

# THE ISRAEL LOBBY: A CASE STUDY IN JEWISH INFLUENCE

*The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*

John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt

New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007

*Reviewed by Kevin MacDonald*

*The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* is a courageous, ground breaking effort. The authors are experts in the field of foreign policy, and they provide exhaustive detail on a wide range of topics. Because of my interest in Jewish issues generally, I was reasonably familiar with many of the issues discussed. But I learned a great deal from this book. And even when the themes were familiar, they were backed up with an extraordinary depth of relevant information.

Each chapter is a treasure trove of information. The first chapter, on the United States as the “Great Benefactor” of Israel, shows that Israel is in a class by itself in terms of receiving aid, not only in how much it receives but in how it receives it and in the lack of accountability for how it is spent. For example, Israel is the only country to receive all of its aid at the beginning of the fiscal year, so that it is able to earn extra interest (\$660 million as of 2004) even as the U.S. government must pay interest on the money it provides Israel (\$50 million–\$60 million per year). Lax enforcement of U.S. tax law results in Jewish donations to the settler movement being tax deductible, and, since there is no accountability for how U.S. aid is spent, it can be used to support policies like the settler movement that the government officially opposes. Mearsheimer and Walt emphasize the “increasingly unconditional nature” of U.S. military aid (p. 37) despite the fact that Israel has often taken actions that the U.S. government opposes (refusing to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, annexing conquered land, building settlements in conquered territories, selling U.S. technology to China, spying on the United States, and using U.S. weapons like cluster bombs in ways that violate U.S. law). Since Eisenhower, the United States has used only larger carrots, not sticks, to try to influence Israeli behavior, often with little or nothing to show for it. Even when Israeli

actions contravene explicit American policies, there is at best a temporary interruption of U.S. aid.

The second chapter shows that Israel has been a far less reliable ally and strategic asset than its defenders claim. During the Cold War — the supposed height of a confluence of interest between the United States and Israel, “although Israeli military might did help check Soviet client states like Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, America’s commitment to Israel played a significant role in pushing those states into Moscow’s arms in the first place” (p. 52). Moreover, Israel was never a credible force that could be used to thwart Soviet military power in the region. Even during the Cold War, U.S. support for Israel had its liabilities: fanning anti-U.S. sentiment throughout the Arab world, endangering U.S. energy supplies (e.g., the Arab oil embargo following the 1973 war), and preventing possible solutions to the Israeli–Arab conflict because of its entanglement in Cold War politics.

Since the Cold War, there is overwhelming evidence that Israel is a strategic liability to the United States. For example, Israel was kept on the sidelines during the Gulf War of 1991, while Saddam Hussein did his best to recruit Arab sympathy by lobbing SCUD missiles into Israel.

Mearsheimer and Walt do a masterful job exposing the new “combating terrorism” rationale for the U.S.–Israel alliance:

(1) Palestinian terrorism is not at all directed against the United States but against Israel because of its policies; it has no known links to al Qaeda.

(2) Terrorism is a legitimate tool used by those without other options. It is often used in state creation, and indeed, prominent Israeli leaders (Begin, Shamir) were themselves terrorists during Israel’s formative years.

(3) Most importantly, “the United States has a terrorism problem in good part because it has long been so supportive of Israel” (p. 64). Exhibit A is Osama bin Laden himself. Mearsheimer and Walt provide an excellent account showing that bin Laden “has been deeply sympathetic to the Palestinian cause ever since he was a young man and that he has long been angry at the United States for backing Israel so strongly” (p. 66).

(4) The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in the region is not a real strategic threat to the United States. This is particularly important given that a rationale for the invasion of Iraq and the

impending invasion of Iran is their possession of such weapons: "If the United States could live with a nuclear Soviet Union or a nuclear China . . . and if it can tolerate a nuclear Pakistan and embrace a nuclear India, then it could live (however reluctantly) with a nuclear Iran as well" (p. 73). Moreover, the U.S. relationship with Israel makes it harder, not easier, to deal with these threats.

(5) Israel is not the loyal ally it is often made out to be. Mearsheimer and Walt provide a long list of cases where Israel has openly flouted U.S. interests, ranging from the Lavon affair of 1954 (a false flag operation in which Israeli agents blew up U.S. offices in Egypt in order to provoke a U.S.-Egypt crisis), to espionage, to selling weapons and technology to countries like China viewed as adversaries of the United States.

Mearsheimer and Walt do a good job of discrediting the importance of the oil lobby and the Christian Zionists in influencing U.S. policy. The Christian Zionists, although certainly useful to the lobby, have far less impact than other parts of the lobby. The oil lobby has only a "modest" influence. Its interests often conflict with those of the Israel lobby, mainly because the oil industry wants friendly Arab regimes that will not threaten to disrupt oil supplies, as during the 1973 oil embargo. As the authors note, "if Arab petrodollars or energy companies were driving American policy, one would expect to see the United States distancing itself from Israel and working overtime to get the Palestinians a state of their own" (p. 143). Indeed, when Gulf Oil was found aiding Arab causes in 1975, it was publicly condemned by Jewish organizations and it ended up issuing an abject apology in the *New York Times*: "You may be certain it will not happen again." The recent Iran sanctions program also contravenes the interests of U.S. oil companies wanting to do business with Iran. Tellingly, Dick Cheney opposed sanctions as head of Halliburton, but has been a strong advocate of sanctions since becoming vice-president.

Intriguingly, Mearsheimer and Walt note that, "this view [i.e., the view that the oil lobby has a powerful influence on U.S. Mideast policy] is advanced by some of Israel's most persistent critics—such as Noam Chomsky and Steven Zunes—as well as by fervent defenders, like Martin Peretz" (p. 142). Without stating it explicitly, the authors clearly suggest that blaming the oil companies is a subterfuge used by both supporters and duplicitous critics of Israel to deflect serious criticism of Israel. That may be rather obvious in the case of knee-jerk

supporters like Peretz (publisher of *The New Republic*), but it has long seemed suspicious to many that Chomsky would consistently temper his criticisms of Israel by asserting that Israel is simply doing the bidding of the United States in the region and that the real masters are the oil companies. All that energy and money the lobby devotes to influence U.S. policy is only a smokescreen for the real story: Poor, hapless Israel is Uncle Sam's errand boy. As Jeffrey Blankfort notes:

