

**Debunking the Newest – and Oldest – Jewish Conspiracy:**

**A Reply to the Mearsheimer-Walt “Working Paper”**

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## **Abstract**

The working paper by Academic Dean and Professor Stephen Walt and Professor John Mearsheimer presents a conspiratorial view of history in which the Israel Lobby has a “stranglehold” on American foreign policy, the American media, think tanks and academia. In his response, Professor Alan Dershowitz demonstrates that the paper contains three types of major errors: quotations are wrenched out of context, important facts are misstated or omitted; and embarrassingly weak logic is employed. One of the authors of this paper has acknowledged that “none of the evidence represents original documentation or is derived from independent interviews.” In light of the paper’s errors, and its admitted lack of originality, Dershowitz asks why these professors would have chosen to publish a paper that does not meet their usual scholarly standards, especially given the risk – that should have been obvious to “realists” - that recycling these charges under their imprimatur of prominent authors would be featured, as they have been, on extremist websites. Dershowitz questions the authors claims that people who support Israel do not want “an open debate on issues involving Israel.” He renews his challenge to debate the issues.

### **Debunking the Newest – and Oldest – Jewish Conspiracy<sup>1</sup>:** **A Reply to the Mearsheimer-Walt “Working Paper”** **by Alan Dershowitz<sup>2</sup>**

#### Introduction

The publication, on the Harvard Kennedy School web site, of a “working paper,” written by a professor at the Kennedy School and a prominent professor at the University of Chicago, has ignited a hailstorm of controversy and raised troubling questions. The paper was written by two self-described foreign-policy “realists,” Professor Stephen Walt

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<sup>1</sup> Article citations reference John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy,” John F. Kennedy School of Government Faculty Research Working Paper Series, March 2006, accessible at [http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP06-011/\\$File/rwp\\_06\\_011\\_walt.pdf](http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP06-011/$File/rwp_06_011_walt.pdf) (last viewed March 28, 2006) (hereinafter “Walt & Mearsheimer”).

<sup>2</sup> Alan Dershowitz is the Felix Frankfurter Professor at Harvard Law School. He would like to thank Mitch Webber, Alex Blenkinsopp, Aaron Voloj Dessauer, Alexandra Katz, and Elizabeth Pugh for the research they provided under time pressure during their spring vacation.

and Professor John Mearsheimer.<sup>3</sup> It asserts that the Israel “Lobby” – a cabal whose “core” is “American Jews” – has a “stranglehold” on mainstream American media, think tanks, academia, and the government.<sup>4</sup> The Lobby is led by the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (“AIPAC”), which the authors characterize as a “de facto agent of a foreign government” that places the interests of that government ahead of the interests of the United States.<sup>5</sup> Jewish political contributors use Jewish “money” to blackmail government officials, while “Jewish philanthropists” influence and “police” academic programs and shape public opinion.<sup>6</sup> Jewish “congressional staffers” exploit their roles and betray the trust of their bosses by “look[ing] at certain issues in terms of their Jewishness,” rather than in terms of their Americanism.<sup>7</sup>

The authors claim that the Lobby works against the interests of the United States because Israel’s interests are not only different from ours, but antagonistic to them for several reasons, including that: America’s “terrorism problem” is directly attributable to its “alli[ance] with Israel”<sup>8</sup>; Israel has gotten us to fight wars, such as those against Iraq, which are not in our general interest; and Israel spied on the United States during the Cold War and provided information to our enemy, the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., “Conversation with John Mearsheimer, *Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley Website*, accessible at <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people2/Mearsheimer/mearsheimer-con2.html>.

<sup>4</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 6.

The authors also assert that Israel lacks any moral claim to American support, because the “creation of Israel entailed a moral crime against the Palestinian people”<sup>10</sup>; Israel has continued to commit crimes including “massacres ... and rapes by Jews”<sup>11</sup>; Israel is not a true democracy, because “citizenship is based on the principle of blood kinship”<sup>12</sup>; Israel is a “colonizing” regime,<sup>13</sup> on the road to achieving “pariah status” reserved for “apartheid states like South Africa”<sup>14</sup>; Israel has always refused to grant the “largely innocent” Palestinians “a viable state of their own”<sup>15</sup>; and “Israel’s conduct is not morally distinguishable from the actions of its opponents.”<sup>16</sup>

This particular lobby – which the authors ominously capitalize and reference with the definite article (“the Lobby”) – uses the undue influence of Jews in America to get the United States to do the “fighting, dying ... and paying” for wars that are not in its own interest, causing American soldiers to die for Israeli interests.<sup>17</sup> It was “the Lobby” that, according to Walt and Mearsheimer, drove the United States into the war against Iraq,<sup>18</sup> and threatens to drive us into a war against Iran.<sup>19</sup> In other words, real Americans are being killed because other Americans, whose primary loyalty is to the Jewish nation, are

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<sup>10</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 12. Walt and Mearsheimer quote two sources – including a full book on the War for Independence – to substantiate their charges of Jewish rape during the 1948 war. Neither source gives any indication whatsoever that the Israeli army adopted rape as either an official or unofficial policy. (One source does not mention a single incidence of rape; the other mentions one confirmed rape – for which the perpetrators were put on trial – and another attempted rape.) The emphasis that Walt and Mearsheimer put on “rapes by Jews” is therefore not only bizarre and unsettling, but also completely unwarranted.

<sup>12</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 42.

<sup>15</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, pp. 10, 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, pp. 31-35.

<sup>19</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, pp. 38-40.

manipulating America's political, media, academic and cultural leaders, as well as ordinary American citizens. American Jews who support Israel – even in a critical way – are thus being disloyal to the United States by placing the interests of a foreign state above the interests of their own country.

If these charges sound familiar, it is because, as I will show, they can be found on the websites of extremists of the hard right, like David Duke, and the hard left, like Alexander Cockburn. They appear daily in the Arab and Muslim press. They are contemporary variations on old themes such as those promulgated in the notorious czarist forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, in the Nazi and America First literature of the 1930s and early '40s,<sup>20</sup> and in the propaganda pamphlets of the Soviet Union.

In essence, the working paper is little more than a compilation of old, false, and authoritatively discredited charges dressed up in academic garb. The only thing new about it is the imprimatur these recycled assertions have now been given by the prominence of its authors and their institutional affiliations. As David Duke observed: “The Harvard report contains little new information. I and a few other American commentators have for years been making the same assertions as this new paper.”<sup>21</sup> It

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<sup>20</sup> Compare Walt and Mearsheimer's accusations to those of the America First Committee and Charles Lindbergh prior to America's entrance into World War II. Lindbergh traveled the country arguing that loyal Americans opposed war with Germany, while Jewish “war agitators” exerted undue influence to push American into the European conflict. On September 11, 1941, Lindbergh warned, “Instead of agitating for war, the Jewish groups in this country should be opposing it in every possible way for they will be among the first to feel its consequences.... A few far-sighted Jewish people realize this and stand opposed to intervention. But the majority still do not. Their greatest danger to this country lies in their large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio, and our government.” Charles Lindbergh, “Who Are the War Agitators,” Speech delivered in Des Moines, Sept. 11, 1941 (found in Philip Roth, “Postscript,” *The Plot Against America* (Houghton Mifflin: New York, 2004), p. 387.

<sup>21</sup> David Duke, “A Real Breakthrough in the Battle for the Truth!,” *DavidDuke.com*, March 20, 2006, accessible at <http://www.davidduke.com/?p=501>. I never thought I would quote David Duke, but in this instance he is factually correct.

“validates every major point I [Duke] have been making.”<sup>22</sup> It should have been easily predictable – especially to “realists” – that their “Harvard report” would be featured, as it has been, on neo-Nazi and extremist websites, and even by terrorist organizations, and that it would be used by overt anti-Semites to “validate” their paranoid claims of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy.<sup>23</sup>

One of the authors of this paper has acknowledged that “none of the evidence [in their paper] represents original documentation or is derived from independent interviews”<sup>24</sup> – a surprising admission, considering that professors at great universities are judged by the originality of their research. Moreover, the paper is filled with errors and distortions that should be obvious to any critical reader, all of which are directed against Israel and the Jewish Lobby. As I will show, there are at least three major types of errors: First, quotations are wrenched out of context (for example, the authors distort a Ben-Gurion quote to make him appear to favor evacuation of Arabs by “brutal compulsion,”<sup>25</sup> when he actually said that, because an evacuation would require “brutal compulsion,” it should not become “part of our programme”<sup>26</sup>). Second, facts are misstated (for example, that Israeli citizenship is based on “blood kinship,”<sup>27</sup> thus confusing Israel’s law of citizenship with its Law of Return; fully a quarter of Israel’s

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<sup>22</sup> Eli Lake, “David Duke Claims To Be Vindicated by a Harvard Dean,” *New York Sun*, March 20, 2006, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> An addition to David Duke’s accolades, the paper’s most vocal supporters and distributors have been Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. Charles A. Radin, “‘Israel Lobby’ Critique Roils Academe,” *Boston Globe*, March 29, 2006; Eli Lake, “David Duke Claims to be Vindicated by a Harvard Dean,” *New York Sun*, March 20, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Ori Nir, “Professor Says American Publisher Turned Him Down,” *Forward*, March 24, 2006, accessible at <http://www.forward.com/articles/7550>.

<sup>25</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims* (New York: Vintage, 2001), p. 169 ((found in Alex Safian, “Study Decrying ‘Israel Lobby’ Marred by Numerous Errors,” *CAMERA.org*, March 22, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 9.

citizens are not Jewish). And third, embarrassingly poor logic is employed (for example, whenever America and Israel act on a common interest, it must be the result of pressure from “the Lobby,” and that “the mere existence of the Lobby” is proof that “support for Israel is not in the American national interest”<sup>28</sup>).

In light of its many errors and the admission that their paper contains nothing original, it is fair to ask why these distinguished professors would have chosen to publish a paper that does not meet their usual scholarly standards, especially given the obvious risk that recycling these old but explosive charges under the imprimatur of prominent authors and their universities would be seized on by bigots to promote their anti-Semitic agendas.

As an advocate of free speech and an opponent of censorship based on political correctness, I welcome a serious, balanced, objective study of the influences of lobbies — including Israeli lobbies — on American foreign policy. I also welcome reasoned, contextual and comparative criticism of Israeli policies and actions. Let the marketplace of ideas remain open to all. But, as I will show, this study is so filled with distortions, so empty of originality or new evidence, so tendentious in its tone, so lacking in nuance and balance, so unscholarly in its approach, so riddled with obvious factual errors that could easily have been checked (but obviously were not), and so dependent on biased, extremist and anti-American sources, as to raise the question of motive: what would motivate two well recognized academics to depart so grossly from their usual standards of academic

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<sup>28</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 43.

writing and research in order to produce a “study paper” that contributes so little to the existing scholarship while being so susceptible to misuse?

Academics do not generally respond to the kinds of assertions and accusations made on hate sites.<sup>29</sup> But because of the academic setting in which the Walt-Mearsheimer paper appears, I feel compelled to respond in detail and to these recycled charges and to demonstrate how the paper fails the most basic tests of scholarship and accuracy.

