

The US-Israel special relationship: hegemon and client state or tail wagging the dog?

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"Israel will be your proxy" Yaakov Meridor

"But the United States now has an Israeli-style foreign policy, and thus America's liberal intellectuals overwhelmingly support it." Tony Judt, *Reappraisals* (390)

"If America loves us so much, they could help us to keep our promises." A.B Yehoshua
quoted by Eric Alterman, *The Nation*, September 22, 2008

In his book, entitled *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World*, Avi Shlaim quotes Moshe Dayan as saying "Our American friends offer us money, arms, and advice. We take the money, we take the arms, and we decline the advice."¹ This quotation is invoked as proof that the US-Israel relationship is unbalanced and that Israel is not a typical client state but that it manages to dictate what it wants to the US, the only remaining superpower. In the same book Shlaim quotes James Baker, who was Bush senior's Secretary of State in 1989: "For Israel, now is the time to lay aside, once and for all, the unrealistic vision of greater Israel. Israeli interests in the West Bank and Gaza, security and otherwise, can be accommodated in a settlement based on UNSC Resolution 242. Forswear annexation. Stop settlement activity. Allow schools to reopen. Reach out to the Palestinians as neighbors who deserve political rights."² On the next page comes another quotation when Baker felt let down by Shamir, the Israeli Prime Minister, and said: "I can only say 'take this number: 202-456-1414. When you are serious about peace call us."

These quotations come from a book written by a new Israeli historian who teaches at Oxford. They illustrate some aspects of the US-Israeli relationship, notably American frustration and Israeli arrogance, but they also show that this relationship is an emotional one which rational analysis cannot totally apprehend. Contrary to what might be expected, they do not come from the work of the two well-known American political

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scientists, Walt and Mearsheimer, on the Israel lobby published in 2006 which sparked such intense controversy.³

This paper will unpack the intricacies of the US-Israel relationship by using historical examples and argue that, contrary to many perceptions, informed comments or scholarly views, this relationship does not deviate from the usual one between a powerful hegemon and a client state. I will first review the arguments in favor of an Israeli control over US foreign policy and then deconstruct them to show that the special relationship between Israel and the US is quite ordinary in a Machiavellian world. After defining the issue I will move on to a more general discussion of geopolitics and special relationships.

Defining the issue

Like any relationship between states, the US-Israeli one has varied over time and shifted according to prevalent geopolitical realities. Thus Eisenhower effectively forced the Israelis with their French and British allies to withdraw from Egyptian territory in 1956. Political and economic pressures were enough to force the victorious allies to toe the American line. Before 1967, Israel's main arms supplier was France and, as Chomsky demonstrates, the close special relationship between the US and Israel took place after the Six Day War in 1967.⁴ At the time Israel was a close ally in the Cold War and a proxy in the fights against the Soviet Union and its allies. The Nixon Doctrine, based on US reluctance to intervene directly in the Third World, had made Iran under the Shah and Israel two of its pillars in the Middle East. Israel was a tool in throwing the Soviets out of the region.⁵ Though debates about the power and influence of a pro-Israel lobby had started in the 1980s. The debate over the special relationship between Israel and the US did not become a major mainstream preoccupation until the end of the Cold War and the apparent change in Israel's status.

Debates about a US lobby are somewhat different from debates over the relationship between two states but, of course, in the case of Israel the two are closely linked; for critics of the Israel lobby claim that American foreign policy is either strongly influenced or even dictated by what is known in Congress as "The Lobby" working for a foreign power, Israel. Patrick Buchanan, a right wing commentator and former Nixon speech writer, even coined the expression "Israel's amen corner", which some writers on the left also use. In his 1987 book, Edward Tivnan had made many of

the same claims that Walt and Mearsheimer make in their article and book but did not have the same success and did not get involved in the same kind of vocal controversy.⁶ The core idea common to these works is the fact that Israel and its allies in the US can manage to get what Israel wants from US administrations, often working through Congress and to ignore what it does not like. Two years previously, after an electoral defeat, Paul Findley had published a book critical of the Israel lobby.⁷ He too focused on the domestic impact on the foreign policy of the US of a domestic lobby which skillfully funded the opponents of those it deemed hostile to Israel. Clearly there is a need for some untangling of a very complex and emotionally loaded phenomenon.