I was convinced that while, ironically, having provided perhaps the most extensive documentation of Israeli crimes, [Chomsky] had, at the same time immobilized, if not sabotaged, the development of any serious effort to halt those crimes and to build an effective movement on behalf of the Palestinian cause. . . . [Chomsky] goes on for two pages explaining the importance of Middle East oil and the efforts by the United States to control it. It is the basic explanation that he has repeated and republished, almost verbatim, over the years. What it has to do with the Palestinians who have no oil or how a truncated Palestinian state would present a threat to U.S. regional interests is not provided, but after two pages the reader has forgotten that the question was even posed. In his explanation there is no mention of the lobby or domestic influences.<sup>1</sup>

Another noteworthy section is the detailed presentation on the role of the Israel lobby in the origins of the Iraq war. "We argue that the war was motivated at least in good part by a desire to make Israel more secure" (p. 231). They note that "some Israeli leaders" actually favored a war with Iran but were mollified by assurances that war with Iran would come later. The originators of the plan for the war with Iraq were Jewish-American neoconservatives "who conceived the idea and were principally responsible for pushing it forward in the wake of September 11" (p. 234). Israel then chimed in to do its part, chiefly by providing false intelligence and by having its leaders join the public chorus in America in favor of the war.

#### **THE MINIMALISM OF MEARSHEIMER AND WALT**

The main goal of Mearsheimer and Walt is to sway U.S. policy to-

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Blankfort, "Damage Control: Noam Chomsky and the Israel-Palestine Conflict," *Dissident Voice* ([www.dissidentvoice.org](http://www.dissidentvoice.org)), May 25, 2005.

ward Israel. They understand that this is a daunting, if not impossible task—that even if they made an overwhelming case for their point of view, it would still face a very long uphill struggle against the power of the lobby over its minions in Congress and throughout the government. I suspect that as a result they adopt what might be called a minimalist position: They seek to rest their case on the narrowest possible basis—that is, the base that allows them to have a maximum effect without having to get caught up in arguments that might alienate readers by departing too much from the current zeitgeist. This is certainly an excellent strategy—perhaps the only one that makes sense among those seeking to change public policy. But a reviewer need have no such compunctions. So in the following, I will point out what I take to be areas where Mearsheimer and Walt let rigor slide in the interests of having influence within the current mainstream of public opinion.

#### JEW AS QUINTESSENTIAL VICTIMS

Mearsheimer and Walt appear to be “honest liberals.” That is, they genuinely abhor Israel’s ethnonationalism and tendency to territorial expansion. They are deeply concerned by its focus on blood ties and its concerns about racial purity. They are horrified by the treatment of the Palestinians and the apartheid society that Israel has become. And they are disturbed by the ghastly campaigns against Lebanon.

But on the other hand, they also accept the standard accounts of Jews and their history and so see Jews fundamentally as victims. In the chapter titled “The Dwindling Moral Case for Israel,” Mearsheimer and Walt note that, “There is no question that Jews suffered greatly from the despicable legacy of anti-Semitism and that Israel’s creation was an appropriate response to a long record of crimes” (p. 92). This is the lachrymose tale of passive victimhood that has been repeatedly promulgated by Jewish activists and apologists virtually ever since the Enlightenment.

However, as Albert Lindemann notes, throughout their history Jews have behaved “individually and collectively, as active agents, as modern, responsible, and flawed human beings, not merely as passive martyrs or as uncomprehending objects of impersonal forces.”<sup>2</sup> In my view, the main outbreaks of anti-Semitism in European history have

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<sup>2</sup> A. S. Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank) 1894–1915* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 279.

had strong overtones of resource competition and have always been exacerbated by Jewish characteristics, particularly their separateness and their aggressive behavior toward non-Jews. Indeed, the typical Jewish pattern in traditional societies was to act as a middleman minority on behalf of an exploitative alien ruling elite.<sup>3</sup>

Rather than passive victims, Jews have often behaved quite aggressively toward the people they have lived among. For example, Jews have aggressively pursued their interests in America not just via the Israel lobby but by successfully advocating an open borders immigration policy, promoting U.S. involvement in World War II, altering the privileged position of Christianity in the public square, and successfully promoting many of the influential movements of the political and cultural left.<sup>4</sup> In the twentieth century, the Jewish role in the slaughter of 20 million Soviet citizens under Bolshevism was well known and was an important component of negative perceptions of Jews prior to World War II.<sup>5</sup>

Mearsheimer and Walt provide a long list of examples of Israeli aggressiveness toward its neighbors and the Palestinians: Israel is an expansionist state whose leaders were not satisfied with the original partition of 1948—a time when Jews comprised 35 percent of the population of Palestine and controlled 7 percent of the land. Israelis “continued to impose terrible violence and discrimination against the Palestinians for decades” after the founding of the state, including ethnic cleansing after the 1967 war and, according to Israeli historian Benny Morris, an occupation based on “brute force, repression and fear, collaboration and treachery, beatings and torture chambers, and daily intimidation, humiliation, and manipulation” (p. 100). Mearsheimer and Walt spend a great deal of time recounting other acts of Israeli aggression, such as the horrors of the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the wanton destruction wrought by the bombing of Lebanon in the sum-

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin MacDonald, *Separation and Its Discontents: Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism* (Bloomington, Ind.: 1stbooks Library, 2004). (Paperback edition of the 1998 Praeger edition, with a new Preface.)

<sup>4</sup> Kevin MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique: An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements*. (Bloomington, Ind.: Authorhouse, 2002). (Paperback edition of the 1998 Praeger edition, with a new preface.)

<sup>5</sup> Kevin MacDonald, “Stalin’s Willing Executioners: Jews as a Hostile Elite in the USSR,” in *Cultural Insurrections: Essays on Western Civilization, Jewish Influence, and Anti-Semitism* (Atlanta: The Occidental Press, 2007).

mer of 2006. They also show how Israel has aggressively promoted regime change throughout the region, using the power of the United States harnessed by the Israel lobby. But they ignore a consistent pattern of aggressive Jewish behavior in pursuit of their perceived interests that has been a theme of Jewish history and an important ingredient of historical anti-Semitism.