In this paper, I expressly raise questions about motive. As I have argued elsewhere, the issue of motive is a legitimate concern of scholarship,<sup>30</sup> especially to “realists” who often look behind rationales for the actual reasons that underlie actions.<sup>31</sup> This is especially so when the Walt-Mearsheimer paper itself questions the motives and loyalties of others, and when so many critics of the paper have raised the question of motive.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> I am frequently attacked on these web sites, but I do not respond. Here, my own colleague accused me of being part of this anti-American conspiracy – they call me an “apologist” for Israel (p.11) – despite my frequent criticisms of specific Israeli policies and my opposition to the war in Iraq. For example, in my most recent book on the Middle East, called *The Case for Peace*, I air disagreements and grievances with many Israeli policies, and I advocate many positions different from those supported by the Israeli government. See, e.g., Alan Dershowitz, *The Case for Peace: How the Arab-Israeli Conflict Can Be Resolved* (Wiley: Hoboken, 2005), p. 12 (“But by announcing that Maale Adumim will be expanded in the direction of Jerusalem before a final agreement is reached, the Israeli government has usurped a bargaining chip from the Palestinians and engendered distrust among some Palestinian moderates.”).

<sup>30</sup> See Alan M. Dershowitz, *Supreme Injustice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 110-11.

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?: Toward a Diplomacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Simon & Schuster: New York, 2001) (“realism” in international relations); Jerome Frank, *Law and the Modern Mind* (Doubleday, New York, 1963) (“legal realism”).

<sup>32</sup> See Max Boot, “Policy Analysis – Paranoid Style,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 2006; Michael B. Oren, “Tinfoil Hats in Harvard Yard,” *The New Republic*, April 10, 2006; Richard Baehr and Ed Lasky, “Stephen Walt’s War with Israel,” *American Thinker*, March 20, 2006, accessible at [http://www.americanthinker.com/articles.php?article\\_id=5342](http://www.americanthinker.com/articles.php?article_id=5342); Daniel W. Drezner, “Trying for the Full Huntington,” *DanielDrezner.com*, March 17, 2006, accessible at <http://www.danieldrezner.com/archives/002636.html>; and David Bernstein, “Mearsheimer and Walt—

I have requested the Kennedy School to distribute this counter working paper on its website and to give it the same circulation and prominence as the original paper. Dean David Ellwood has graciously acceded to this request. I am confident that we share a commitment to the open marketplace of ideas as a vehicle to establish the validity or falsehood of ideas.

I have had only a few days to write this preliminary response to a paper that took much more time to produce, and so my response is truly a “working paper” — a work in progress. But because of the attention the original paper has received, it is essential to publish and circulate this response as soon as possible. I hope that readers will be stimulated by my work to do research of their own to test my points as well as those of Mearsheimer and Walt. My reply is not meant to be exhaustive; I address only the central points, beginning with the charge that “the Lobby” exists to undercut the interests of the United States on behalf of an antagonistic foreign power.

### The Lobby

Who belongs to “the Lobby”? Walt and Mearsheimer acknowledge that the lobby is not monolithic in its composition.<sup>33</sup> They point to extremists on the religious and political right as included in this Lobby,<sup>34</sup> though they consciously omit non-Jewish liberal supporters of Israel, ranging from Senators Edward Kennedy and Evan Bayh to former President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore to Father Robert Drinan and

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Arrogance, Not Anti-Semitism,” *Volokh Conspiracy*, March 28, 2006, accessible at [http://volokh.com/archives/archive\\_2006\\_03\\_26-2006\\_04\\_01.shtml#1143570237](http://volokh.com/archives/archive_2006_03_26-2006_04_01.shtml#1143570237).

<sup>33</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 15.

Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Yet they claim that the Lobby is single-minded in its pursuit of Israel's interests over that of the United States.<sup>35</sup>

Walt and Mearsheimer include in their catalogue of "Lobby"-ists: journalists Robert Kagan, William Kristol, and Charles Krauthammer<sup>36</sup>; Princeton professor Bernard Lewis<sup>37</sup>; Clinton administration diplomats Dennis Ross and Martin Indyk<sup>38</sup>; Bush staffers Scooter Libby and Paul Wolfowitz<sup>39</sup>; Democratic Senator Joseph Lieberman<sup>40</sup> and Congressman Eliot Engel<sup>41</sup>; former Republic Congressman Dick Armey<sup>42</sup>; the Brookings Institute and just about every other major think tank.<sup>43</sup> *The New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* are willing members of the conspiracy,<sup>44</sup> whereas CNN and NPR are being dragged into it by pressure from Jewish donors and letter writers.<sup>45</sup> This explains why, according to Mearsheimer and Walt, "the American media contains few criticisms of Israeli policies."<sup>46</sup> This statement will sound especially bizarre to anyone who regularly reads the *The New York Times*, which is frequently critical of Israel, and whose editorial

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<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., page 16-17, noting the two-fold goals of all Lobby members:

"The Lobby pursues two broad strategies to promote U.S. support for Israel. First, it wields significant influence in Washington, pressuring both Congress and the Executive branch to support Israel down the line. Whatever an individual lawmaker or policymaker's own views, the Lobby tries to make supporting Israel the "smart" political choice.... Second, the Lobby strives to ensure that public discourse about Israel portrays it in a positive light, by repeating myths about Israel and its founding and by publicizing Israel's side in the policy debates of the day. The goal is to prevent critical commentary about Israel from getting a fair hearing in the political arena. Controlling the debate is essential to guaranteeing U.S. support, because a candid discussion of U.S.-Israeli relations might lead Americans to favor a different policy."

<sup>36</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 33.

<sup>37</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 32.

<sup>38</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p.19.

<sup>39</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 32.

<sup>40</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 17.

<sup>43</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>44</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

board seems particularly antagonistic toward the Likud Party, which dominated Israeli politics during the period under discussion by the authors.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, some members of the so-called Lobby organized a boycott of *The New York Times* for its perceived bias against Israel.<sup>48</sup> A careful review of other media outlets that are allegedly part of the Lobby will also show repeated criticism of specific Israeli policies. Mearsheimer and Walt are demonstrably wrong when they assert that “the American media contains few criticisms of Israeli policies.”

They are also wrong when they say that the Lobby conspires to manipulate the U.S. government into making war on Arab and Muslim nations. Never mind that the chief figures in the Bush Administration responsible for the Iraq war, including the President, the Vice President, both Secretaries of State, and the Secretary of Defense, are all non-Jewish. A pesky detail like that can be explained away by the claim that America’s top politicians are all heavily “influenced by the neoconservatives” (read: Jews),<sup>49</sup> and pressured by Jewish congressional staffers<sup>50</sup> into doing Israel’s bidding, even though it is

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<sup>47</sup> For example, the *Times*’s masthead editorial following Hamas’s January electoral victory placed at least partial responsibility on Ariel Sharon. “Israeli hard-liners can blame themselves as well. Even though most reasonable people have recognized Mr. Abbas as a far more pragmatic negotiating partner than Yasir Arafat was, Prime Minister Sharon failed to give Mr. Abbas any concession that he could point to as an achievement. Instead, Israel has busied itself with carrying out Mr. Sharon’s doctrine of unilateral separation from the Palestinians, a doctrine that is sure to gain more favor now that the Palestinians have chosen Hamas.” “In the Mideast, a Giant Step Back,” *The New York Times*, January 27, 2006. The *Times* was originally so anti-Zionist that it refused to accept a paid advertisement from a pro-Israel group in 1946. Gay Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power* (Laurel: New York, 1986), p. 112. According to Gay Talese’s history of the *Times*, the editorial page eventually became “a supporter of Israel in wars with the Arabs, but critical of some Israeli territorial ambitions and actions following the victories.” *Id.* at 97.

<sup>48</sup> See “Rabbi Lookstein and The New York Times,” *The Jewish Press*, June 20, 2001.

<sup>49</sup> Walt & Mearsheimer, p. 32.

<sup>50</sup> Walt and Mearsheimer write: “Pro-Israel congressional staffers are another source of the Lobby’s power. As Morris Amitay, a former head of AIPAC, once admitted, ‘There are a lot of guys at the working level up here [on Capitol Hill] ... who happen to be Jewish, who are willing ... to look at certain issues in terms of their Jewishness.... These are all guys who are in a position to make the decision in these areas for those senators.... You can get an awful lot done just at the staff level’” (p.17). Quoting a Jewish source for this

against the interests of the United States.<sup>51</sup> As the conclusion warns, “American leaders” must “distance themselves from the Lobby” in order to act in a manner “more consistent with broader U.S. interests.”<sup>52</sup>

The reality, of course, is that the so-called members of “the Lobby” have little in common with each other, except for a preference for democracy over tyranny, belief in Israel’s strategic importance to the United States, support for an endangered American ally, commitment to the survival of a small democracy in which Jewish culture can thrive, and the recognition of the need for one nation that will always be open to Jews threatened with discrimination and persecution in a world with continuing if not increasing anti-Semitism. As Brett Stephens explained why the *Wall Street Journal*’s Robert Bartley — a moderate Christian — supported Israel:

He supported Israel for much the same reason he supported Great Britain, Poland and Taiwan – because they were friends of the United States, because they were democracies, because they were places where his core beliefs in free men and free markets held sway. In this respect, and like so many of us who are friends of the Jewish state, he was not privy to an Israeli conspiracy but part of an American consensus.<sup>53</sup>

Some supporters of Israel are of the left and support extensive territorial compromise and a two state solution. Others are of the right and favor more limited steps. Some are secular, others religious. Some are Democrats, others Republican. Some supported the war in Iraq, while others – a majority of Jews – opposed it. They have no more in

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preposterous claim — that Jewish staffers place their loyalty to Israel over the loyalty to their own country — is part of a process of ethnic identification that I will examine later in this paper.

<sup>51</sup> “In short,” the paper states, “Sharon and the Lobby took on the President of the United States and triumphed” (p. 29).

<sup>52</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 40.

<sup>53</sup> Bret Stephens, “The Israel Conspiracy,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 2006.

common with each other than do “members” of the anti-Israel lobby, which includes David Duke, Pat Buchanan, Noam Chomsky, Alexander Cockburn, numerous Arab and Muslim organizations, some church groups and now the authors of this working paper.

Indeed, there are many lobbies that support diverse approaches to the Arab-Israeli conflict, just as there are many lobbies with differing perspectives on Cuba, China, North Korea, and Russia. Among the powerful lobbies related to the Middle East are the American oil lobby, the Saudi lobby, the lobbies for the Emirates, and various church groups that urge divestiture against Israel. AIPAC – to its credit – has been an influential lobby. So have others. When Saudi lobbyists have clashed with the Israel lobby, the Saudi lobby has often won. For example, the Israel lobby was no match against the Saudi lobby in securing the \$8.5 billion sale of American Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) jets to Saudi Arabia, over strong Israeli objection.<sup>54</sup> The chief lobbyist for the Saudis, until recently, was Prince Bandar bin Sultan, who was described as “so close to the President's father, George H. W. Bush, that he was considered almost a member of the family,”<sup>55</sup> and was nicknamed “Bandar Bush” by the President’s family.<sup>56</sup> And yet Walt and Mearsheimer omit any reference to competing lobbies.

