between a major curtailment of Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank east of Jerusalem and a major curtailment of the Palestinian Right of Return to the land of Israel west of Jerusalem.

Obama has done just about all he can to make that negotiated agreement impossible.

Obama, the petulant ideologue, knows this but doesn’t care.

Slate

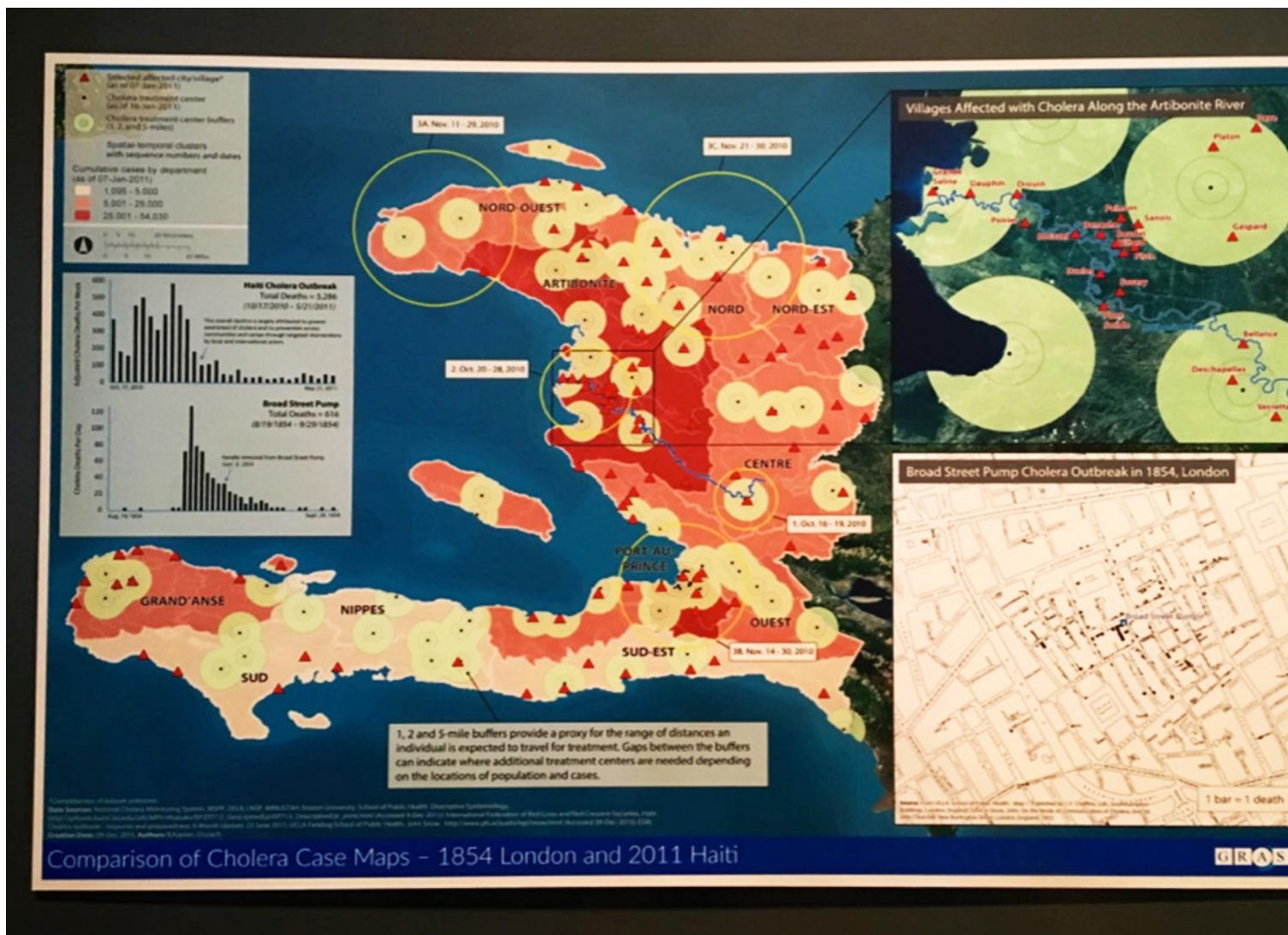
The Killer Hiding in the CDC Map

What caused Haiti's cholera epidemic? The CDC Museum knows but won't say

by Jonathan M. Katz

Last Friday, a friend doing research at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta sent me a photo of a display at the CDC's in-house museum. She thought I'd be interested because it had to do with the cholera epidemic in Haiti, which I lived through at its beginning and have been reporting on ever since.