Incidentally, not all Jewish groups have behaved as aggressively toward the surrounding society as have the Ashkenazi groups that make up the great bulk of American Jewry. For example, a community of Syrian Jews called the SY (pronounced “ess-why”) arrived in New York around the same time as the huge influx of *Ostjuden* (Eastern European Jews). The SY have become wealthy, but they haven’t entered into the power centers of American society. They eschew higher education and have no role in the elite media. They are not involved in the legal profession, politics, or academic departments of the social sciences or humanities. Although they tend to be hawkish on matters related to Israel, they have not been involved in creating the edifice that is the Israel lobby.

One gets the impression that they want to make money and stay under the radar by not making waves—the antithesis of the aggressive posture of the *Ostjuden*. This is probably how they survived for centuries in the Middle East. In fact, Jews in traditional societies often hid their wealth and controlled the behavior of other Jews so as not to arouse hostility from the surrounding peoples.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, unlike the Ashkenazim, they have not developed an adversarial, competitive stance toward the people and culture of America. One can’t imagine them developing a lobby that would harness the power of the United States on behalf of a foreign government. Nor can one imagine them becoming a hostile elite, as Ashkenazi Jews became in the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup> They have shown no tendencies toward developing a culture of critique that subjected Western culture to what John Murray Cuddihy termed “punitive objectivity” and “the vindictive objectivity of the marginal nonmember.”<sup>8</sup> Unlike their Ashkenazi brethren, they had no impact on Western societies in the twentieth century. In this regard, they are

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<sup>6</sup> *Separation and Its Discontents*, ch. 6.

<sup>7</sup> “Stalin’s Willing Executioners.”

<sup>8</sup> J. M. Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss, and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

much more like the Overseas Chinese than their Jewish brothers from Eastern Europe.<sup>9</sup>

To understand the origins and the power of the Israel Lobby, one has to understand the *Ostjuden*—the *fons et origo* of the two most potent and aggressive twentieth-century movements: political radicalism and Zionism. It is not that the *Ostjuden* are particularly ethnocentric compared to other Jews. They are, if anything, less ethnocentric than the SYs with their hyperxenophobia and obsession with blood purity.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, it is obvious that the *Ostjuden* could never have been so successful in creating the Israel lobby or in altering the culture and demography of the West had they remained as a hermetically sealed community, shut off from the power centers of the society.

In attempting to understand the influence of the lobby, Mearsheimer and Walt note the characteristics of American Jews that make them an effective lobby: American Jews are relatively wealthy, and they give generously to Jewish causes; Jewish organizations are well run and have a great deal of expertise (p. 140). However, they fail to mention aggressiveness. Harnessing the power of the United States to effect regime change of governments that Israel doesn't like is nothing if not aggressive.

Indeed, given the long history of charges of Jewish disloyalty, such behavior is downright reckless and foolhardy. Like all aggressive strategies, there is an element of risk. When one contemplates the enormous expenditures of the United States on behalf of Israel, both in terms of money and lives, there is very definitely a possibility of an eventual backlash if Americans finally begin to grasp the reality of the influence of the Israel lobby.

### THE DUAL LOYALTY OF AMERICAN JEWS

Mearsheimer and Walt bend over backward to exonerate Jews of the charge of dual loyalty. On one hand, they massively document the deep commitment of American Jews to Israel. For example, they quote sociologist Stephen Rosenthal, "since 1967 . . . there has been no other country whose citizens have been as committed to the success of another country as American Jews have been to Israel" (p. 115). Indeed,

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<sup>9</sup> Kevin MacDonald, *A People that Shall Dwell Alone: Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy, with Diaspora Peoples* (Lincoln, Nebr.: iUniverse, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Zev Chafets, "The SY Empire," *New York Times Magazine*, October 14, 2007.

as Mearsheimer and Walt note, Israel is at the heart of Jewish identity for Diaspora Jews. And Jews, as a wealthy group with a long history of developing successful activist organizations, have created over 80 national organizations devoted to pro-Israel activism, as well as a great many others for which such activism is at least part of their charter. Although Jewish organizations certainly have other causes, promoting Israel by promoting "the alignment of America's and Israel's strategic and moral values" (p. 119) is the most important communal focus of American Jews.

Also raising loyalty issues, Mearsheimer and Walt show that the activism of American Jews is often orchestrated by Israel, as in 1967 when the Israeli ambassador was instructed to "create a public atmosphere that will constitute pressure on the [Johnson] administration . . . without it being explicitly clear that we are behind this public campaign" (p. 122; quote from historian Tom Segev). The result was a massive outpouring of letters urging the administration to back Israel. This example also illustrates that appeals to Jews to aid Israel are often highly emotional, conjuring images of a society under siege: "Portraying Israel as beleaguered and vulnerable and issuing dire warnings about continued or growing anti-Semitism helps maintain a high level of concern among potential supporters and helps ensure these organizations' continued existence" (p. 128).

Not only do American Jews often act on behalf of the wishes of a foreign government, there are also forces within the Jewish community that prevent significant dissent from this stance. Mearsheimer and Walt recount instances in which Jewish critics of Israel have been subjected to pressure not to publicly criticize Israel. The result, as recounted by J. J. Goldberg, is that, "All these organizations reached the same conclusion: American Jews had the right to discuss issues freely, but only in discreet forums outside public view" (quoted on p. 123). American Jews are to support policies favored by the government of Israel and to keep disagreements among themselves, thereby keeping up a united front of support for Israel.

Dissenting Jews are marginalized. Mearsheimer and Walt recount the domination of pro-Israel activism by "hard-line Zionists, Orthodox, and neoconservative circles" (p. 126). As has happened so often in Jewish history, the most committed Jews have determined the direction of the Jewish community, with the result that the leadership of pro-Israel organizations tends to be more radical than the rest of the

American Jewish community.

This shows that even in the twenty-first century, the Jewish community retains a strong strain of collectivism. Group interests and their enforcement within the Jewish community remain a fundamental feature of the Jewish group evolutionary strategy – as apparent in the regulation of economic behavior among Jews in traditional societies<sup>11</sup> as it is in the behavior of the Israel lobby in twenty-first century America.

In general, the lobby supports Israeli policies whatever they are, but there are exceptions. The lobby was less than enthusiastic for the Rabin government of the 1990s and its overtures to the Palestinians. Indeed, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations never endorsed the Oslo peace process, “and AIPAC helped sponsor the 1995 Jerusalem Embassy Act, a transparent attempt to disrupt the peace process by requiring the United States to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem” (p. 127). This does not detract from the common front of American Jewish opinion on Israel, but it does indicate some independence of American Jews from Israeli policies, and it shows that the American Jewish community tends to favor the more expansionist, aggressive political positions within Israel.