The paper is filled with thinly veiled charges of Jewish control of American thought. The authors refer to Jewish “manipulation” and “influence” over American

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<sup>54</sup> “News Summary,” *The New York Times*, October 30, 1981. The AWACS episode was accompanied by similar charges that a “Jewish Lobby” harbored undue influence in Congress. See James G. Abourezk, “The Power of Washington’s Israel Lobby,” *The New York Times*, November 8, 1981.

<sup>55</sup> Elsa Walsh, “The Prince: How the Saudi Ambassador Became Washington’s Indispensable Operator,” *New Yorker*, March 24, 2003.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Baer, “The Fall of the House of Saud,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1, 2003; Maureen Dowd, “A Golden Couple Chasing Away a Black Cloud,” *The New York Times*, November 27, 2002; Brian Knowlton, “Saudi Ambassador’s Absence From U.S. Draws Questions,” *International Herald Tribune*, June 30, 2005.

media and government thirty-four times. They identify an American-Jewish lobbying group as a “*de facto* agent for a foreign government,” of having a “stranglehold” over American policy, and of “controlling the debate.”<sup>57</sup> These charges are indistinguishable from Pat Buchanan’s invocation of the U.S. government as Israel’s “amen corner” and his reference to Congress as “Israeli Occupied Territory,”<sup>58</sup> allegations, among others, that led William F. Buckley to characterize Buchanan’s views as “amount[ing] to anti-Semitism.”<sup>59</sup>

Mearsheimer and Walt go out of their way to deny that their paper’s dominant thesis is similar to the notorious anti-Semitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.<sup>60</sup> They bring up the *Protocols* to distance themselves from it — while generally adhering to a variation on its conspiratorial theme. Again, listen to Bret Stephens in the *Wall Street Journal*:

[T]he gist of the Mearsheimer-Walt hypothesis should be clear. So should its pedigree. The authors are at pains to note that the Israel Lobby is by no means exclusively Jewish, and that not every American Jew is a part of it. Fair enough. But has there ever been an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory that does not share its basic features? Dual loyalty, disloyalty, manipulation of the media, financial manipulation of the political system, duping the *goyim* (gentiles) and getting them to fight their wars, sponsoring and covering up acts of gratuitous cruelty

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<sup>57</sup> Consider their word choice. “AIPAC, which is a *de facto* agent for a foreign government, has a stranglehold on the U.S. Congress” (p. 18). Listen to the language: “agent for a foreign government” and “stranglehold.” It sounds more like a hate speech web site than an academic essay. And read this cryptic sentence: “Controlling the debate is essential to guaranteeing U.S. support, because a candid discussion of U.S.-Israeli relations might lead Americans to favor a different policy” (pp. 16-17).

<sup>58</sup> “Pat Buchanan In His Own Words,” Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting, February 26, 1996, accessible at <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=2553>.

<sup>59</sup> William F. Buckley Jr., *In Search of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 44.

<sup>60</sup> They write, “The Lobby’s activities are not the sort of conspiracy depicted in anti-Semitic tracts like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*” (p. 16).

against an innocent people – every canard ever alleged of the Jews is here made about the Israel Lobby and its cause.<sup>61</sup>

As an added precaution, the authors preemptively accuse the Lobby of indiscriminately crying anti-Semitism: “Anyone who criticizes Israeli actions or says that pro-Israel groups have significant influence over U.S. Middle East policy ... stands a good chance of getting labeled an anti-Semite.”<sup>62</sup> “In other words criticize Israeli policy and you are by definition an anti-Semite.”<sup>63</sup> This is demonstrably false, though it is a charge made frequently in the hate literature.<sup>64</sup> Several years ago, I challenged those who made similar accusations to identify a single Jewish leader who equated mere criticism of Israeli policy with anti-Semitism.<sup>65</sup> No one accepted my challenge, because no Jewish leader has made such an absurd claim. Among the harshest critics of Israeli policy are Jews and Israelis. Just read the mainstream Israel and Jewish-American press<sup>66</sup> - a research task that Mearsheimer and Walt should have but did not undertake before they

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<sup>61</sup> Bret Stephens, “The Israel Conspiracy,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 2006.

<sup>62</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 24.

<sup>63</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 25.

<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., Osama bin Laden, “Full Text: bin Laden’s ‘Letter to America,’” *The Guardian Online*, accessible at [www.observer.co.uk/worldview/story/0,11581,845757,00.html](http://www.observer.co.uk/worldview/story/0,11581,845757,00.html) (“Anyone who disputes with them on this alleged fact is accused of anti-Semitism.”). John Lynch, “Israel: A racist state for Jews-only!,” National Socialist Movement Northwest, accessible at <http://www.nukeisrael.com/al.htm>.

<sup>65</sup> Alan Dershowitz, “The New Big Lie,” *The Jerusalem Post*, October 24, 2002 (“But the reality is that in the many years that I have been speaking about the Arab-Israeli conflict, I have never heard anyone ever actually label a mere critic of Israel or Sharon as anti-Semitic. Nor have I ever heard mere criticism of Israel described as anti-Semitism. Yet the big lie persists. Holocaust scholar Susannah Heschel has made the following charge: ‘We often hear that criticism of Israel is equivalent to anti-Semitism.’ Tikkun editor Michael has made a similar charge, as has Harvard professor Paul Hanson. I hereby challenge anyone who claims that mere criticism of Israel is ‘often’ labeled anti-Semitism to document that charge with actual quotations, in context, with the source of the statements identified. I am not talking about the occasional kook who writes an anonymous postcard or e-mail. I am talking about mainstream supporters of Israel who, it is claimed, have ‘often’ equated criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism.”).

<sup>66</sup> For recent, harsh criticism of Israel and Israeli policy, see, e.g., Leonard Fein, “Zionists Without Umbilical Cords,” *The Forward*, March 16, 2006; Zvi Bar’el, “Let Hamas Do Its Work,” *Ha’aretz*, March 31, 2006.

falsely generalized about its content. Mearsheimer and Walt's straw-man argument — which, if true, would make me and other critical supporters of Israel anti-Semites — simply does not stand up to scrutiny.

Nor are Mearsheimer and Walt merely criticizing Israeli policies, or even Israel itself. They are very explicitly targeting American *Jews*: “The core of the Lobby is comprised of American Jews who make a significant effort in their daily lives to bend U.S. foreign policy so that it advances Israel’s interests” over those of the United States.<sup>67</sup> In one of the paper’s more peculiar passages, the authors try to refute the allegation that anti-Semitism is on the rise in France by pointing out that “85 percent of practicing French Catholics reject the charge that Jews have too much influence in business and finance.”<sup>68</sup> By citing this strange statistic — very few French people are, in fact, practicing Catholics — they seem to be acknowledging that those who do argue that Jews have too much influence may well be making a bigoted argument.

The fact is that anti-Semitism is on the rise in France, as evidenced by a recent poll showing that sixty-four percent of French citizens themselves (not limited to, but including, “practicing French Catholics”) “think anti-semitism is on the rise in France.”<sup>69</sup> The *New York Times* recently reported on “an undeniable problem: anti-Semitism among France’s second generation immigrant youth...” It headlined its story “Jews in France feel sting as anti-Semitism surges among children of immigrants,” and it documented “the deteriorating climate” that “has led thousands of French Jews to move to Israel in the

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<sup>67</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 14.

<sup>68</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 25.

<sup>69</sup> “France: Community leaders Believe Anti-Semitic Assaults are Symptoms of a Growing Problem with Racism: In Numbers,” *The Guardian (London)*, March 21, 2006 (“64 % of French people think anti-semitism is on the rise in France, according to a survey published by Paris Match this month.”)

past five years....”<sup>70</sup> Yet Mearsheimer and Walt insist on denying the “undeniable,” because a rise in anti-Semitism would undercut their thesis of an all-powerful Jewish cabal.

Regardless, the real trouble with the paper is that it presents a conspiratorial view of history. This type of paranoid worldview, in which Jews manipulate and control the media and government, is not the sort of argument one would expect from prominent academics. It more closely resembles what Professor Richard Hofstadter described in “The Paranoid Style of American Politics,” in which extremists on both the far right and the far left harbor exaggerated fantasies about an individual demographic group’s influence.<sup>71</sup> Prominent among the hard-right Jewish conspiracy theorists are David Duke and Pat Buchanan, and on the hard left are Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein, and Alexander Cockburn. Their hateful views are consistent with other types of conspiracy theories spouted by those who, for instance, blame all of their own and America’s

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<sup>70</sup> Craig S. Smith, “Jews in France Feel Sting as Anti-Semitism Surges Among Children of Immigrants,” *New York Times*, March 26, 2006, p. 12 (Emphasis added.) See also, Craig S. Smith, “World Leaders Gather for Auschwitz Ceremony,” *The New York Times*, January 27, 2005 (“That commitment is all the more critical now because a growing number of Europe’s young Muslims are resisting, even rejecting, efforts to teach them about the Holocaust, arguing that there is not enough attention paid to the killing of innocent Muslims by Israel or the United States-led coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan.... Teachers are reluctant to teach about the Holocaust in some schools, particularly in France, Belgium and Denmark.”); Janine Zacharia, “A Nation Scorned; Eretz Acharet,” *Foreign Policy*, May 1, 2005 (“One need look no further than recent history for evidence. A report issued by the U.S. State Department in January noted the rise in anti-Semitic incidents in Europe since 2000.”).

<sup>71</sup> “In the history of the United States one find it [paranoid-style politics], for example, in the anti-Masonic movement, the nativist and anti-Catholic movement, in certain spokesmen of abolitionism who regarded the United States as being in the grip of a slaveholders’ conspiracy, in many alarmists about the Mormons, in some Greenback and Populist writers who constructed a great conspiracy of international bankers, in the exposure of a munitions makers’ conspiracy of World War I, in the popular left-wing press, in the contemporary American right wing, and on both sides of the race controversy today, among White Citizens’ Councils and Black Muslims.” Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics,” accessible at [http://karws.gso.uri.edu/jfk/conspiracy\\_theory/the\\_paranoid\\_mentality/the\\_paranoid\\_style.html](http://karws.gso.uri.edu/jfk/conspiracy_theory/the_paranoid_mentality/the_paranoid_style.html). The essay is referenced and related to the Walt-Mearsheimer paper in: Max Boot, “Policy Analysis – Paranoid Style,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 2006.

economic troubles on immigrants, or those who blame all crime on African-Americans, those who blame a perceived cultural decline on gays, or moral decline on secular humanists. The sort of people who articulate such views might defend themselves against charges of prejudice by insisting that they do not believe that *all* immigrants are harmful to America, or that *all* blacks violate the law. But just because a person believes there are some exceptions to his pejorative generalizations does not erase the underlying prejudice.

There are three areas of the Mearsheimer-Walt paper that I will address in more detail: their method of scholarship, their marshalling of facts, and their logical analysis.