She was right. It blew my mind:



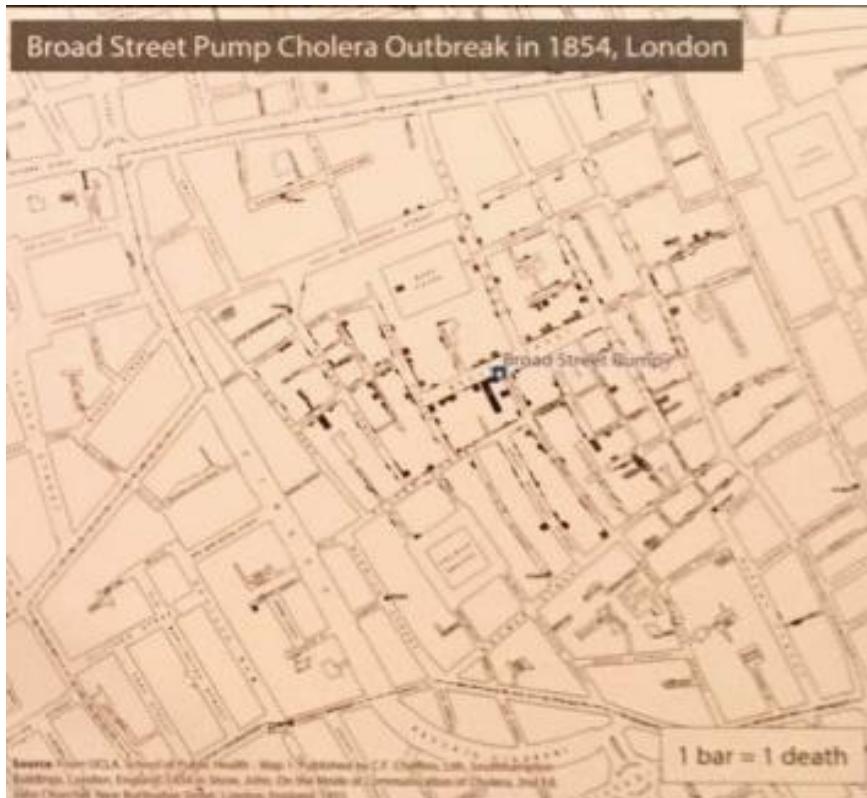
To understand what's so insane about it, you need to know a little about two of the maps in that image and the CDC's history with the epidemic.

The main part of the map, that pink-and-red mass that looks like a crab claw, is Haiti. Specifically, it is Haiti at the height of the worst cholera epidemic in recent history, an incredible

scourge that by official count has killed at least 9,265 people and sickened 775,000 people in that country alone—figures that many experts believe are **wild underestimates**. Even though this map is just a snapshot from early January 2011, less than three months into an epidemic that has now been raging nearly six years, you'll note that already not a single part of the country has been left untouched. (The red areas are home to 25,000 cases or more; the pale pink areas, at least 1,000.) By then, the disease had already spread into the neighboring Dominican Republic and would soon be in Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico, and other parts of the region.