Given that the American Jewish community is galvanized around doing the bidding of a foreign government, that dissent within the Jewish community has been effectively silenced, and that the most energized, radical elements of the Jewish community determine the direction of the entire community, it is certainly not surprising that issues of loyalty would be raised.

Mearsheimer and Walt begin their treatment of loyalty by stating flatly that “any notion that Jewish Americans are disloyal citizens is wrong” (p. 147). They note that it is quite common for Americans’ ethnic and religious identifications to affect their attitudes toward other countries and their political behavior.

This is an argument based on prevalence, not on principle. That is, one might reasonably argue that such dual loyalties are not really a good thing for America or any other country. Indeed, dual loyalty has become legitimate because of the rise of multiculturalism in America – a phenomenon that is due in no small part to another hugely im-

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<sup>11</sup> H. M. Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in the United States* (New York: Arno Press, 1924).

portant area of Jewish activism. I noted in *The Culture of Critique* that beginning with Horace Kallen, Jewish intellectuals have been at the forefront in developing models of the United States as a culturally and ethnically pluralistic society. Reflecting the utility of cultural pluralism in serving internal Jewish group interests in maintaining cultural separatism, Kallen personally combined his ideology of cultural pluralism with a deep immersion in Jewish history and literature, a commitment to Zionism, and political activity on behalf of Jews in Eastern Europe. There certainly isn't much doubt where Kallen's loyalties lay. Indeed, within the multicultural perspective, there is tolerance for different groups but the result is a tendency to "deprecate the importance or even the existence of a common national identity."<sup>12</sup> If there is no national identity, it's hard to see how there can be a concept of national interest.

Multiculturalists have typically promoted identities that depart from a general American identity. Dual citizenship is much more common now, with Mexican Americans, for example, being allowed to vote in Mexican elections. Whereas in the past assimilation was the norm, as is often noted, immigrants now are encouraged to retain their own language and culture, as well as powerful ties to their countries of origin. So it is no surprise that when Mearsheimer and Walt consider loyalty issues, their treatment is framed within a zeitgeist created by Jewish intellectuals to serve their interests in America. As Mearsheimer and Walt's treatment indicates, the legitimacy of this view in the present time certainly benefits the Israel lobby.

Mearsheimer and Walt also note that a great many Jewish activists and their supporters genuinely believe that the policies they propose are in the interests of the United States. Nevertheless, they point out that no two countries have the same interests and that "many of Israel's supporters find it hard to acknowledge that Jerusalem and Washington could have fundamentally different interests" (p. 148).

Indeed, psychological research shows that people like Richard Perle with strong ingroup loyalties are likely to suffer cognitive distortions that bias their policy recommendations in ways that benefit the ingroup. They may well believe that their recommendations also benefit the United States, but they might not even be aware

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<sup>12</sup> Kevin MacDonald, "Neoconservatism as a Jewish Movement" and "Neoconservative Portraits," in *Cultural Insurrections*.

of how their commitment to Israel can bias their judgment.

Since, as Mearsheimer and Walt point out, no two countries have the same interests, it follows that logically there cannot ultimately be dual loyalties. When the two putative objects of loyalty come into conflict, one will inevitably be chosen over the other, and the one chosen is the true object of loyalty. In the case of someone like Perle, there can be no doubt at all where his true loyalty lies. The problem, according to Mearsheimer and Walt, is not that Jews are loyal to Israel. As noted, that's normal and accepted for a wide range of Americans in multicultural America. The problem is that Jewish activists are engaged in a largely fallacious effort to portray their policy preferences as good for America as a whole. In doing this, they often seem unaware that their own ingroup attitudes may shape their perceptions.

As Mearsheimer and Walt note, movements such as the Israel lobby have typically presented themselves not as furthering Jewish interests but as furthering the interests of the society as a whole. Pro-Israel activists such as Perle typically phrase their policy recommendations as aimed at benefiting the United States. He does this despite evidence that he has a strong Jewish identity and despite the fact that he has typical Jewish concerns, such as anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and the welfare of Israel. Perle poses as an American patriot despite credible charges of spying for Israel, writing reports for Israeli think tanks and op-eds for the *Jerusalem Post*, and maintaining close personal relationships with Israeli leaders.<sup>13</sup>

This was also true of all the movements I described in *The Culture of Critique*: The Jewish commitments and motivations of the main players were never a subject of discussion, and the movements themselves were presented as scientifically sound and morally superior to the traditional culture of the West. As a result, non-Jews are invited to see these Jewish activists as disinterested social scientists, or, in the case of the neocons, as patriotic fellow Americans—as “just like themselves.” We are invited to view these Jewish activists as part of our ingroup, with all that that entails psychologically. In my ideal world, Richard Perle's advice to presidents and defense secretaries should be accompanied by a disclaimer:

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<sup>13</sup> “Neoconservatism as a Jewish Movement” and “Neoconservative Portraits.”

You should be cautious in following my advice or even believing what I say about Israel. Deception and manipulation are very common tactics in ethnic conflict, so that my pose as an American patriot should be taken with a grain of salt. And even if I am entirely sincere in what I say, the fact is that I have a deep psychological and ethnic commitment to Israel and the Jewish people. Psychologists have shown that this sort of deep commitment is likely to bias my perceptions of any policy that could possibly affect Israel even though I am not aware of it.

As I noted in *The Culture of Critique*, “many of the Jews involved in the movements reviewed here may sincerely believe that these movements are really divorced from specifically Jewish interests or are in the best interests of other groups as well as Jews. . . . But, as [evolutionary theorist Robert] Trivers notes,<sup>14</sup> the best deceivers are those who are self-deceived.”<sup>15</sup>

One such Jew may well be Henry Kissinger. Mearsheimer and Walt, quoting historian Kenneth Stein, make the interesting point that Henry Kissinger “accurately and repeatedly represented Israeli interests to Moscow, almost totally contrary to Nixon’s preferences” during the 1973 war (p. 44). Kissinger also secretly approved giving the Israelis extra time to consolidate their military position after the UN-imposed ceasefire agreement. Despite these actions and a firm sense of his own deep commitment to the Jewish community, Kissinger does not see himself as advocating policies that departed from the national interest of the United States: “Though not practicing my religion, I could never forget that thirteen members of my family had died in Nazi concentration camps. . . . Most Israeli leaders were personal friends. And yet . . . I had to subordinate my emotional preferences to my perception of the national interest. . . . It was not always easy; occasionally it proved painful” (quoted on p. 148). I guess one is supposed to believe that pursuing policies that departed from those of the Nixon administration and just happened to be in the interests of Israel represented the true national interest of the United States and had nothing to do with his ethnic commitment to Israel.