### **Scholarship**

Mearsheimer and Walt rely heavily on discredited allegations and out of context quotations found on extremist, disreputable sources, including well-known hate websites. It is ironic that in support of the proposition that American Jews are disloyal *to America*, Mearsheimer and Walt cite *America haters* who classify our country as the leader of the real axis of evil, who call America a worse terrorist organization than al Qaeda, and who claim that we deserved what happened to us on September 11.

Consider some of the sources. Mearsheimer and Walt favorably cite Cockburn's *CounterPunch.org* on four different occasions. Cockburn is best known for his anti-American charges (he referred to "the shared enthusiasm of the Führer and all U.S. Presidents (with the possible exception of Warren Harding) for mass murder as an

appropriate expression of national policy”<sup>72</sup> and for airing accusations that Israel may have been complicit in September 11, ultimately concluding that he is not sure “whether [the charges] are true or not.”<sup>73</sup> They cite Noam Chomsky and Norman Finkelstein three times apiece. Chomsky has repeatedly expressed hatred for the United States, making such claims as: “[i]f the Nuremberg laws were applied today, then every Post-War American president would have to be hanged.”<sup>74</sup> Finkelstein’s anti-Americanism has led him to support Hezbollah and to blame the United States for September 11: “[W]e [the U.S.] deserve the problem on our hands because some things Bin Laden says are true.”<sup>75</sup> On the question of Palestinian refugees, Mearsheimer and Walt cite Finkelstein’s for the absurd proposition that Israel essentially started the War of Independence in order to ethnically cleanse its land of Palestinians.<sup>76</sup> Why would serious academics choose to cite as an authority on the contentious refugee issue a man who is not an expert on Israel and who wrote a book that the *New York Times Book Review* called “irrational and insidious” and a “conspiracy theory”?<sup>77</sup> This is a man whom the *Washington Post* has described as “a writer celebrated by neo-Nazi groups for his Holocaust revisionism and comparisons

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<sup>72</sup> Alexander Cockburn, “Bush as Hitler? Let’s Be Fair,” *Nation*, January 26, 2004, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> Franklin Foer, “Relativity Theory; Alexander Cockburn’s Dubious Theories,” *New Republic*, April 22, 2002, p. 12.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in “Who Runs America? Forty Minutes with Noam Chomsky,” *Boston Phoenix*, April 1-8, 1999, accessible at [http://www.bostonphoenix.com/archive/features/99/04/01/NOAM\\_CHOMSKY.html](http://www.bostonphoenix.com/archive/features/99/04/01/NOAM_CHOMSKY.html).

<sup>75</sup> Don Atapattu, “How to Lose Friends and Alienate People: A Conversation with Professor Norman Finkelstein,” *CounterPunch*, December 13, 2001, accessible at <http://www.counterpunch.org/finkelstein1.html>.

<sup>76</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt assert that Israel was always intent on ridding its land of all Arabs and that the “opportunity came in 1947-48, when Jewish forces drove up to 700,000 Palestinians into exile” (p. 10). They fail to mention that the War of Independence was thrust on Israel by the decision of the surrounding Arab countries to invade the new state and destroy it. They cite Finkelstein (footnote 35) in support of the ahistoric claim that the entire refugee problem was a product of Israeli’s willful “design.”

<sup>77</sup> Omer Bartov, “A Tale of Two Holocausts,” *New York Times*, August 6, 2000, p. 8.

of Israel to Nazi Germany.”<sup>78</sup> University of Chicago historian Peter Novick had it exactly right when he said Finkelstein’s so-called scholarship — which he says includes made up quotes and sources — is a “twenty-first century updating of the ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion.’”<sup>79</sup> Novick continued:

As concerns particular assertions made by Finkelstein . . . the appropriate response is not (exhilarating) debate but (tedious) examination of his footnotes. Such an examination reveals that many of those assertions are pure invention. . . . No facts alleged by Finkelstein should be assumed to be really facts, no quotation in his book should be assumed to be accurate, without taking the time to carefully compare his claims with the sources he cites.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Marc Fisher, “Campus Should Cultivate Its Seeds of Debate,” *Washington Post*, December 3, 2002.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Novick, “Offene Fenster und Tueren. Ueber Norman Finkelsteins Kreuzzug,” in Petra Steinberger, ed., *Die Finkelstein-Debatte* (München: Piper Verlag, 2001), p. 159 (translated from the German). Moreover, on several occasions, the authors cite quotations to their primary sources, when it’s obvious that they did not find the materials there. For example, the authors cull a single quotation that originally appeared on pages 401-403 of Max Frankel’s biography, *The Times of My Life and My Life with The Times*. (“I was much more deeply devoted to Israel than I dared to assert.”) It is the type of quotation that pops up regularly on radical conspiracy theory web sites that assert the same sort of Jewish domination of the media as Mearsheimer and Walt allege. Clearly the authors did not read Max Frankel’s autobiography, but rather came across the quotation somewhere far less reputable. On at least one occasion, they quote to the primary source incorrectly. Though they cite to page 99 of the Steve Cox translation of Nahum Goldmann’s *The Jewish Paradox*, the quotation that Walt and Mearsheimer use is not from Cox’s and Goldmann’s book. Rather than citing to where they actually found the quotation, the authors simply copied a citation without checking the source they were citing. A few years ago, Finkelstein accused me of “plagiarism” on the basis of his claim that I cited to original sources, rather than to the secondary sources from which he (erroneously) believed I had initially found some of my quotations. In other words, Walt and Mearsheimer did exactly what Finkelstein accused me of doing. (The claim that citing to original sources amounts to plagiarism is patently ridiculous, and it was promptly refuted by quick reference to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, as well by investigations conducted by Harvard University, *The New York Times*, a former president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a score of librarians and professors.) Nor was I ever accused of taking quotations out of context in any way. I note that Finkelstein has not raised any “plagiarism” charges against Walt and Mearsheimer, either because he realizes that the accusation is utterly absurd, or because he has a double standard when it comes to criticizing his ideological soul mates. I suspect that both reasons play a part in his decision to remain silent. Finkelstein, who has made a career out of falsely maligning the academic integrity of nearly every prominent Holocaust historian and supporter of Israel’s right to exist (including Elie Wiesel, whom Finkelstein has called a “liar,” “cheater,” “clown,” “ridiculous character,” and “wimp”) never criticizes the citation form of his ideological allies.

<sup>80</sup> Peter Novick, “Offene Fenster und Tueren. Ueber Norman Finkelsteins Kreuzzug,” in Petra Steinberger, ed., *Die Finkelstein-Debatte* (München: Piper Verlag, 2001), p. 159 (translated from the German).

If there were other, more reputable sources, they would not have had to dig through recycled trash to support their untenable assertions.

Mearsheimer and Walt do not make up quotes, but they wrench them out of context. They twice quote David Ben-Gurion so out of context that they make him appear to be saying the exact opposite of what he actually did say. First, the authors have Ben-Gurion saying, “After the formation of a large army in the wake of the establishment of the state, we shall abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine.”<sup>81</sup> The clear implication is that this would be done by force. Yet, in a follow-up question to that statement, Ben-Gurion was asked whether he meant to achieve this “By force as well?” He responded in the negative. “Through mutual understanding and Jewish-Arab agreement.”<sup>82</sup> Yet, Mearsheimer and Walt omit this important qualifying answer. Ben-Gurion is then quoted by Mearsheimer and Walt as saying that “it is impossible to imagine general evacuation [of the Arab population] without compulsion, and brutal compulsion,”<sup>83</sup> making it seem as if Ben-Gurion was advocating a “brutal compulsion.” But they omit what Ben-Gurion said after that: “but we should in no way make it part of our programme.”<sup>84</sup> By omitting Ben-Gurion’s critical conclusions, they falsely suggest that Ben-Gurion was proposing the opposite of what he said. There are only two possible explanations for these pregnant omissions: either they were unaware of the context of the

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<sup>81</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 10.

<sup>82</sup> Efraim Karsh, “Falsifying the Record: Benny Morris, David Ben-Gurion, and the ‘Transfer’ Idea,” *Israel Affairs*, vol. 4, no. 2, winter 1997, at p. 52 ((found in Alex Safian, “Study Decrying ‘Israel Lobby’ Marred by Numerous Errors,” *CAMERA.org*, March 22, 2006).

<sup>83</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 10.

<sup>84</sup> Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims* (New York: Vintage, 2001), p. 169 ((found in Alex Safian, “Study Decrying ‘Israel Lobby’ Marred by Numerous Errors,” *CAMERA.org*, March 22, 2006). Ben-Gurion, of course, had no objection to other nations, such as Britain or the United States, pressuring the Palestinians to leave.

quotes because they read only the misleading excerpts ripped out of context by the biased sources in which they found them it but did not cite; or they themselves made the decision to misuse the quotes so as to mislead the reader. The burden is on them to tell us which it is.

These particular quotations from Ben Gurion appears on several hard-left or hate sites, where they are always wrenched out of context to make it appear that he said the opposite of what he actually said.<sup>85</sup> The same is true of other quotations, also taken out of context. For example, the Max Frankel quotations are trumpeted on holywar.org, a website which claims that “Israel is a Satanic state.”<sup>86</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt quote Ehud Barak as saying that “had he been born a Palestinian, he ‘would have joined a terrorist organization.’”<sup>87</sup> This quote, too, appears on many hard-left websites,<sup>88</sup> and

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<sup>85</sup> See, e.g., “‘Transfer’ (Ethnic Cleansing) Zionist Quotes,” PalestineRemembered.com: The Home Of All Ethnically Cleansed Palestinians, December 3, 2001, accessible at <http://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Famous-Zionist-Quotes/Story694.html>; Phil Gasper, “Israel: Colonial-settler state,” *International Socialist Review*, December 2000-January 2001, accessible at [http://www.isreview.org/issues/15/israel\\_colonial.shtml](http://www.isreview.org/issues/15/israel_colonial.shtml); and Remi Kanazi, “Transferring The Truth,” *Palestine Chronicle*, July 2, 2005, accessible at <http://palestinechronicle.com/story.php?sid=20050702064103835>.

<sup>86</sup> See “Jewish Influence in the Mass Media,” accessible at <http://holywar.org/jewishtr/24media3.htm>.

<sup>87</sup> Walt & Mearsheimer, p. 13.