Several issues are intertwined and for the sake of clarity and brevity I'll mention which ones I will not deal with and I shall make a few semantic and conceptual remarks. I will not tackle the issue of the real or supposed anti-Semitism of those criticizing Israeli policies— a charge I consider unwarranted in the case of Walt and Mearsheimer and which is often used to silence critics (but may also, at times, be valid, mostly outside academia).⁸ Noted anti-Semites like Nixon⁹ or Stalin supported Israel at crucial moments in its history in spite of their well-established prejudices. Indeed in the case of Stalin between 1948 and 1951, his support of Israel, mostly through Prague, went hand in hand with his brutal repression of Jews in the Soviet Union.¹⁰ Israel, like the US, readily cooperated with Noriega, before he fell out of favor with the US, although he had a portrait of Hitler in his office.¹¹ Israel sold weapons to the Islamic Republic of Iran during the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s with the full knowledge of the US, which mostly supported Iraq.

The use of terms like "Israel" or "the US", which seems straightforward, refers here to the leaders of these two countries and not to the many different views expressed by citizens or individuals from these two countries. Indeed, one significant characteristic of the many debates over Israel is the rhetorical proximity of anti-Semites who hate or reject all Jews on the basis of their supposed common ethnicity and organised supporters of Israel who wish to stifle dissent within the Jewish community, in the US and the rest of the world and therefore equate a common ethnicity or ancestry within similar views.¹² Determined efforts are made in the US to silence, demonize or marginalize critics of Israel or of the Israel lobby in the US. The Tony Judt case is a good illustration of this¹³ but Judith Butler, Norman Finkelstein, an admitted "loudmouth", or Noam Chomsky are often the target of the Israel lobby, though, interestingly enough, Chomsky is equally a critic of the critics of the lobby. I will also mostly leave aside the debate of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism because it is largely outside the scope of this paper.¹⁴

Dershowitz's so-called reply to Walt and Mearsheimer, which tried to equate their work with a new anti-Semitic "Jewish conspiracy", is an unscholarly and scurrilous piece of work but the real stakes are elsewhere.¹⁵ Geopolitics and anti-Semitism, though sometimes linked, remain very distinct phenomena. Suffice it to say, as Alfred Grosser notes, Israel must be judged by the same criteria as all other nations.¹⁶ There is no Jewish cabal in the US and no unified group of conniving Jews. Indeed, Jewish diversity in the political sphere is a stake in the debates over Israeli actions.¹⁷

Let us start with the quip that led to my subtitle, a question asked by the Israeli peace activist Ury Avnery: "Simply put: does the dog wag its tail, or does the tail wag its dog?" In other words, is Israel a client state of the US, a pillar as planned by Nixon and Kissinger to do the US's bidding in a region of the world, or does Israel contravene the usual law of client states and does its lobby in the US defy the usual rule of ethnic lobbies, that is that they cannot prevail if they go against the national interest?¹⁸ Avnery went on with a Jewish joke:

I'll start with the Jew, who went to the Rabbi and complained about his neighbor. "You are right" the Rabbi declared. Then came the neighbor and denounced the complainant. "You are right" the Rabbi announced. "But how can that be," exclaimed the Rabbi's wife, "Only one of the two can be right!" "You are right, too," the Rabbi said.¹⁹

Avnery focused mostly on the debate between Chomsky, Walt and Mearsheimer over whether "the Lobby" determines Washington's foreign policy. Walt and Mearsheimer argue that with the end of the Cold War there is no good reason for the US to support Israel so heavily, both financially and politically; not to speak of military support through the sale of sophisticated weapons. They state that the close relationship goes against America's national interest. Chomsky's rejoinder is that their definition of the lobby is so wide as to include almost all elites into it and that if major companies (the business lobby) did not approve of what Washington decides it would stop it immediately. This debate about the influence of the Israel lobby is the most interesting indeed but unfortunately it was obscured by many sideshows in the US when Walt and Mearsheimer's work was published.²⁰ Although many figures are bandied about in this debate, notably the financial aid given to Israel by the US (said to be around \$500 per Israeli citizen, 2% of Israel's GDP, \$ 3 billion a year from the US with an increase at the end of 2007), the debate is mostly discursive. Why should the US give more money to

Israel than to any other country although Israel is now far from poor? Is it conned into doing so?