In any case, the bottom line, as Mearsheimer and Walt note, is that

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<sup>14</sup> R. Trivers, *Social Evolution* (Menlo Park, Cal.: Benjamin Cummings, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> *The Culture of Critique*.

while it is legitimate for Jews to propose policies they see as favoring Israel, "it is equally legitimate for critics to point out that organizations like AIPAC are not neutral, or that the individuals who run AIPAC, the ADL, the Conference of Presidents, and similar organizations are motivated by an attachment to Israel that is bound to shape their thinking about many foreign policy issues" (p. 150).

### **DO JEWS OR PRO-ISRAEL FORCES "CONTROL THE MEDIA"?**

Mearsheimer and Walt note that "while serious criticism of Israel occasionally reaches a large audience across the United States, the American media's coverage of Israel tends to be strongly biased in Israel's favor, especially when compared with coverage in other democracies" (p. 169). But they reject the idea that "Jews control the media" in the United States with the following arguments.

(1) It is entirely legitimate for people like Martin Peretz to use their position in the media to influence attitudes toward Israel because "all elites tend to use their privileged positions to advance their interests" (p. 169). It is indeed expected that the people in the media will act to further their interests, but Mearsheimer and Walt do not even attempt to gauge the relative importance of Jews as owners and producers of media content. In fact, Jewish overrepresentation in the media dates at least from the 1930s. I have written on this topic, noting that, "By all accounts, ethnic Jews have a powerful influence in the American media—far larger than any other identifiable group."<sup>16</sup> It's not difficult to find Jewish authors who will say much the same thing.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Jews have a consistent pattern of advancing their interests by using their position in the media. In my review, I highlighted the prevalence of typical Jewish attitudes reflected in the media: positive attitudes on multiculturalism; negative attitudes toward the culture of the West and small-town America; positive portrayal of Jews and Jewish issues such as anti-Semitism; negative portrayals of Christianity and Christian culture; and promotion of positive views of Israel and its policies.<sup>18</sup> It is one thing for Mearsheimer and Walt to state that elites always use their position to further their interests, but to ignore the very large overrepresentation of Jews in this elite does a disservice to

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<sup>16</sup> *The Culture of Critique*.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Michael Medved, "Is Hollywood Too Jewish?" *Moment* 21(4) (1996): 36–42, p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> *The Culture of Critique*.

their readers.

(2) Mearsheimer and Walt note that, “There are certainly owners, publishers, editors, columnists, and reporters in the mainstream media who have no special feelings for Israel and would feel comfortable criticizing its policies as well as the U.S.–Israel relationship” (p. 169). Who are these people, and why aren’t they speaking up? Whatever one may make of this, it certainly is not an argument against Jewish media control. For example, the fact that we don’t find non-Jews who are prominent in the media criticizing Israel seems just another indication of Jewish power. Indeed, one of the striking aspects of pro-Israel reportage is that non-Jews who are prominent in the U.S. media tend to be reflexively pro-Israel. As I noted in my discussion of Eric Alterman’s<sup>19</sup> claim (also discussed by Mearsheimer and Walt) that the debate on Israel “is dominated by people who cannot imagine criticizing Israel”:

There can be little doubt that the U.S. media are dominated by a pro-Israeli perspective ultimately deriving from Jewish influence on the media. What is perhaps most interesting is the long list of non-Jews who . . . support Israel reflexively and without qualification. These include George Will, William Bennett, Andrew Sullivan, Allan Keyes, Brit Hume, Bill O’Reilly, Michael Barone, Ann Coulter, Linda Chavez, and Rush Limbaugh. The fact that reflexive support for Israel is not characteristic of non-Jews in other societies with less Jewish influence on the media strongly suggests that unconditional support for Israel is a critical litmus test of acceptability by the major media in the United States—that prospective pundits “earn their stripes” by showing their devotion to Israel (and, one might infer, other Jewish issues, such as immigration; none of these pundits is a critic of massive non-European immigration into Western societies). After all, reflexive, uncritical support for anything is rare enough for any issue, and [as Mearsheimer and Walt also note] we know that the media in other countries are not so one-sided. So it seems difficult to explain the huge tilt toward Israel as the result of individual attitudes in the absence of some enormous selective factor.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *The Culture of Critique*.

<sup>20</sup> Preface to the first paperback edition of *The Culture of Critique*.

(3) "The reason that the lobby works so hard to monitor and influence what the mainstream media says about Israel is precisely that the lobby does not control them." This seems a rather obvious non-sequitur. In any case, the fact that Mearsheimer and Walt can write a chapter titled "Dominating Public Discourse" would seem to show that in fact the lobby does control them.

(4) "If the media were left to its own devices, they would not serve up as consistent a diet of pro-Israel coverage and commentary. Instead there would be a more open and lively discussion about the Jewish state and U.S. policy toward it, as there is in virtually every other democracy in the world. Indeed, that debate is especially lively in Israel itself, the one state where Jews clearly *do* control the media" (p. 169). This ignores the extent to which the media are influenced by Jews independent of the work of the lobby. And in any case, the fact that the media would behave in a more even-handed fashion if left to their own devices is simply another manifestation of Jewish power. The fact that there is more even-handedness in Israel can be reasonably attributed to the lack of danger that open discussions would influence non-Jews who, after all, are the ones who need constant pro-Israel propaganda in the first place. This can be seen as just another example of the dictum noted above by Mearsheimer and Walt: It is okay for Jews to criticize Israel among themselves but inappropriate to do it in the presence of non-Jews.