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g., “From the Horses Mouth,” *Guerrilla News Network*, February 7, 2005, accessible at <http://guerrillanews.com/users/user.php?bid=3914>; “More Quotes,” MonaBaker.com, accessible at <http://www.monabaker.com/quotes.htm>; “On Ethnic Cleansing and the Solution of the Arab Question,” *SocialistViewpoint*, September 2003, accessible at [http://www.socialistviewpoint.org/sept\\_03/sept\\_03\\_18.html](http://www.socialistviewpoint.org/sept_03/sept_03_18.html); Stephen R. Shalom, “Background to the Israel-Palestine Crisis,” *Z Magazine*, May 2002, accessible at <http://www.zmag.org/shalom-meqa.htm>. Mona Baker, an Egyptian-born professor at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST), caused a firestorm of controversy when, in 2002, she fired two Israeli nationals from two scholarly journals based solely on their nationality. One was Miriam Schlesinger, a former chairman of Amnesty International’s Israel chapter. Baker told the Sunday Telegraph that “Israel has gone beyond just war crimes. It is horrific what is going on there. Many of us would like to talk about it as some kind of Holocaust which the world will eventually wake up to, much too late, of course, as they did with the last one.” Charlotte Edwardes, “Fury as Academics Are Sacked for Being Israeli; American Scholar Leads Condemnation of ‘Repellant’ British Action,” *Sunday Telegraph* (London), July 7, 2002.

omits his condemnation of terrorism.<sup>89</sup> The same goes for the Ben-Gurion quote, “If I were an Arab leader I would never make terms with Israel.”<sup>90</sup> And the quotation of Morris Amitay, about how Jewish Congressional staffers will “look at certain issues in terms of their Jewishness,”<sup>91</sup> was included in an article 22 years ago that sounded many of the same themes as Mearsheimer and Walt.<sup>92</sup> On NukeIsrael.com and other hate sites, one can also find many of the same points: “A group of powerful U.S. Jews have grotesquely distorted U.S. foreign policy in blind fanatic support of Israel.”<sup>93</sup> And the following, which is somewhat more nuanced than the Mearsheimer-Walt formulation, appears in a neo-Nazi on-line publication: “Although criticism of specific Israeli policies is permissible in the United States, it is more or less forbidden to express fundamental criticism of the Zionist state, of America's basic policy of support for Israel, or of the Jewish-Zionist grip on the U.S. media or America’s political and academic life.”<sup>94</sup>

In addition to relying on quotes wrenched out of context by dubious sources, Mearsheimer and Walt also recite historic facts out of context. They willfully omit the most important contextual history. The authors mention the wars of 1948, 1967, and

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<sup>89</sup> Barak added that he found terrorism “despicable” and “inhumane.” Liat Collins, “Barak, Gazit Cause Stir With Provocative Remarks,” *Jerusalem Post*, March 8, 1998.

<sup>90</sup> M. Junaid Alam, “The New York Times Threatens Palestinians with Israeli Brutality After Hamas Vote,” *Left Hook*, accessible at <http://lefthook.org/Politics/Alam020506.html>; and “The origin of the Palestine-Israeli conflict,” April 5, 2002, accessible at <http://www.zmag.org/content/Mideast/jewsfjustice.cfm>. Mearsheimer and Walt claim to have drawn this quote from Nahum Goldmann’s *The Jewish Paradox*. Importantly, they omit the end of Goldmann’s account of this conversation with Ben-Gurion. “That was Ben-Gurion all over: he had told me that so as to show me how well he knew in his heart that Israel could not exist without peace with the Arabs,” Goldmann wrote. *The Jewish Paradox* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), p. 99-100.

<sup>91</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 17.

<sup>92</sup> Cheryl Rubenberg, “The Middle East Lobbies,” *The Link*, January-March 1984, accessible at <http://www.ameu.org/page.asp?iid=170&aid=214&pg=3>.

<sup>93</sup> “Jews that control the world,” National Socialist Movement Northwest, accessible at <http://www.nukeisrael.com/media%20jewish%20elite.html>.

<sup>94</sup> John Lynch, “Israel: A racist state for Jews-only!,” National Socialist Movement Northwest, accessible at <http://www.nukeisrael.com/al.htm>.

1973 to cite evidence of Israeli military superiority, but they never mention *why* the wars were fought in the first place. In other words, there is absolutely no indication that on all three occasions, Arab countries attacked Israel in order, according to their own well-known formulation, to “drive the Jews into the Sea.” (Mearsheimer and Walt say that Israel won “quick and easy victories” in these wars, without mentioning casualty rates that claimed the lives of a full one percent of Israel’s population (many of them Holocaust survivors) during the 1948 war,<sup>95</sup> or the high casualty rates and near-disaster Israel suffered by the Egyptian surprise attack on Yom Kippur of 1973.) Nor is there any mention of Palestinian terrorism, except to blithely dismiss it as a minor nuisance and to justify it as an understandable reaction to occupation.<sup>96</sup> Needless to say, the authors’ rationalization does not explain the prevalence of Palestinian terror campaigns beginning in 1929, nor does it address terrorist organizations that consider all of Israel to be “occupied territory” (including Hamas, which now controls the Palestinian Authority). After all, al-Fatah (“The Conquest,” the main branch of the PLO) was founded as an organization committed to Israel’s destruction by terrorism *before* the 1967 war and subsequent occupation.

The authors’ discussion of American involvement in Israel’s affairs is similarly skewed. They mention that “Washington was deeply involved in the negotiations that ended [the 1973] war” without saying that Washington’s intervention was to Israel’s

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<sup>95</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 8.

<sup>96</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 13.

*disadvantage*.<sup>97</sup> They say that Israel was a potential liability in the first Gulf War coalition without mentioning that Israel refrained from entering the conflict, at the United States's request, despite the Iraqi Scuds that rained down on Tel Aviv.<sup>98</sup> Walt and Mearsheimer also fail to mention that it would have been considerably more difficult, if not impossible, for the United States to confront Iraq in the first Gulf War if Israel had not destroyed the Osirak nuclear reactor ten years earlier. Then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney acknowledged Israel's crucial role in facilitating America's victory when, in December 1991, he presented the Israeli general who had organized the attack on Osirak a satellite photograph of the destroyed reactor with the following inscription: "With thanks and appreciation for the outstanding job...on the Iraqi nuclear program in 1981, which made our job much easier in Desert Storm."<sup>99</sup>

The authors write, "Even when Israel was founded, Jews were only about 35 percent of Palestine's population and owned 7 percent of the land,"<sup>100</sup> without citing the more important demographic statistic, namely, that Jews were a clear majority in the areas assigned to Israel under partition, thus making their reference to South Africa's Apartheid inapt.

The authors' bias is most clearly demonstrated when they write that "the creation of Israel entailed a moral crime" without adequately explaining the history behind Israel's

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<sup>97</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 3. The United States pressed for a cease-fire only after Israel had turned the tide of the war and was marching steadily toward Cairo and Damascus. "The Americans pressed Israel to withdraw to the October 22 lines and, at the same time, rejected the Egyptian demand for American-Soviet military involvement, viewing this as a barely veiled ploy to inject Soviet troops into the area in order to intimidate Israel and to force open a passage between Cairo and the Third Army." Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p. 436.

<sup>98</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 4.

<sup>99</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Great Terror," *New Yorker*, March 25, 2002.

<sup>100</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 10.

birth and the near-unanimous Arab refusal to accept a Jewish state in the Middle East.<sup>101</sup>

There is no recognition that during and after the Holocaust, no nation would accept more than a handful of Jews in need of refuge. There is no word of the several partition plans – Balfour (1917), Peel (1937), and the UN (1947) – that the Arabs rejected but that the Jewish leadership accepted so that it might establish peaceful sovereignty alongside its neighbors, no matter how small, disconnected, and indefensible were the borders of the proposed Jewish state. There is no word about the great statesmen of the time, from Woodrow Wilson<sup>102</sup> through Harry Truman<sup>103</sup> and Winston Churchill,<sup>104</sup> who wholeheartedly supported Jewish self-determination through the establishment of Israel. The authors invert cause and effect by presenting Israel’s founding, without any historical context, as the cause of a great crime, rather than the reaction to one.

These are only a few examples. Nearly every paragraph of the paper is riddled with similar errors, omits crucial details, and misleads the reader. As an editorial in the *Forward* put it:

Countless facts are simply wrong. Long stretches of argument are implausible, at times almost comically so. Much of their research is oddly amateurish, drawn not from credible [sources].... Some are wildly misquoted. An undergraduate submitting work like this would be laughed out of class.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 11.

<sup>102</sup> Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p. 75.

<sup>103</sup> Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p. 172.

<sup>104</sup> Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p. 72. 99-100 (“It is manifestly right that the scattered Jews should have a national center and a national home and be reunited and where else but in Palestine with which for 3,000 years they have been intimately and profoundly associated? We think it will be good for the world, good for the Jews, good for the British Empire, but also good for the Arabs who dwell in Palestine.... They shall share in the benefits and progress of Zionism.”).

<sup>105</sup> “In Dark Times, Blame the Jews,” *Forward*, March 24, 2006, accessible at <http://www.forward.com/articles/7532>.

But this is no laughing matter since the authors of this “junk” social science study — one of Mearsheimer’s colleagues called it “piss-poor, monocausal social science”<sup>106</sup> — hold prominent positions in major universities. Accordingly, the alleged “facts” on which their study is based must be tested against the reality.<sup>107</sup>

## II. Facts

It would take a much longer article to debunk all the factual errors in the paper, which truly is a collage of misinformation. I will point out only a very few of the most obvious misstatements Mearsheimer and Walt have borrowed from Israel bashers.

### **1. “By contrast, Israel was explicitly founded as a Jewish state and citizenship is based on the principle of blood kinship.”<sup>108</sup>**

This mendacious emphasis on Jewish “blood” is a favorite of neo-Nazi propaganda. It is totally false. In reality, a person of any ethnicity or religion can become an Israeli citizen. In fact, approximately a quarter of Israel’s citizens are not Jewish, a higher percentage of minority citizenry than in nearly any other country. Mearsheimer and Walt admit that Israel has 1.3 million Arab citizens — about 20 percent of Israel’s population.<sup>109</sup> Yet they repeat the blood accusation. The paper’s authors confuse Israel’s law of return — which was designed to grant asylum to those who were

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<sup>106</sup> Daniel W. Drezner, “A Follow-Up on the Israel Lobby,” DanielDrezner.com, March 21, 2006, accessible at <http://www.danieldrezner.com/archives/002642.html>.

<sup>107</sup> Many other have found erroneous facts as well. See, e.g., Richard Baehr and Ed Lasky, “Stephen Walt’s War with Israel,” *American Thinker*, March 20, 2006, accessible at [http://www.americanthinker.com/articles.php?article\\_id=5342](http://www.americanthinker.com/articles.php?article_id=5342); Martin Peretz, “Oil and Vinegar,” *The New Republic*, April 10, 2006; Alex Safian, “Study Decrying ‘Israel Lobby’ Marred by Numerous Errors,” *CAMERA.org*, March 22, 2006.

<sup>108</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 9.