I will list and review the arguments which seem to indicate that the tail is wagging the dog first. I will leave aside such arguments as the one stating that the US and Israel are both democracies and therefore support each other. The same goes for the argument that they have a similar religious background: both are patently wrong. The US supports countries irrespective of whether they are democracies or share religious values with a nation that believes it is a redeemer nation. And Israel can form alliances with anti-Semites like Nixon, Christian fundamentalists or even cooperate with the Islamic Republic of Iran.²¹

Besides the huge financial help, Israel enjoys enormous political support on the part of the US, which often vetoes UN resolutions at the Security Council or votes against the majority of countries at the General Assembly. In 1967 Israel destroyed the US ship *Liberty* and was never punished, although 34 American sailors died. Israel turns down American peace plans and is sometimes not punished or even rewarded, as when President George W. Bush called former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon "a man of peace."²² Criticism of Israel is more common in the Israeli media, notably in the liberal daily *Haaretz* than in the US mainstream media (though many websites and a few publications are extremely critical).²³ Wars launched by Israel, such as the 2006 Lebanon war, are condoned by US administrations; as when Condoleezza Rice called it "the birth pangs of a new Middle East." The US calls for democratization of the Middle East, but when Hamas won elections in 2006 it did not acknowledge the victory of the Islamists and supported Fatah factions, which launched armed attacks against the elected representatives. With French help, Israel developed a nuclear bomb at Dimona and lied to the US, which did not lead to sanctions. The Israeli military always benefits from the latest US technology and outclasses all its rivals in the Middle East, the US gives Israel privileged access to its intelligence, yet Israel has spied on the US (one agent Jonathan Pollard was sentenced in 1986 for passing secrets to Israel and is in jail but some Israeli or pro-Israeli groups in the US clamor for his release from prison). The charges against two former members of AIPAC who were prosecuted for espionage and indicted in 2005 were dropped by the Obama Administration.²⁴ There are allegations, which cannot be verified, that Israeli companies such as Verint routinely spy on the FBI and the State Department.²⁵

The so-called pro-Israel groups have managed to censor some cultural events; such as a play about Rachel Corrie, an activist killed in Palestine or a talk by Tony Judt at the Polish consulate in 2006. Israeli violence in the illegally occupied territories of Palestine exceeds Palestinian violence in terror attacks in the number of victims and in destruction of housing, yet the US and most mainstream media blame Palestinian violence more frequently and more virulently than Israeli violence.²⁶ The US had, before the Bush II Administration, repeatedly asked Israel to stop the building of settlements in the West Bank and whether Israel agrees to do so or refuses the building continues. Thus, even after Annapolis in November 2007, Israel has launched into additional illegal building on the West Bank, at Har Homa for instance.²⁷ Things are pretty much the same with Netanyahu and Obama leading their respective countries. The Israeli Human Rights organisation documents these violations, as do *Human Rights Watch*, a US organization, or *Amnesty International*. The US let Israel intervene brutally in the Gaza strip in December 2008 and January 2009 just before Obama was inaugurated. Clearly Israel benefits from American double standards, something which Venezuela or Iraq do not seem to do. The harshest critics say that Israel literally gets away with murder; some conclude that this is true only of Israel and very close allies of the US.

Yet this statement must be qualified. Iraq, for instance, was allowed to destroy a US ship, the *USS Stark*, on May 17 1987 with French-made Exocet missiles fired from a French-built mirage plane. The ship did not even fire back, although 37 sailors died in the attack. No one was court-martialed.²⁸ So this is something similar to the Israeli attack on the *Liberty* twenty years earlier. 1987 was the tail end of the Iran-Iraq war in which the US, like most Western powers supported Iraq (though in 1986 the US had provided Iran with weapons for cash used in the infamous Iran-Contra scandal).²⁹ Here we need to disentangle moralistic or ideological discourses from facts on the ground and actual deeds. Letting Israel get away with the killing of US soldiers was not primarily determined by Israel's influence upon the US, but rather by Israel's usefulness at the time. Iraq was also useful in 1987 and its errors or crimes could be ignored even in the face of strong public reactions in the US. Saddam Hussein was blamed for gassing Kurds, not so much in 1988 when it happened, but later after Iraq was invaded in 2003 and Hussein was caught, "tried" and hanged.