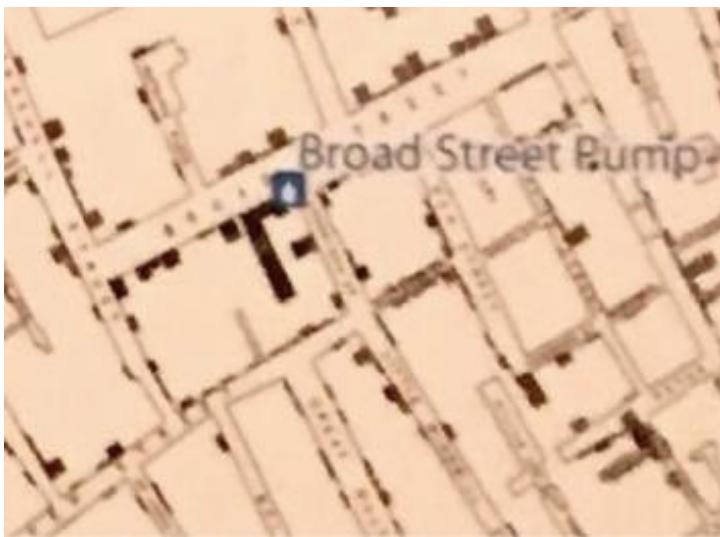
One of the several key facts this map fails to note is that three months earlier there had been zero diagnosed cases of cholera in Haiti. In fact, there had never been a diagnosed case of the disease in that country before. More on that in a bit.

Now let's go to the second map, the inset at the bottom right—the little beige street grid:



This is the most famous map in the history of public health and one of the most important in the history of science. It was drawn in 1854 by John Snow, a Victorian anesthesiologist and polymath who, faced with one of the many catastrophic cholera outbreaks that plagued London in the 19th century, decided to figure out what caused it, scientifically. (At the time, most people thought cholera—a bacterial disease—was a product of either bad odors, moral and physical weakness, or the wrath of God.)

To do so, Snow went to Golden Square in the working-class Soho neighborhood and took a census of how many people had died in each house from cholera. Then he put them on the street map: one bar for each death. He found a pattern: The bars (deaths) were all clustered in one area, and as you got closer to the center of that area, the bars got longer. Most of the longest bars were next to a water pump on Broad Street, marked here:



Snow surmised this must have had something to do with the outbreak.

Shortly after, a local Church of England minister named Henry Whitehead set out to disprove Snow's theory. (The reverend was fond of the bad-smells and wrath-of-God hypotheses.) Instead, he wound up proving it when he learned that a local woman whose baby had died from cholera had thrown its soiled diapers into an ancient waste pit that seeped into the adjacent pump's well. A little later, everyone else in the neighborhood had started getting sick.

Armed with the map and the information, Snow theorized, correctly and for the first time, that cholera was a disease caused by microscopic organisms transmitted through dirty water, simultaneously creating the germ theory of disease, epidemiology, and modern public health. You know, no big deal.

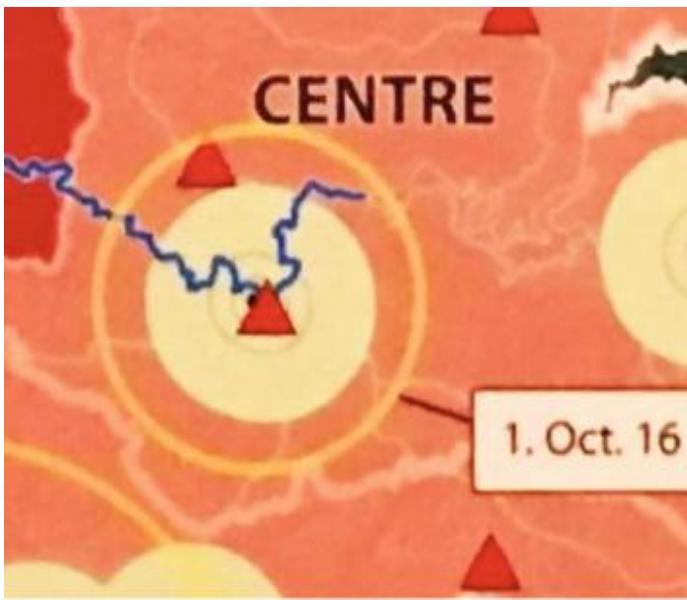
(A popular legend says the pump's handle was then removed, ending the outbreak immediately. In reality, it had already peaked and was burning itself out. It took another decade and the invention and construction of a sewer and water treatment system to eradicate cholera from London. You can read about this in Steven Johnson's excellent book, [The Ghost Map](#).)

Now, this display is hanging in a traveling exhibition called "[Places & Spaces: Mapping Science](#)"—which, according to the brochure, "demonstrates the power of maps to address vital questions about the contours and content of human knowledge." The "Places & Spaces" creators at Indiana University told me the installation also includes "data visualizations created by the CDC that relate to the theme of using data visualization to better understand data." This particular map was "one of the CDC's pieces."