<sup>109</sup> “Israel,” *CIA World Factbook*, 2006, accessible at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/is.html>.

victims of anti-Semitism, including non-Jewish relatives of Jews — with its law of citizenship. All Israeli citizens, whether Jews or non-Jews, enjoy the same legal rights and liberties, as evidenced by the many thriving Arab political parties represented in the Israeli Knesset and Muslim judges in the Israeli judiciary. (Where is there a single Jewish legislator or judge in any Muslim-majority nation?) As evidence of the “undemocratic” nature of Israel in relation to its Arab citizens, Walt and Mearsheimer cite “The Official Summation of the Or Commission Report.” They fail to mention, however, that the report explicitly noted that “Israel’s Arab citizens have the right to equality because of the essence of the State of Israel as a democracy, and because it is a basic right of every citizen.” The report goes on to state that existing inequalities between the Jewish and Arab citizens are due in part to efforts by some Arab leaders to delegitimize the government:

“The committee determined that, while most of Israel’s Arab citizens are loyal to the state, the messages transmitted during the October disturbances blurred and sometimes erased the distinction between the state’s Arab citizens and their legitimate struggle for rights, and the armed struggle against the state being conducted by organizations and individuals in the West Bank and Gaza. More than once, the two struggles are presented by leaders of the Arab community as one struggle against one adversary, often an enemy. The committee emphasized that the concept of citizenship is incompatible with the presentation of the state as the enemy...”<sup>110</sup>

Conveniently, Mearsheimer and Walt ignore the nuances and qualifications of the report.

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<sup>110</sup> “The Arab sector and its leadership,” section of the Or Commission Report,” published in *Ha’aretz*, September 2, 2003, accessible at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=335607&contrassID=2&subContrassID=1&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y>.

If Mearsheimer and Walt were truly concerned about racist citizenship statutes, they could have looked right next door, to Jordan, which openly and explicitly refuses to grant citizenship to Jews. (This, from everyone’s favorite “moderate” Arab nation!) When asked about Arab citizenship laws, Walt responded, “We were not writing on Saudi Arabia and Jordan.”<sup>111</sup> First of all, that is not true. Mearsheimer and Walt compare Israel to its Arab neighbors on several occasions, finding — incredibly — that “[i]n terms of actual behavior, Israel’s conduct is not morally distinguishable from the actions of its opponents.”<sup>112</sup> Second, Walt’s evasive answer reminds me of an argument attributed to another Harvard administrator – President A. Lawrence Lowell – who fought fiercely to keep Jews out of Harvard. His reasoning was that “Jews cheat.” When a distinguished alumnus pointed out that some non-Jews cheat, too, Lowell allegedly responded, “You’re changing the subject. I’m talking about Jews.” Mearsheimer and Walt are using the same tactic: singling out Jews and Israel without any historical or contemporary comparative data. When someone identifies their bias, they accuse the objector of changing the subject.

**2. “[T]he United States has a terrorism problem in good part because it is so closely allied with Israel, not the other way around.... There is no question, for example, that many al Qaeda leaders, including bin Laden, are motivated by Israel’s presence in Jerusalem and the plight of the Palestinians.”<sup>113</sup>**

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<sup>111</sup> Eli Lake, “David Duke Claims To Be Vindicated by a Harvard Dean,” *New York Sun*, March 20, 2006, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 11.

<sup>113</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 5.

In fact, bin Laden was primarily motivated by the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia.<sup>114</sup> Saudi Arabia, recall, had asked the United States to defend the Arabian Peninsula against Iraqi aggression prior to the first Gulf War. So it was America's ties to and defense of an *Arab* state — from which fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers originated — and not the *Jewish* state, that most clearly precipitated September 11. Prior to September 11, Israel was barely on bin Laden's radar screen.

Nor does Israel's supposed domination of American public life explain terrorist massacres in Bali, Madrid, London, and elsewhere.<sup>115</sup> Europe, after all, is praised for being more immune to the Lobby's manipulation tactics.<sup>116</sup>

**3. “Contrary to popular belief, the Zionists had larger, better-equipped, and better-led forces during the 1947-49 War of Independence....”<sup>117</sup>**

Here, the authors are trying to persuade the readers that, despite the Arab world's several attempts to eliminate the Jewish State and exterminate its inhabitants, Israel has

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<sup>114</sup> See Osama bin Laden's first and second fatwas, issued in 1996 and 1998, respectively. The fatwas make clear that bin Laden's primary grievance was with America's military presence in Saudi Arabia. Here is what he wrote in 1998: "First, for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples." Osama bin Laden, "Al Qaeda's Fatwa," *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer Transcript: Online Focus*, accessible at [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa\\_1998.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1998.html).

<sup>115</sup> See also, Christopher Hitchens, "Overstating Jewish Power," *Slate*, March 27, 2006 ("As for the idea that Israel is the root cause of the emergence of al-Qaida: Where have these two gentlemen been? Bin Laden's gang emerged from a whole series of tough and reactionary battles in Central and Eastern Asia, from the war for a separate Muslim state in the Philippines to the fighting in Kashmir, the Uighur territories in China, and of course Afghanistan. There are hardly any Palestinians in its ranks, and its communiqués have been notable for how little they say about the Palestinian struggle. Bin Laden does not favor a Palestinian state; he simply regards the whole area of the former British Mandate as a part of the future caliphate. The right of the Palestinians to a state is a just demand *in its own right*, but anyone who imagines that its emergence would appease—or would have appeased—the forces of jihad is quite simply a fool. Is al-Qaida fomenting civil war in Nigeria or demanding the return of East Timor to Indonesia because its heart bleeds for the West Bank?").

<sup>116</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 24.

<sup>117</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 8.

never been in serious danger.<sup>118</sup> To the contrary, the invading Arab armies — trained professional militaries<sup>119</sup> — possessed armor and a steep manpower advantage, whereas Israel “had few heavy weapons and no artillery, armored vehicles, or planes.”<sup>120</sup>

There are enormously varying accounts of the number of soldiers and armament in the 1948 War. One estimate shows the Arab armies with ten times more aircrafts, thirty times more artillery, and ninety times more tanks than the Israelis, not to mention thousands more combat soldiers<sup>121</sup> available to the Arabs because of their enormous population advantage. Other accounts suggest that the Arab advantage was less lopsided. Some numbers are indisputable. It is easy, for example, to count the hundreds of aircrafts under the control of Arab armies, versus the nominal number of planes that the young Jewish state was able to secure for its defense. Manpower is more difficult to evaluate, because the numbers depend on whether one counts front-line soldiers in Israel at any given time, or the full standing armies of the several allied Arab nations. Typical of Walt and Mearsheimer’s style, the authors select the most extreme interpretation, omitting all nuance and conflicting accounts, and present it as if it were non-controversial.

**4. “Israeli officials have long claimed that the Arabs fled because their leaders told them to, but careful scholarship (much of it by Israeli historians like Morris) have demolished this myth.”<sup>122</sup>**

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<sup>118</sup> See also the authors’ unsupported and flip assertion that “Israel’s survival is not in doubt—even if some Islamic extremists make outrageous and unrealistic references to ‘wiping it off the map’...” (11).

<sup>119</sup> Most notably, British-trained officer General John Bagot Glubb trained and led the Transjordanian Arab Legion against Israel in the 1948 War. “Sir John Bagot Glubb,” *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, accessible at <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9037078>.

<sup>120</sup> Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), p. 102.

<sup>121</sup> Alex Safian, “Study Decrying ‘Israel Lobby’ Marred by Numerous Errors,” *CAMERA.org*, March 22, 2006.

<sup>122</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 10.

No such academic consensus exists. On the contrary, nearly all scholars acknowledge that the issue is complex and that some Arab leaders did urge Palestinians to flee their homes in Israel. Nor does the Israeli historian Benny Morris say anything resembling what Mearsheimer and Walt cite him as saying. Here is what he wrote:

In some areas Arab commanders ordered the villagers to evacuate to clear the ground for military purposes or to prevent surrender. More than half a dozen villages — just north of Jerusalem and in the Lower Galilee — were abandoned during these months as a result of such orders.<sup>123</sup>

Morris insists that “there was no Zionist policy to expel the Arabs or intimidate them into flight....”<sup>124</sup> Certainly, many innocent Palestinians fled because they feared the approaching Jewish army. Such flight from the scenes of battle occurs in most wars, if the winning side allows it, rather than seeking to kill those running away, as the Arabs proposed doing. As ‘Abd al-Rahman Azzam Pasha, the secretary general of the Arab League, predicted immediately prior to the Arab invasion of Israel: “This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre, which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades.”<sup>125</sup> And, indeed, the Palestinians murdered many unarmed Israelis as well as soldiers who had surrendered.

Keep in mind, too, that it was the Palestinians and surrounding Arab armies that initiated the war. There would be no refugees if, as Israel did, the Arabs had been willing to accept Partition, leading to a full Palestinian state alongside a Jewish homeland.

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<sup>123</sup> Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p. 256.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p. 219.

This particular falsehood also illustrates Mearsheimer and Walt's co-opting of Noam Chomsky's favored method of argumentation: they simply claim that their most preposterous assertions are universally accepted as true. They call their evidence entirely "not controversial," just as Chomsky says "the most significant facts" – that is, the facts that he invents and relies upon – "are not controversial."<sup>126</sup>

**5. "But the creation of Israel involved additional crimes against a largely innocent third party: the Palestinians."<sup>127</sup>**

Considering Palestinian collaboration and support for Nazism during World War II, and its participation in an offensive war of extermination in 1948-49, the Palestinian people can hardly be called "a largely innocent third party." The recognized leader of the Palestinian people, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Husseini, supported Hitler wholeheartedly. He asked the Axis powers for help in solving the Jewish problem in Palestine based on the "racial interests of the Arabs and along lines similar to those used to solve the Jewish question in Germany...."<sup>128</sup> He even asked if he could send Jews to "Poland, in order thereby to protect oneself from their menace."<sup>129</sup>

Following the war, when the UN partitioned the British Mandate between Jews and Palestinians, the Jews agreed to a peaceable division, while the Palestinians sided with the invading Arab armies in a war whose object was to rid the former Mandate of its Jews. Mearsheimer and Walt never mention the Peel Commission (1937) or the UN

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<sup>126</sup> *The New Intifada: Resisting Israel's Apartheid*, ed. By Roan Carey (Verso, 2001), p. 7 (quotation from Chomsky's introduction).

<sup>127</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 10.

<sup>128</sup> Fritz Grobba, *Männer und Mächte im Orient* (Zurich: Masterschmidt, 1967), pp. 194-97, 207-208, quoted in Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial* (Chicago: JKAP, 2002), p. 37.

<sup>129</sup> Letter from Husseini to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary, June 28, 1943, reprinted in Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial* (Chicago: JKAP, 2002), p. 372.

Partition Plan (1947) and Israel's acceptance of tiny, non-contiguous cantons, because it would undermine their false argument that Israel has never agreed to a full and contiguous Palestinian state.

**6. “The mainstream Zionist leadership was not interested in establishing a bi-national state or accepting a permanent partition of Palestine.”<sup>130</sup>**

Israel has accepted every partition plan proposed, from the 1917 Balfour Declaration, to the 1937 Peel Commission plan, to the 1947 UN Partition, to the 2000 Camp David proposals, and finally, to the December 23 Clinton Parameter plans. The Palestinian leadership has rejected all of these international partition proposals. But you wouldn't know that from reading this one-sided account.