Still, Mearsheimer and Walt do an admirable job in documenting how the lobby controls public discourse on Israel. Consider the following amazing passage:

In August 2003 . . . the writer Ian Buruma wrote an article in the *New York Times Magazine* titled "How to Talk About Israel." He made the obvious point that it is sometimes difficult to talk "critically and dispassionately" about Israel in the United States and pointed out that "even legitimate criticism of Israel, or of Zionism, is often quickly denounced as anti-Semitism by various watchdogs." In response, Bret Stephens, then the editor of the *Jerusalem Post*, and now a columnist and editorial board member for the *Wall Street Journal*, published a vitriolic open letter in the *Post* that began by asking Buruma, "Are you a Jew?" Two paragraphs later, Stephens declared, "What matters to me is that *you* say, 'I am a Jew.'" Why did this matter? Because in Stephen's

view, "One must be at least a Jew to tell the goyim how they may or may not talk about Israel." The message of this remarkable letter was, in short, that non-Jews should talk about this subject only in ways that Jews deem acceptable. (p. 174)

There are a great many other insightful comments on how the Israel lobby dominates public discourse. One that particularly struck me is that whenever Israel is under pressure because of its policies (e.g., the invasion of Lebanon or expanding West Bank settlements), there is a spurt of publications seeing criticism of Israel as an indication of a "new anti-Semitism." On the other hand, such publications disappear when Israel is not under such pressure. Charges of anti-Semitism are "the great silencer" in all debates about Israel. The good news is that "even William Kristol seems to have recognized that calling critics of Israel or the lobby anti-Semites is losing its capacity to silence others, writing . . . that 'the mainstream Jewish organizations have played the "anti-Semitism" card so often that it has been devalued'" (pp. 195–96).

### IS IT GOOD FOR ISRAEL?

Mearsheimer and Walt suggest that a less influential lobby would be good for Israel: "U.S. and Israeli interests would . . . be advanced by wresting power away from the hard liners who now control AIPAC" (p. 352). For example, Mearsheimer and Walt suggest that the lobby prevented the United States from putting pressure on Israel to pursue peace with Syria by giving up the Golan Heights. This was against U.S. interests, and it was also against Israeli interests because "a different U.S. policy might well have produced a Syrian-Israeli peace treaty by now, a treaty that would have further enshrined Israel's legitimacy and regional supremacy and reduced international support for its most determined, recalcitrant, and violent foes" (p. 279).

This is perhaps true. However, I think that behind the aggressive stance that Israel has exhibited is the belief that they can win, where winning is defined as retaining the Golan Heights, continuing de facto sovereignty over the West Bank, removing the Palestinians from most of the West Bank, enclosing the Palestinians in walled-off Bantustans where conditions are so horrible that many will eventually emigrate, preventing a meaningful Palestinian state, and establishing hegemony

in the entire area.

It is hardly ridiculous for Israelis and their American supporters to think this way. After all, Israel is by far the preeminent military power in the region and can easily act to preempt the development of weapons of mass destruction by its enemies, including Iran. And as a nuclear power, it could inflict huge costs on any enemy who even contemplated destroying it. It also has the world's one remaining military superpower completely at its bidding, so that it's difficult to envision a worst case scenario in which Israel is decisively defeated.

Why should the Israelis give up anything when victory is in sight? And why give up anything given that the water has been so poisoned by 60 years of hostility that any concession at all, much less a return to the 1967 borders, will probably be seen as little more than weakness. Of course, continuing its aggressive, expansionist policies means that Israel will continue to be an international pariah, but Israel is quite accustomed to that role at this point, and the lobby has a long and successful track record in dealing with the fallout from charges such as "Zionism is racism," at least in the West (which is all that really matters). With the aid of Jewish Diaspora communities, there is little likelihood of widespread boycotts as happened with the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Finally, whatever arguments one may make regarding what is in the best interests of Israel, I suggest that in a real sense Israel can't change its direction. Mearsheimer and Walt try to see Israel as a normal state capable of making rational decisions, but the extremists are in charge and have been so at least since the 1967 War. Any attempt to make a meaningful withdrawal from the West Bank and Jerusalem and to allow a viable Palestinian state would produce a civil war among Israelis and likely provoke a strong response by the lobby on the side of the nonaccommodationists. The fate of the Oslo peace process, the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and the support by the lobby of the most radical elements within Israel certainly argue that there is little chance of a successful move in this direction.

As throughout Jewish history, it is the most committed members who determine the direction of the entire group.<sup>21</sup> This is doubtless

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<sup>21</sup> Kevin MacDonald, "Zionism and the Internal Dynamics of the Jewish Community," in *Cultural Insurrections*.

true of most groups, but it is especially the case with Jews where there is a long history of fanaticism. I am reminded of Christiane Amanpour's depiction of Jewish fanatics in her excellent TV documentary, *God's Jewish Warriors*. These West Bank settlers and Jewish activists are massively ethnocentric, and, unlike the propaganda put out by the lobby, they are not at all democratic. They live in a completely Jewish world where their every thought and perception is colored by their Jewish identity. There is an apartheid world separated by high concrete walls from their Palestinian neighbors, where even tiny settlements are necessarily protected by the Israeli army. And at a time when Americans are constantly being encouraged by Jewish organizations like the ADL to be ever more tolerant of all kinds of diversity, these people are anything but tolerant. Calls for expropriation and expulsion of the Palestinians are commonplace among them. Israel has created a classic Middle Eastern segmented society in which different groups live in an ingroup/outgroup world, completely isolated from each other.

Such people may not be representative of the Jewish community either in Israel or in America. But their numbers are large, and they have created "facts on the ground" that make any kind of reasonable settlement impossible. Mearsheimer and Walt do a good job of showing how the lobby has moved to the right along with Israeli politics, and they do a good job of showing how the more moderate American Jews have been excluded from having any influence. But I don't really think that they come to grips with the fanaticism of those who are shaping the directions of Israeli policy and their supporters in the lobby. One can talk about U.S. interests or Israeli interests all one wants, but this is a fight to the finish. Make no mistake about it.

#### RESPONSES TO MEARSHEIMER AND WALT

Several commentators have noted that the rise of Jewish intellectual and political influence was necessarily accompanied by a crisis of confidence in the older order.<sup>22</sup> The culture of critique that resulted from this influence called into question the fundamental moral, political, and economic foundations of Western society. The pillars of the older Protestant intellectual and cultural establishment gave way to a variety of complementary and overlapping utopian visions of America,

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<sup>22</sup> A. R. Heinz, *Jews and the American Soul: Human Nature in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

including especially the vision of a multicultural America that has energized the pro-immigration movement from the beginning.