So whoever put it together must have known that this little map from London and the big map of Haiti had something important to do with each other—namely, that they both pointed to the source of a cholera outbreak.

You can see it if you look closely. It's the spot with the earliest date next to it, right next to the blue river that has all the other early cases clustered downstream.

Right here:



Yet the map on display makes no particular mention of that spot. There's no highlight around it, no explanatory blurb, no special color, no icon akin to the one on Snow's map. The inset in the top right, which purports to show "villages affected with cholera along the Artibonite River," doesn't even include it.

In fact, despite making the direct analogy between Snow's map and the Haiti map, the CDC display does not indicate a source of the epidemic at all.

Why not? A spokeswoman for the CDC says in an email that the Haiti map was devised "to optimize response activities on the ground." Mapping the origin of the epidemic, she says, "was not germane to the purpose."

That's one answer. Another is that the CDC knows as well as anyone else that the source—that unidentified spot beside the red triangle, the Broad Street pump of Haiti—was a U.N. peacekeeping base. This one:

U.N. base, October 2010.



Which was full of stuff like this:



A pool of U.N. peacekeepers' feces, across the street from the base and a few yards from Haiti's most important river system.

The U.N. soldiers at that base had just arrived from their home country, Nepal, where a cholera outbreak was underway. Thanks to negligent sanitation practices, such as the open dump pits above, there was a multiplicity of ways that their choleraic feces could have gotten from the base into the river, including latrine pipes leaking over a drainage canal that emptied into the river.

However it happened, from that very spot, that cholera strain—the same strain found in Nepal, which had never been seen before in Haiti, ever—spread throughout the country. By January 2011, the date given for the map, it had been well-established—mainly through my reporting and the work of French epidemiologist Renaud Piarroux—that this was the case.

Since the first days of the epidemic, the U.N. has tried to cover up what it did. Everyone from the soldiers on the base to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has been implicated. The Obama administration and the U.S. government did not want the U.N. to be held accountable, because doing so might persuade other people elsewhere to hold U.S. peacekeeping missions accountable—and because the U.S. foots about a quarter of the U.N. peacekeeping budget.

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The CDC, a U.S. government agency, discouraged journalists from asking about the epidemic's origin, telling them that **pinpointing the source**, Dr. Snow-style, was "not productive," "not central," and would likely **never happen**. Its epidemiologists did provide a key detail early on, when they identified the strain in Haiti as having a recent South Asian origin—meaning it could have come from Nepal and not from South America, Africa, or anywhere else cholera was circulating at the time. But after that, the CDC **refused to take environmental samples** from around the base or test the soldiers during the small window when doing either would have been worthwhile. All of this detailed in a damning new book by Ralph R. Frerichs called **Deadly River: Cholera and Cover-Up in Post-Earthquake Haiti**.

In the book, Frerichs also makes a good case that the agency used maps as tools of diversion. In one crucial map distributed in early 2011, he writes, the agency scrambled the order of dates for when cholera arrived in Haiti's different regions, or *départements*—making it seem as if the disease had appeared on the coast before showing up near the U.N. base. Citing the CDC's own manual, "How to Investigate an Outbreak," which in his words emphasizes the "importance of correctly identifying infectious disease cases and then using a frequency distribution of the onset dates to estimate the outbreak's start time," Frerichs writes:

CDC had ignored its own standard procedure by using the "first confirmed case" in its Haiti Cholera Outbreak map of mid-February 2011. It based the onset time on laboratory confirmation, which falsely implied that cholera had first appeared on October 21 in downriver Artibonite département, then two days later in Ouest département, and finally a day after that, October 24, in upriver Centre département—findings entirely different from Piarroux's and the Haitian public health team's.

The timing of that map was crucial, because a panel of experts appointed, under pressure, by Ban was on its way to investigate the source of the outbreak:

Piarroux suspected that CDC had released the map in anticipation of the UN panel's arrival in Haiti and was helping the UN shift attention away from the Nepalese peacekeeping base in Centre département. Implying that cholera had started elsewhere served that purpose.