**7. “Pressure from extremist violence and the growing Palestinian population has forced subsequent Israeli leaders to disengage from some of the occupied territories and to explore territorial compromise, but no Israeli government has been willing to offer the Palestinians a viable state of their own. Even Prime Minister Ehud Barak's purportedly generous offer at Camp David in July 2000 would only have given the Palestinians a disarmed and dismembered set of ‘Bantustans’ under de facto Israeli control.”<sup>131</sup>**

The Bantustan accusation is Mearsheimer and Walt's boldest misstatement. They cite Ehud Barak for this proposition, though what he actually said was that the Bantustan accusation was “one of the most embarrassing lies” Arafat told about Camp David. They do *not* cite to the map Dennis Ross published in his book, *The Missing Peace*, which contrasts the “Palestinian Characterization of the Final Proposal at Camp David” with the

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<sup>130</sup> Walt & Mearsheimer, p. 10.

<sup>131</sup> Walt & Mearsheimer, p. 11.

“Map Reflecting Actual Proposal at Camp David.”<sup>132</sup> The second map – which reflected President Clinton’s proposals and which Arafat rejected – shows a contiguous Palestinian state in the West Bank. Saudi Prince Bandar was so astounded by the generosity of Israel’s offer at Camp David that he told Arafat in no uncertain terms, “If we lose this opportunity, it is not going to be a tragedy. This is going to be a crime.”<sup>133</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt choose to repeat Arafat’s lie over the word of virtually everyone else at Camp David and the published maps proving exactly what it was that Arafat turned down.<sup>134</sup> Yet they insist on characterizing their demonstrably false description as “uncontroversial.” On Planet Chomsky perhaps, but not in the real world!

**8. “Neither America nor Israel could be blackmailed by a nuclear-armed rogue [Iran], because the blackmailer could not carry out the threat without receiving overwhelming retaliation. The danger of a ‘nuclear handoff’ to terrorists is equally remote, because a rogue state could not be sure the transfer would be undetected or that it would not be blamed and punished afterwards.”<sup>135</sup>**

Mearsheimer and Walt minimize the dangers posed by Iran both to the United States and to Israel. They assume that Iran would be as subject to a deterrent threat of massive retaliation as was the Soviet Union during the Cold War or North Korea today.

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<sup>132</sup> Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), p. 42.

<sup>133</sup> Elsa Walsh, “The Prince: How the Saudi Ambassador Became Washington’s Indispensable Operator,” *New Yorker*, March 24, 2003.

<sup>134</sup> For a refutation of Arafat’s Bantustan lie, see Alan Dershowitz, *The Case for Peace: How the Arab-Israeli Conflict Can be Solved* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), chapter 3. Rick Richman also carefully dissects Walt and Mearsheimer’s argument in “The ‘Israel Lobby’ And Academic Malpractice,” *Jewish Press*, March 29, 2006, accessible at [http://www.jewishpress.com/page.do/8758/The\\_%27Israel\\_Lobby%27\\_And\\_Academic\\_Malpractice.html](http://www.jewishpress.com/page.do/8758/The_%27Israel_Lobby%27_And_Academic_Malpractice.html).

<sup>135</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, pp. 5-6.

This argument ignores the fact that the leaders of Iran have quite clearly asserted that they do not fear nuclear retaliation. Hashemi Rafsanjani, the former president of Iran, has threatened Israel with nuclear destruction, boasting that an Iranian attack would kill as many as five million Jews. Rafsanjani estimated that even if Israel retaliated by dropping its own nuclear bombs, Iran would probably lose only fifteen million people, which he said would be a small “sacrifice” from among the billion Muslims in the world.<sup>136</sup> And he told a crowd in Tehran:

“If a day comes when the world of Islam is duly equipped with the arms Israel has in its possession, the strategy of colonialism would face a stalemate because application of an atomic bomb would not leave any thing in Israel but the same thing would just produce damages in the Muslim world.”<sup>137</sup>

At a conference entitled “The World Without Zionism” in October 2005, Rafsanjani’s successor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, declared that Israel “must be wiped off the map.”<sup>138</sup> Accordingly, neither the United States nor Israel could be confident that a “handoff” of nuclear weapons to terrorists would necessarily be deterred by the threat of retaliation. That is why both nations, as well as European countries, have mutual interests in preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

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<sup>136</sup> Suzanne Fields, “Confronting the New Anti-Semitism,” *Washington Times*, July 25, 2004.

<sup>137</sup> “Rafsanjani Says Muslims Should Use Weapons Against Israel,” *Iran Press Service*, December 14, 2001, accessible at [http://www.iran-press-service.com/articles\\_2001/dec\\_2001/rafsanjani\\_nuke\\_threats\\_141201.htm](http://www.iran-press-service.com/articles_2001/dec_2001/rafsanjani_nuke_threats_141201.htm).

<sup>138</sup> Nazila Fathi, “Iran’s New President Says Israel ‘Must Be Wiped Off the Map,’” *New York Times*, October 27, 2005, p. 8. He also proclaimed that “[t]he establishment of a Zionist regime was a move by the world oppressor against the Islamic world.... The skirmishes in the occupied land are part of the war of destiny. The outcome of hundreds of years will be defined in Palestinian land.” *Ibid.* Furthermore, Ahmadinejad warned that “[a]nybody who recognizes Israel will burn in the fire of Islamic nation’s fury,” and that any Islamic leader “who recognizes the Zionist regime means he is acknowledging the surrender and defeat of the Islamic world.” *Ibid.*

**9. “There is also a strong norm against criticizing Israeli policy, and Jewish-American leaders rarely support putting pressure on Israel.”<sup>139</sup>**

If the authors believe that American Jews are reluctant to criticize Israel or to try to pressure Israeli public officials, they are not familiar with the American Jewish community, which thrives on controversy.

**10. The Lobby is engaged in a “campaign to eliminate criticism of Israel from college campuses.”<sup>140</sup>**

If this absurd assertion were true, it would prove that “the Lobby” is a lot less powerful than the authors would have us believe, considering the fact that anti-Israel sentiment is nearly ubiquitous on college campuses.<sup>141</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt try to have it both ways. On the one hand, the Lobby is an all-powerful force for manipulating American thought, conversation, and policy. On the other, the Lobby is ineffectual in its desperate attempt to stifle debate about Israel on university campuses.

In fact, the Mearsheimer-Walt *paper* may be one of the strongest pieces of evidence of the powerful culture of anti-Israeli animus on college campuses. As Caroline Glick pointed out:

Walt and Mearsheimer - who are both rational men - undoubtedly considered the likely consequences of publishing their views and concluded that the anti-Israel nature of their article would shield them from criticisms of its substandard academic quality. That is, they believe that hostility towards Israel is so acceptable in the US that

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<sup>139</sup> Walt & Mearsheimer, p. 15.

<sup>140</sup> Walt & Mearsheimer, p. 23.

<sup>141</sup> Walt and Mearsheimer acknowledge that “the Lobby has had the most difficulty stifling debate about Israel on college campuses...” (p. 22).

authors of shoddy research whose publication would normally destroy their professional reputations can get away with substandard work if it that work relates to Israel.<sup>142</sup>

### III. Logic

Even if the scholarship were sound and the facts accurate – neither come close – the paper’s thesis would still be unsound. Mearsheimer and Walt’s “reasoning” is simply illogical.

The very first argument they offer exemplifies their illogical and conspiratorial approach. They contend that the very existence of an Israeli lobby proves that support for Israel is essentially un-American. Here is what they say:

Indeed, the mere existence of the Lobby suggests that unconditional support for Israel is not in the American national interest. If it was [*sic.*], one would not need an organized special interest group to bring it about.<sup>143</sup>

In other words, any group that *needs* a lobby must be working against "American national interest." The absurdity of this argument is demonstrated by the fact that the most powerful lobby is the AARP. According to Mearsheimer and Walt’s "logic," that would mean that the rights of retired people are inconsistent with American national interests, as is equality for African-Americans (NAACP), choice for women (reproductive rights lobbies), clean air for environmentalists (Environmental Defense Fund), and the thousands of other groups that maintain powerful lobbies in Washington. By their reasoning, the very existence of the ACLU proves that civil liberties are not in America’s national interest! The reality, of course, is that virtually all interest groups and many

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<sup>142</sup> Caroline Glick, “The Jewish Threat,” *The Jerusalem Post*, March 23, 2006.

<sup>143</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 43.

foreign countries employ lobbying, but only the “Israel lobby” is accused of being contrary to American national interest.

One of the authors’ most common arguments is to suggest that if a Jew admits something negative about other Jews, then it must necessarily be true. Gideon Levy wrote a column saying that no one in Israel opposed the Iraq war – a ridiculous and easily falsifiable claim – but Mearsheimer and Walt quote it as Gospel.<sup>144</sup> Akiva Eldar accused Douglas Feith and Richard Perle of “walking a fine line between their loyalty to American governments...and Israeli interests.”<sup>145</sup> The authors copy the quotation and present it as credible evidence. The authors quote Morris Amitay, another Jew, to suggest that Jewish staffers view their primary professional allegiance to their “Jewishness” rather than to their nation. It is a serious accusation, substantiated by only a single quotation from a person who, like many in Washington, had a professional stake in exaggerating his access to decision-makers. But he’s a Jew, so it must be true!

These are examples of the *ad hominem* fallacy, in which the authors rest the soundness of their arguments on the identity of the speaker, rather than on the truth of the ideas. As I wrote about this style of argumentation in *The Case For Israel*:

It is a fundamental fallacy to conclude that one side of a dispute must be right if some people who are ethnically identified with that side support the other side. For example, the fact that there is a handful of Jewish Holocaust deniers – as well as some prominent Jews, like Noam Chomsky, who are prepared to endorse the “extensive research” done by a Holocaust denier – does not mean that the Holocaust did not occur. Nor does the fact that some Italian Jews supported Mussolini in the early

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<sup>144</sup> Walt & Mearsheimer, p. 31.

<sup>145</sup> Walt & Mearsheimer, p. 34.

1930s prove that fascism was right. Yet a staple of pro-Palestinian propaganda is the argument that is structured as follows: “See, even a Jew like [fill in the name] believes that Israel is wrong and the Palestinians are right about [fill in the issue].” This “argument by ethnic admission” is both logically and empirically fallacious.<sup>146</sup>

The paper’s thesis is equally nonsensical. Mearsheimer and Walt attribute anything that Israel and America do or aspire to achieve in common to Israeli manipulation. The professors make the most basic of all logical fallacies – they confuse correlation with causation. Listen to the following passage:

By February 2003, a *Washington Post* headline summarized the situation: “Bush and Sharon Nearly Identical on Mideast Policy.” The main reason for this switch is the Lobby.<sup>147</sup>

The upshot of their naked conclusory assertion is that Ariel Sharon *duped* President Bush into overthrowing Saddam Hussein. Mearsheimer and Walt never consider the more likely explanation: that Bush and Sharon shared the same worldview and vision for the Middle East. This is not academic writing. There is no weighing of evidence. Mearsheimer and Walt simply chose the most insidious explanation – which also happened to be the *least plausible* explanation – and dismissed all other possibilities without even an acknowledgement that other interpretations are *possible*. No wonder Mearsheimer’s colleague critiqued the research as poor “monocausal social science.”

Walt’s colleague David Gergen — who has far more experience in the actual decision-making process in the White House — finds the paper’s thesis “wildly at

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<sup>146</sup> Alan Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2003), p. 221.