The US breaks international laws, treaties and conventions, intervenes illegally in countries from Chile to Iraq, supports vicious or ugly regimes, from apartheid South Africa to murderous human rights violator Uzbekistan until 2005, and allows its allies to

do the same in their regions or their own countries. From this point of view there is nothing special about Israel. The Israeli crimes and legal violations targeting Palestinians are on a par with the terrible violations happening in Uzbekistan, which the US did not denounce when it was an ally of its dictator Islam Karimov, as is brilliantly analyzed by the former British ambassador to this country Craig Murray.³⁰ In 2007, Karimov was called the world's worst dictator by a group of Human Rights organisations, but his religion, morality, disrespect for democracy have no impact on the US attitude towards him.³¹

Walt and Mearsheimer insist on the geopolitical changes to explain why the US today not only does not need Israel but also that Israel is detrimental to US national interests, something that General Petraeus also stated in early 2010. The end of the Cold War and the shift to the rhetorical framework of the global war on terror allegedly explain this change in the relationship between the US and Israel. There is no doubt that this relationship is being reviewed, at least intellectually, and that the publication of Walt and Mearsheimer's work, or President Carter's book, indicate that things are changing.³² Indeed, even if the Bush II administration was said to be the most pro-Israel ever, and far more so than Bush I, the intellectual discourse about Israel has changed in the US. When Edward Said or Aruri Naseer Hasan or Norman Finkelstein criticised Israel, or the US-Israel relationship, in ways either similar to Walt and Mearsheimer, or indeed even more harshly, they were not heard by non-academic audiences.³³ Said was well-known as a literary critic and often vilified in American media, but his writings on Palestine did not achieve the notoriety of Walt and Mearsheimer's production although he was much blunter than they were. Indeed Said wrote:

In fine, American Zionism has made any serious public discussion of the past or future of Israel, far the largest recipient ever of US foreign aid, a taboo. To call this quite literally the last taboo in American public life would not be an exaggeration. Abortion, homosexuality, the death penalty, even the sacrosanct military budget can be discussed with some freedom. The extermination of native Americans can be admitted, the morality of Hiroshima attacked, the national flag publicly committed to the flames. But the systematic continuity of Israel's 52-year-old oppression and maltreatment of the Palestinians is virtually unmentionable, a narrative that has no permission to appear.³⁴

Said went on to say that in Israel itself the taboo did not exist. What the various publications after 2005 show is precisely that the taboo seems to be crumbling or rather losing momentum. Here a key distinction should be made between, on the one hand, the power of the Israel lobby or pro-Israeli groups, undeniable and well documented not only by Walt and Mearsheimer but by Jonathan Goldberg in his *Jewish Power; Inside the American Jewish Establishment* published in 1996.³⁵ And, on the other hand, the actual complex relationship between two states: a hegemon and a regional power. Walt and Mearsheimer argue that the Israel lobby shapes US foreign policy, they neglect other factors, but they do a good job of showing how influence and power are exerted within the US. Let us repeat what should be obvious: that the Israel Lobby is not made up of only Jews and that not all American Jews support the Israel lobby, a key distinction that some fierce left wing critics of Chomsky, such as James Petras and Jefferey Blankfort, seem to have forgotten when they make use of Walt and Mearsheimer, two so-called realists who are not on the left and are careful to point this out.³⁶ The role of Christian Zionist groups is of major importance here. Ilan Pappé, a fierce Israeli critic of Israeli policies who left his job in Haifa to teach in England (Exeter) talks about "The Fundamentalist Quartet: History and Future of the American Support for Israel" and adds the oil industry and the military complex to the other two well-known Zionist groups.³⁷