It was the first in a series of online maps from CDC that used the poorest available measure to show when cholera had first appeared in Haiti's ten départements. The CDC information remained widely circulated through updates in September 2011.

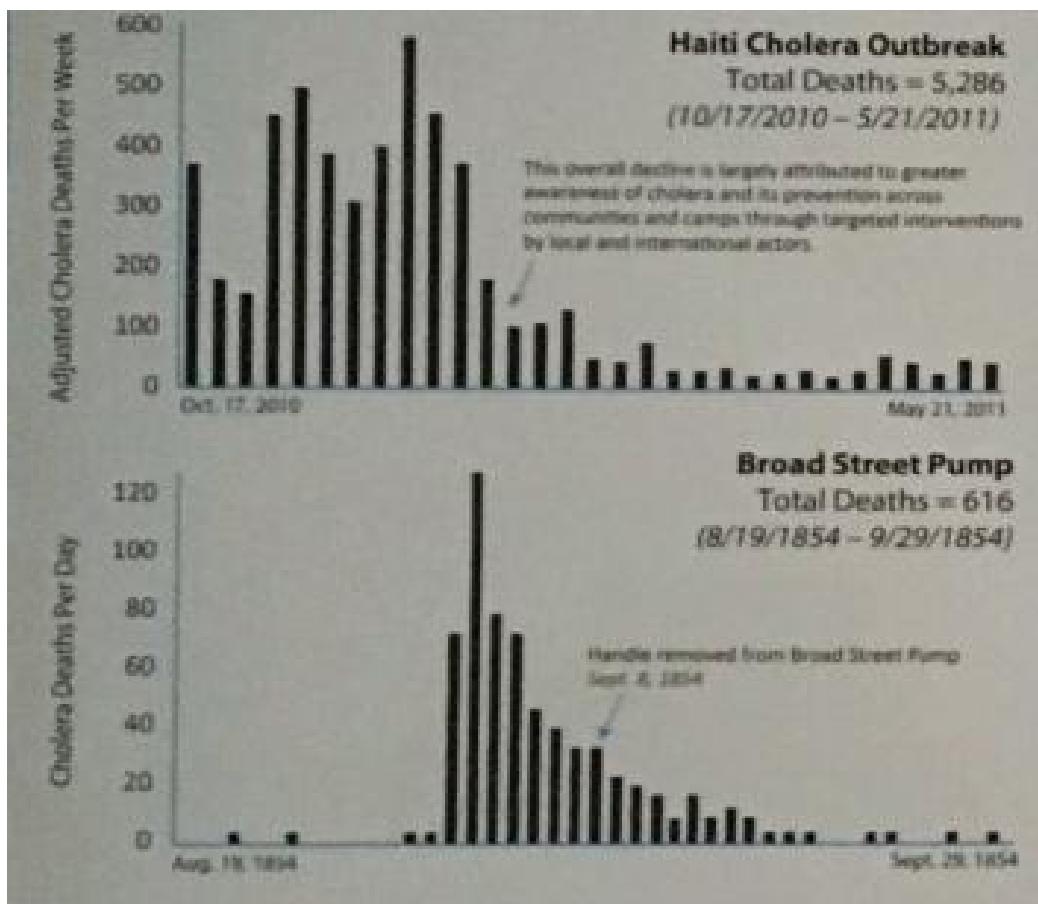
In a rare moment of clarity, as evidence mounted, Scott F. Dowell, then director of the CDC's global disease and emergency response division, talked openly of political considerations in the agency's response: "We're going to be really cautious about the Nepal thing because it's a politically sensitive issue for our partners in Haiti."

Since then, the CDC has made a few more quiet admissions. In July 2011, its peer-reviewed journal, *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, published **an independent paper by Piarroux's team** laying out evidence that the U.N. peacekeepers brought cholera to Haiti, with a standard note that it did "not necessarily reflect" the agency's official position. CDC officials have occasionally cited that paper in **technical writings**, couched in conditionals. The agency's **public page on the epidemic** does not make any mention of its cause.