<sup>147</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 27.

variance” with what he witnessed. Yet Walt and Mearsheimer apparently never interviewed Gergen. Had they done so, they would have learned the following:

Over the course of four tours in the White House, I never once saw a decision in the Oval Office to tilt U.S. foreign policy in favor of Israel at the expense of America’s interest. Other than Richard Nixon — who occasionally said terrible things about Jews, despite the number on his team — I can’t remember any president even talking about an Israeli lobby. Perhaps I have forgotten, but I can remember plenty of conversations about the power of the American gun lobby, environmentalists, evangelicals, small-business owners, and teachers unions.

Gergen added the following:

Not only are these charges wildly at variance with what I have personally witnessed in the Oval Office over the years, but they also impugn the loyalty and the unstinting service to America’s national security by public figures like Dennis Ross, Martin Indyk, and many others. As a Christian, let me add that it is also wrong and unfair to call into question the loyalty of millions of American Jews who have faithfully supported Israel while also working tirelessly and generously to advance America’s cause, both at home and abroad. They are among our finest citizens and should be praised, not pilloried.<sup>148</sup>

Just because Israel and the United States often have similar interests does not mean that America is pursuing its policies on Israel’s behalf. By that reasoning, anyone who agrees with Mearsheimer and Walt’s paper must in fact be manipulating the authors into holding their particular beliefs. The most vocal proponent of their paper so far has been David Duke, but that does not mean that Mearsheimer and Walt are beholden to the Klan Lobby. The better explanation is simply that Walt, Mearsheimer, and Duke happen

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<sup>148</sup> David Gergen, “An Unfair Attack,” *U.S. News & World Report*, April 3, 2006, accessible at <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/opinion/articles/060403/3edit.htm>.

to have reached the same conclusions, and share the same interest in vilifying Jewish leaders and spouting conspiracy theories about Zionist plots against American interests.

What is most astounding about Mearsheimer and Walt's conspiratorial worldview is that they think that a population of five million Jews — which is less than 2% (not 3%, as Mearsheimer and Walt assert) of the U.S. population — is somehow able to bully and confuse two hundred ninety-five million non-Jews into consistently acting against their own true interests. They are parroting the Marxist principle of "false consciousness," that is, the idea that "the masses" do not truly recognize what is in their own self-interest.

Professor Ruth Wisse, with whom I have often respectfully disagreed on matters of Israel and the Jewish community, gets it right this time when she writes:

Yet it would be a mistake to treat this article on the "Israel Lobby" as an attack on Israel alone, or on its Jewish defenders, or on the organizations and individuals it singles out for condemnation. Its true target is the American public, which now supports Israel with higher levels of confidence than ever before. When the authors imply that the bipartisan support of Israel in Congress is a result of Jewish influence, they function as classic conspiracy theorists who attribute decisions to nefarious alliances rather than to the choices of a democratic electorate. Their contempt for fellow citizens dictates their claims of a gullible and stupid America. Their insistence that American support for Israel is bought and paid for by the Lobby heaps scorn on American judgment and values.<sup>149</sup>

Again, the more likely explanation is that the majority of Americans — Jew and non-Jew alike — often perceive their interests to be parallel to Israel's interests. Both are democratic nations born out of Western traditions with rich Western cultures. Is it any wonder that Americans would more closely identify with a secular democratic nation

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<sup>149</sup> Ruth R. Wisse, "Israel Lobby," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 22, 2006.

than with the totalitarian theocracies or oppressive dictatorships that surround Israel – or with a nation that is fervently pro-American, rather than with countries with considerable anti-American sentiment.<sup>150</sup>

The implication of Mearsheimer and Walt’s paper, that American Jews put the interests of Israel before those of America, raises the ugly specter of “dual loyalty,” a canard that has haunted Diaspora Jews from time immemorial. Today in America, it is rightfully considered vile to suggest that American Catholic politicians such as John F. Kennedy and John Kerry owe their primary allegiance to the Vatican over the United States. But Mearsheimer and Walt have no qualms about making the analogous accusation against Jewish politicians and their staffers. “There are also Jewish senators and congressmen who work to make U.S. foreign policy support Israel’s interests.”<sup>151</sup> When America acts in concert with Britain, Italy, Germany, India, or China, no one questions the loyalty and patriotism of the descendants from those nationalities. Mearsheimer and Walt target only Jews for their accusations of disloyalty and subversion of American interests.<sup>152</sup>

### Conclusion

It is not only the words – false and unbalanced as they are – that invoke old stereotypes and canards. It is the “music” as well – the tone, pitch, and feel of the article

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<sup>150</sup> Columnist Jeff Jacoby attributes this to “[s]omething more powerful than economics: the kinship of common values.” Jeff Jacoby, “America Takes Side of Israel,” *Boston Globe*, March 26, 2006. See also, Jeff Jacoby, “A Nation Like Ours,” *Boston Globe*, March 29, 2006.

<sup>151</sup> *Walt & Mearsheimer*, p. 17.

<sup>152</sup> And it is no wonder. In support of their dual loyalty accusation the authors cite straight to CounterPunch.org, a virulently anti-American and anti-Israel website. See page 69: “Kathleen and William Christison, ‘A Rose by Another Name: The Bush Administration’s Dual Loyalties,’ *CounterPunch*, December 13, 2002.”

– that has caused such outrage from academics and concerned citizens from all across the political and religious spectrum (with the exception of the hard right and hard left). What would motivate two recognized academics to issue a compilation of previously made assertions that they must know will be used by overt anti-Semites to argue that Jews have too much influence, that will give an academic imprimatur to crass bigotry, and that will place all Jews in government and the media under suspicion of disloyalty to America? Imagine if two professors compiled as many negative statements, based on shoddy research and questionable sources, about African-Americans causing all the problems in America, and presented that compilation as evidence that African-Americans behave in a manner contrary to the best interest of the United States. No matter how many footnotes there were, who would fail to recognize such a project as destructive?<sup>153</sup>

I wonder what the authors believed they would accomplish by recycling such misinformation about Jewish “blood kinship,” by raising discredited and false connections between Jonathan Pollard and the Soviet Union,<sup>154</sup> by saying that the

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<sup>153</sup> “IN HIS CLASSIC 1964 essay, ‘The Paranoid Style in American Politics,’ the late Richard Hofstadter noted: “One of the impressive things about paranoid literature is the contrast between its fantasied conclusions and the almost touching concern with factuality that it invariably shows. It produces heroic strivings for evidence to prove that the unbelievable is the only thing that can be believed.” As examples, he cited a 96-page pamphlet by Joseph McCarthy that contained ‘no less than 313 footnote references’ and a book by John Birch Society founder Robert Welch that employed “one hundred pages of bibliography and notes” to show that President Eisenhower was a communist.

“For a more recent instance of the paranoid style, a modern-day Hofstadter could consult ‘The Israel Lobby and American Foreign Policy,’ a ‘working paper’ by John J. Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen M. Walt of Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. With 83 pages of text and 211 footnotes, the Mearsheimer-Walt essay (part of which appeared in the London Review of Books) is as scholarly as those of Welch and McCarthy — and just as nutty.” Max Boot, “Policy Analysis – Paranoid Style,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 2006.

<sup>154</sup> “Convicted Spy for Israel Seeks New Hearing,” *CNN.com*, September 2, 2003 (“John Loftus, a former federal prosecutor and author of a book on the case, told CNN that Pollard was being blamed for the actions of two of Moscow’s spies who weren’t unmasked until years later -- CIA officer Aldrich Ames and FBI counterintelligence agent Robert Hanssen. Ames was arrested in 1994, and Hanssen was arrested in 2001. Both are serving life sentences. ‘It wasn’t until we got both Ames and Hanssen that we realized

“Zionist” army was larger and better equipped than the Arab armies that tried to destroy it in 1948, and by repeating so many other easily refutable distortions? Why pay so much attention to Jewish congressional staffers? Is it so that Congresspeople will stop hiring Jews or demand loyalty tests of them? I simply do not understand, *what is the motive?*

And so I repeat my challenges to Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer. I challenge them to tell us which arguments are new and have not previously been made on hate sites and in anti-Israel screeds.<sup>155</sup> What new evidence has been gathered? Why are there so many factual errors, all cutting against Israel? Why didn’t they present important counterfactuals or address any counterarguments?

Walt and Mearsheimer repeatedly claim that they have written their paper, at least in part, in order to stimulate dialogue concerning the influence of the Lobby. They claim that it is the pro-Israel side that seeks to suppress public discussion: “[The Lobby] does not want an open debate on issues involving Israel, because an open debate might cause Americans to question the level of support they currently provide.”<sup>156</sup> Yet the pro-Israel

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Pollard didn't do any of this,' Loftus said. He said Pollard was 'unquestionably guilty of minor offenses,' but 'he should have been out of jail five years ago.'”); Hershel Shanks, “For a New Look at the Pollard Case,” *The Washington Post*, September 15, 1999 (“(1) Was Pollard's life sentence fair? This question has two parts: (a) Was it fair when it was imposed by Judge Aubrey Robinson on the basis of what was then known? (b) Is it fair in light of what we know today? A damage assessment was made at the time. According to sources, the assessment was made in part by none other than Aldrich Ames, who was then a mole in the CIA working for the Soviet Union. In short, there is good reason to believe that Pollard was blamed for the human losses in the Soviet Union that resulted from Ames's treason.”).

<sup>155</sup> Walt and Mearsheimer cannot complain that I treat their arguments one at a time. Nor can they complain that the overall thrust of their piece may be different from the sum of the individual arguments. The reality is that the hate sites that quote from this paper select only the most stridently anti-Israel and anti-Jewish material. Accordingly, it is important to respond to that material specifically, as well as to critique the overall tone and argument of the paper.

<sup>156</sup> Also: “The goal is to prevent critical commentary about Israel from getting a fair hearing in the political arena. Controlling the debate is essential to guaranteeing U.S. support, because a candid discussion of U.S.-Israeli relations might lead Americans to favor a different policy”; “Moreover, the Lobby’s campaign to squelch debate about Israel is unhealthy for democracy”; “What is needed, therefore, is a candid discussion of the Lobby’s influence and a more open debate about U.S. interests in this vital region... Open

side has risen to the Walt-Mearsheim challenge and has participated in the marketplace of ideas, only to be greeted by silence from the authors, who have generally refused to defend their views. I have personally offered Walt and Mearsheimer an opportunity to debate the issues raised in their paper, but to date they have not done so.<sup>157</sup> My invitation to debate remains open. I challenge Mearsheimer and Walt to look me in the eye and tell me that because I am a proud Jew and a critical supporter of Israel, I am disloyal to my country.

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debate will expose the limits of the strategic and moral case for one-sided U.S. support....” *Walt & Mearsheimer*, pp. 16-17, 41, 43.

<sup>157</sup> For example, on March 30, a major news program on the BBC scheduled a debate with John Mearsheimer for 10:30 PM eastern time. At 10:35 PM, the program called to tell me that Mearsheimer had refused to call in to speak on the program and debate me.