But because utopian visions sooner or later must clash with reality, it was perhaps inevitable that this newer intellectual ethos would itself be subjected to the same scrutiny previously reserved for pre-1965 America and its twenty-first century remnants. The Achilles' heel of the new establishment is Israel and the influence of its supporters in America, particularly the organized Jewish community. As noted above, some of the very same organizations, such as the ADL and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, that have been at the forefront of enforcing and extending the cultural revolution of the 1960s—the revolution that views the eclipse of white America as a moral imperative—have also been at the forefront of promoting Israel and defending it against criticism. But it's becoming apparent to quite a few observers that the emperor has no clothes.

Mearsheimer and Walt devote an entire chapter to the "dwindling moral case" for Israel. They excuse the crimes against the Palestinians that occurred as a result of the 1948 war that established Israel—a more or less normal consequence of state formation. But Israel's brutality toward the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and its behavior in the 2006 war in Lebanon have undermined the moral case for Israel: "In fact, a good case can be made that current U.S. policy conflicts with basic American values and that if the United States were to choose sides on the basis of moral considerations alone, it would back the Palestinians" (p. 80). They call attention to the importance of biological kinship in determining Israeli citizenship and to the refusal of Israel to grant *de jure* equality to Arabs. They also point out that Israel's Arab citizens "are *de facto* treated as second-class citizens," including having to endure marriage laws that prevent Palestinians who marry Israeli citizens from becoming Israeli citizens or living in Israel. They also note that some Israeli leaders and a substantial proportion of the Israeli public have "racist" attitudes toward Palestinians, including a deep concern about Arab fertility. A clear majority favor encouraging Palestinians to emigrate. A prominent politician, Avigdor Lieberman, is quoted as advocating expulsion "so as to make Israel 'as much as possible' a homogeneous state" (p. 90).

At the heart of this critique is a rather glaring double standard: "Imagine the outcry that would arise here if a U.S. cabinet official spoke of the benefits of a policy that had reduced the birthrates of Af-

rican Americans and Hispanics, thereby preserving a white majority" (p. 89). Or, one might suggest, imagine the outcry that would greet a similar comment on immigration policy to the effect that the United States ought to remain a nation of people of European descent.

Indeed, those most outraged by such policies would be prominent American Jewish organizations like the ADL and the Simon Wiesenthal Center. These organizations are major forces promoting Israel as a state serving the interests of the Jewish people while at the same time producing and encouraging anti-majoritarian political and ideological movements in the United States. Thus these Jewish organizations turn a blind eye to apartheid and ethnic cleansing in Israel while being staunch defenders of the rights of minorities in the United States. The common denominator here, of course, is not a universalistic moral principle but what is in the interests of Jews.

Confronted with the moral critique of America emanating from elite universities and the media, the old Protestant intellectual establishment quickly yielded the high ground. Many of them became avid cheerleaders of the new multicultural zeitgeist that rejected the America and even the Americanism of their ancestors, to the point that the new zeitgeist has become a consensus among elites of all stripes. They accepted their own demographic decline, and they gave up their pretensions as cultural leaders and trend setters. And they implicitly paved the way for their eventual loss of political power to other groups, some of which have historically conditioned grudges against them—a dangerous situation to say the least. In doing so, they became the pallbearers for their own people.

One might suppose that the discovery that the emperor is clothed in a massive ethnocentrism of his own while nevertheless working zealously to squelch utterly any murmur of ethnocentrism by American and European majorities would lead to a crisis of confidence among the elites. After all, people who insist on double standards naturally antagonize other people because they thus repudiate the principle of reciprocity that underlies all enduring moral arrangements in a civil society. But there are several reasons to think that won't happen.

The lobby still exerts massive influence over the political process. Even after Mearsheimer and Walt cogently presented the case within the mainstream media that the lobby was a necessary condition for the war in Iraq, Representative Jim Moran (Democrat, Virginia) was

accused of bigotry and anti-Semitism for saying that the Israel lobby “pushed the war from the beginning.” House Republican Chief Deputy Whip Eric Cantor couldn’t resist invoking history’s arch-anti-Semite:

Unfortunately, Jim Moran has made it a habit now to lash out to the American Jewish community. I think his remarks are reprehensible, I think his remarks are anachronistic, and hearken back to the day of Adolph [sic] Hitler, of the others, *Mein Kampf*, of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the high level of Mearsheimer and Walt’s critique and the reputations of its authors, there doesn’t seem to be any lessening of Jewish self-confidence or willingness to defend Israel and the lobby. Reviews of Mearsheimer and Walt in the elite mainstream media have been uniformly negative. The reviews have mainly been by Jews, prompting Philip Weiss to ask “Do the Goyim Get to Register an Opinion Re Walt/Mearsheimer?”<sup>24</sup> There are the obligatory dark (and intimidating) charges of anti-Semitism. Perhaps the most extreme reaction, presumably aimed at a Jewish audience and intended to keep the funds flowing, is by ADL National Director Abraham Foxman: *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control*.<sup>25</sup>

Charges of shoddy scholarship abound, as in Leslie Gelb’s review in the *New York Times Book Review*. Some of Gelb’s charges might even seem reasonable—if you haven’t read the book. For example, Gelb fails to do justice to Mearsheimer and Walt’s case on the power of the Israel lobby, dwelling only on their quoting various sources attesting to that power, but ignoring long sections of the book recounting numerous actual instances where the lobby has used its power to control Congress, presidents, and American public opinion on Mideast policy. Nor does he adequately portray Mearsheimer and Walt’s exhaustive account of the role of the lobby, the government of Israel, and administration neoconservatives (with their strong Jewish identities and

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<sup>23</sup> “NJDC to Jim Moran: Retract Statements about AIPAC,” September 7, 2007. [http://njdc.typepad.com/njdcs\\_blog/2007/09/njdc-to-jim-mor.html](http://njdc.typepad.com/njdcs_blog/2007/09/njdc-to-jim-mor.html)

<sup>24</sup> P. Weiss, “Do the goyim get to register an opinion re Walt/Mearsheimer?” <http://www.philipweiss.org/mondoweiss/2007/10/do-the-goyim-ge.html>

<sup>25</sup> A. Foxman, *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

powerful ties to Israel) in the build-up to the war in Iraq. Gelb states that, contra Mearsheimer and Walt, "Washington has quietly sided with the Palestinians [on the issues of the settlements and a Palestinian state] for a long time." It has indeed been a very quiet support because, as Mearsheimer and Walt show, the lobby has effectively prevented U.S. administrations from pushing Israel in that direction. There is also a complete disconnect between what Gelb says about the influence of the oil lobby and what Mearsheimer and Walt actually write. The same goes for Gelb's comments on how U.S. arms sales to the Saudis illustrates the weakness of the lobby.