If the CDC was trying to distract the U.N.-appointed panel with its maps, it didn't work. The panel's **first official report**, issued in May 2011, made it clear that the epidemic had started next to the U.N. base. A **revised report**, published by the same four scientists once they were

no longer working for the U.N., was unequivocal "that personnel associated with the Mirebalais MINUSTAH facility were the most likely source of introduction of cholera into Haiti."

The U.N. itself has never accepted any responsibility for the outbreak. The head of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti at the time, **Edmond Mulet**, has been continuously promoted, even as he **dissembles publicly** about the **facts of the case**. He is now Ban Ki-moon's chief of staff. Responders prefer to highlight their role in fighting the epidemic their troops began—hence the absurd note on the graph in the top left-hand part of the chart, pairing a revisionist history of the Haiti outbreak with the mythical version of the Broad Street pump handle story:



In fact, the epidemic **continues** in Haiti. Neither the U.N. nor its donors are anywhere close to raising the \$2.27 billion it says is required to build the clean water and sanitation infrastructure needed to end it. Meanwhile, a lawsuit against the U.N. itself, in which Ban and Mulet are named defendants, is wending through **U.S. federal court**. The U.S. Justice Department has appeared at each session to argue on behalf of the U.N., against the Haitian victims.

All of which probably explains why, at CDC headquarters today, five-and-a-half years into the epidemic, they are proudly displaying two historic maps that have everything to do with each other, but they are not telling you why.

Jonathan M. Katz is the author of [The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster](#). His next book, on the legacy of American empire, will be published by St. Martin's Press.

TWEET from Ian Bremmer

[@ianbremmer](#)

2016 UNGA Resolutions Against (UNGA-United Nations General Assembly)

Israel: 20

Syria: 1

Iran: 1

N. Korea: 1

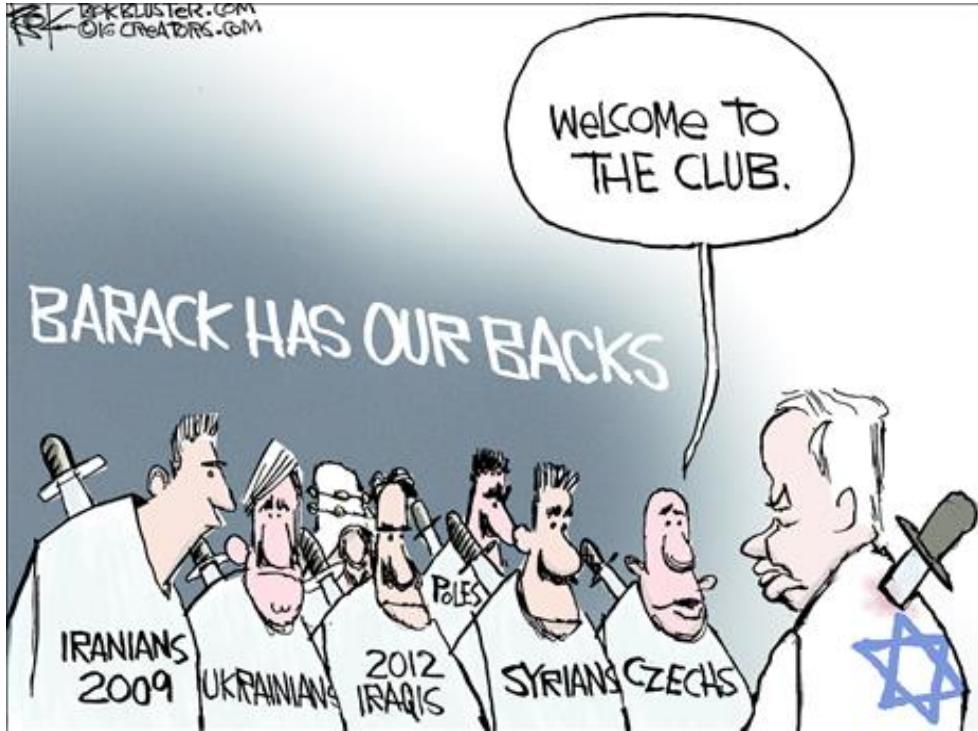
Russia: 1

Seems imbalanced.

Hope n' Change

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(Hat tip to Rod & the original creator of today's joke)





A COUPLE OF DAYS AFTER CHRISTMAS.....

