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## Yes, It's Anti-Semitic

By Eliot A. Cohen

Wednesday, April 5, 2006; A23

Academic papers posted on a Harvard Web site don't normally attract enthusiastic praise from prominent white supremacists. But John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy" has won David Duke's endorsement as "a modern Declaration of American Independence" and a vindication of the ex-Klansman's earlier work, presumably including his pathbreaking book, "Jewish Supremacism."

Walt and Mearsheimer contend that American national security dictates distancing ourselves from the state of Israel; that U.S. support for Israel has led to such disasters as America's status as the No. 1 target for Islamic terrorists; and that such an otherwise inexplicable departure from good sense can be accounted for only by the power of "The Lobby" (their capitalization), an overwhelmingly Jewish force abetted by some Christian evangelicals and a gentile neocon collaborator or two, who have hijacked American foreign policy and controlled it for decades.

One of Mearsheimer's University of Chicago colleagues has characterized this as "piss-poor, monocausal social science." It is indeed a wretched piece of scholarship. Israeli citizenship rests "on the principle of blood kinship," it says, and yet the country has a million non-Jewish citizens who vote. Osama bin Laden's grievance with the United States begins with Israel, it says -- but in fact his 1998 fatwa declaring war against this country began by denouncing the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia and the suffering of the people of Iraq. "Other ethnic lobbies can only dream of having the political muscle" The Lobby has -- news to anyone advocating lifting the embargo on Fidel Castro's Cuba. The Iraq war stemmed from The Lobby's conception of Israel's interest -- yet, oddly, the war attracted the support of anti-Israel intellectuals such as Christopher Hitchens and mainstream publications such as The Economist. America's anti-Iran policy reflects the dictates of The Lobby -- but how to explain Europe's equally strong opposition to Iranian nuclear ambitions?

Oddly, these international relations realists -- who in their more normal academic lives declare that state interests determine policy, and domestic politics matters little -- have discovered the one case in which domestic politics has, for decades, determined the policy of the world's greatest state. Their theories proclaim the importance of power, not ideals, yet they abhor the thought of allying with the strongest military and most vibrant economy in the Middle East. Reporting persecution, they have declared that they could not publish their work in the United States, but they have neglected to name the academic journals that turned them down.

Inept, even kooky academic work, then, but is it anti-Semitic? If by anti-Semitism one means obsessive and irrationally hostile beliefs about Jews; if one accuses them of disloyalty, subversion or treachery, of having occult powers and of participating in secret combinations that manipulate institutions and governments; if one systematically selects everything unfair, ugly or wrong about Jews as individuals

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or a group and equally systematically suppresses any exculpatory information -- why, yes, this paper is anti-Semitic.

Mearsheimer and Walt conceive of The Lobby as a conspiracy between the Washington Times and the New York Times, the Democratic-leaning Brookings Institution and Republican-leaning American Enterprise Institute, architects of the Oslo accords and their most vigorous opponents. In this world Douglas Feith manipulates Don Rumsfeld, and Dick Cheney takes orders from Richard Perle. They dwell on public figures with Jewish names and take repeated shots at conservative Christians (acceptable subjects for prejudice in intellectual circles), but they never ask why a Sen. John McCain today or, in earlier years, a rough-hewn labor leader such as George Meany declared themselves friends of Israel.

The authors dismiss or ignore past Arab threats to exterminate Israel, as well as the sewer of anti-Semitic literature that pollutes public discourse in the Arab world today. The most recent calls by Iran's fanatical -- and nuclear weapons-hungry -- president for Israel to be "wiped off the map" they brush aside as insignificant. There is nothing here about the millions of dollars that Saudi Arabia has poured into lobbying and academic institutions, or the wealth of Islamic studies programs on American campuses, though they note with suspicion some 130 Jewish studies programs on those campuses. West Bank settlements get attention; terrorist butchery of civilians on buses or in shopping malls does not. To dispute their view of Israel is not to differ about policy but to act as a foreign agent.

If this sounds personal, it is, although I am only a footnote target for Mearsheimer and Walt. I am a public intellectual and a proud Jew; sympathetic to Israel and extensively engaged in our nation's military affairs; vaguely conservative and occasionally hawkish. In a week my family will celebrate Passover with my oldest son -- the third generation to serve as an officer in the United States Army. He will be home on leave from the bomb-strewn streets of Baghdad. The patch on his shoulder is the same flag that flies on my porch.

Other supposed members of "The Lobby" also have children in military service. Impugning their patriotism or mine is not scholarship or policy advocacy. It is merely, and unforgivably, bigotry.

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