Gelb also subscribes to two of the central pro-Israel myths of the Mideast. He unabashedly claims that, "in the closing days of the Clinton administration, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak met almost all Palestinian demands for a negotiated solution and was effectively turned down" without even bothering to cite Mearsheimer and Walt's refutation of that argument.

Gelb also tries to resurrect the moral case for Israel, noting that "the United States is helping to protect one of the few nations in the world that share American values and interests, a true democracy," again without bothering to tell his readers that Mearsheimer and Walt devote an entire chapter to the dwindling moral case for Israel. As Philip Weiss notes, if reviewers like Gelb are "right and America, i.e., non-Jews, actually love Israel because of shared interests and democratic values, shouldn't the editors of America put reviewers to the test [by having non-Jews review the book]?"<sup>26</sup>

In making charges of shoddy scholarship, Gelb should look in the mirror.

Some of Gelb's arguments go beyond shoddy scholarship. For example, he states that, "instinctively and without being lobbied, American presidents don't want to gang up on Israel, since virtually every other state does so."

When an argument is so silly that even a child could see through it, yet it is put forward by a Harvard Ph.D. in the elite media, you have to ask yourself what is really going on. Mearsheimer and Walt's mistake may have been to think that they remained in a rational universe of rational actors when in fact they had entered a parallel universe of rationalization, self-deception, and talking points.

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<sup>26</sup> "Do the goyim get to register an opinion re Walt/Mearsheimer?"

Unlike their Protestant forebears, there will be no crisis of confidence among the new elite's proponents of Israel, and they will never feel cognitive dissonance for supporting an apartheid ethnostate in Israel while simultaneously being a pillar of support for a utopian vision of a multicultural United States. Nor should one expect twinges of guilt for the role of the neoconservatives and the organized Jewish community in promoting the war in Iraq, with its thousands of dead and maimed American soldiers, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi dead, typically dismissed as "collateral damage," and the hundreds of billions of dollars better spent elsewhere.

One of the things that struck me in reading Jewish history was a pattern, stretching back to the ancient world, in which Jews consistently created rationalizations and apologia intended to present themselves in a positive light and their enemies in a negative light. There was a great deal of evidence that at least some of this involved self-deception. A great many commentators have noticed this pattern, but one of the most accurate and succinct is John Murray Cuddihy's comment that Jewish apologists developed a theory of their own history:

. . . emphasizing Gentile persecution as the root cause of Jewish "degradation." This ideology . . . was shared in one form or another, by all the ideologists of nineteenth-century Jewry: Reform Jews and Zionists, assimilationists and socialists, Bundists and Communists—all became virtuosos of ethnic suffering. . . . The point is that these Diaspora groups were uninterested in actual history; they were apologists, ideologists, prefabricating a past in order to answer embarrassing questions, to outfit a new identity, and to ground a claim to equal treatment in the modern world.<sup>27</sup>

Social psychologists have long known that powerful commitment to an ingroup results in a variety of cognitive distortions, especially glorifying the ingroup and pathologizing the outgroup. So we can't expect a real dialogue or objective analysis here. The deeply committed Jews who form the backbone of the organized Jewish community in America are simply unable to see Israel as morally flawed and a mas-

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<sup>27</sup> J. M. Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss, and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), p. 177.

sive strategic burden to the United States.

If indeed a majority of Americans and their leaders realize that Israel is fundamentally an expression of the deep wellsprings of Jewish ethnocentrism and that American support for Israel is not at all in the national interest and has resulted in enormous costs and suffering, the predicted reaction is that committed Jews will retreat into a psychological world where once again they will see themselves as victims of irrational hatred—a theme that is already the central response to Mearsheimer and Walt. Consider, for example, the Anti-Defamation League’s blurb for Abe Foxman’s book, *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control*:

In a post-9/11 era of international tension and heightened suspicion, the American Jewish community has found itself having to respond to charges that it stifles free speech, has divided loyalties, and is responsible for pushing the United States into the war in Iraq. The essay by John J. Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen M. Walt of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard on “The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy” and the 2006 book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* by former President Jimmy Carter have lent an alarming veneer of credibility to these accusations, which are little more than paranoid fantasies that reinforce persistent, anti-Semitic myths.<sup>28</sup>

The whole lachrymose history of Jews as a persecuted but morally superior light unto the nations stretching from the Pharaoh to the Crusaders to the Tsar, to Hitler to Ahmadinejad will once again be summoned to confer a sense of psychological affirmation. Only this time, with Israel already a formidable nuclear power, the stakes are raised for the entire planet.

This retreat into a psychological world of ethnic pride and pathologizing their opponents was not an option for the Protestant intellectual and cultural elite displaced by the rise of the culture of critique. Their commitment to individualism and their fragile sense of peoplehood and ethnic identification made them vulnerable to charges of moral failings. It was a vulnerability that was well recognized by Jewish activists: For example, in the debate over the 1924 immigration re-

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<sup>28</sup> [http://www.adl.org/Anti\\_semitism/deadliest\\_lies/](http://www.adl.org/Anti_semitism/deadliest_lies/)

striction law, Israel Zangwill noted that, "You must make a fight against this bill; tell them they are destroying American ideals. Most fortifications are of cardboard, and if you press against them, they give way."<sup>29</sup>

But arguments that the Israel lobby is destroying American ideals will fall on deaf ears among Jewish activists. Instead of producing a lack of confidence and a sense of guilt, the result of America turning against the Israel lobby will be the erection of a parallel universe of rationalization and self-deception among the most strongly identified segments of the Jewish community—the backbone of the organized Jewish community.

Turning against the lobby would also produce a political crisis in the United States. Another very clear message of Mearsheimer and Walt is that American political culture is utterly corrupt. The vast majority of American politicians have been only too willing to conform to the wishes of the lobby, and often compete to go beyond what the lobby desires. The good news, perhaps, is that a political crisis over Jewish influence is exactly what the United States needs.

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<sup>29</sup> Quoted in *The Culture of Critique*, 267.