The power and influence of the Israel lobby, in the wide definition given by Walt and Mearsheimer and extended by Pappé, over Congress and/or the President do play a key role in shaping foreign policy but other Machiavellian considerations also come into play. If Israel mostly gets what it wants from the US and if Bush seemed to have adopted the style and language of Sharon, does it necessarily mean that Israel is pulling the strings and the US is its unwilling puppet? It is, of course, very tempting to answer in the affirmative, for Israel is not held to the same standards as other nations, like Serbia or even France in 2003. US tax payers do pay a lot for aid to Israel which often refuses to do what the US demands of it, like stopping the building of illegal settlements in the illegally occupied territories conquered in 1967. Yet, contrary to appearances, it is not an open and shut case.

El Salvador in the 1980s could violate human rights, kill American citizens (nuns) and still get weapons and support from Washington. Indeed, Israel helped the US supply arms to the government and the death squads there. There was no Salvadoran lobby in the US, only a foreign policy establishment that had determined it was in the interest of the US to support this particular regime. Israel helped President Reagan

bypass Congress in his illegal activities in this region of the world. So the fact that Israel is a democracy (of a very imperfect sort and also an illegal occupier) does not matter at all. American support is predicated on the same considerations as American support for the Shah of Iran was. A client state has a lot of leeway in its domestic dealings and is allowed to do anything it wants, short of going against the interests of the US, as determined by the business and political forces running the country. Noriega of Panama and Hussein of Iraq went from the status of protected allies who were allowed thuggish crimes to immoral enemies only because they crossed a red line. Client states and their leaders always exploit the relationships to their powerful allies to achieve their own goals. Chile under Pinochet, whose regime came to power through a coup encouraged by Henry Kissinger, could torture and repress its citizens without fearing American reprimand or effective restraints. It even carried out an assassination in the US itself (the September 21, 1976 car bomb assassination of Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt in Washington D.C). Egypt, the recipient of the second largest aid package is sometimes mildly reprimanded for its human rights abuses but heavily supported without any Egyptian lobby in the US. It can even be argued that support for Egypt is actually aid to Israel for it protects Israel from attack by the largest Arab state. Egypt however also renders services to the US as when it takes on the prisoners illegally captured in third countries (*extraordinary renditions*) and sent to Egypt to be tortured.

Special relationships and geopolitics

In many ways the Israel lobby obscures some foreign policy realities. The massive support for Israel and the few cases of censorship engineered by a mainstream pro-Israel organization, the undeniable pro-Israel bias in the mainstream media attest to the power of the Israel lobby but also distract from the framework of geopolitical guidelines.

Many in the Arab world or on the left argue that the US is anti-Muslim or anti-Arab and they use the frequent ideological use of the term "Islamofascist" by liberal hawks or neo-cons or Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* theories as evidence. In this perception foreign policy is ethnicized or becomes a new war of religion, or a so-called "clash of civilizations". Such a reduction has, strangely enough, been encouraged by some forms of American multiculturalism which have erased all non ethnic categories of analysis. In geopolitics it is the equivalent of reducing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a religious or ethnic one when it is primarily a historical-political one. There is a lot of anti-Arab racism among Americans (and Europeans too, for that matter) and the term

"Islamofascism" is a historical absurdity with dishonest connotations; yet racism and what Idith Zertal calls "the Nazification of the Arabs" do not explain the US-Israel relationship.³⁸ People in power in business and political circles do not act according to the theories of Huntington or Paul Berman.

The relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia is quite strong, the Bush family had close links with Prince Bandar and Saudi Arabia gets a lot of weapons from the US (sometimes over the opposition of the Israel lobby). The relationship between these two countries is complex and shows that a client state is given some literally undemocratic rights. The Saudis accepted the setting up of US bases in their country then asked the US to leave. Saudi Arabia proposed a peace plan for Palestine in 2002 that the US and Israel spurned; it brokered an agreement between Hamas and Fatah in 2007 which Israel and the US did everything to undermine. Yet Saudi Arabia supports US efforts to isolate Iran, it supported the US against Iraq in 1991 and it has become a *de facto* Israeli ally in the fight against Hezbollah and its Iranian backers. There is no strong extensive Saudi lobby in the US yet Saudi nationals were flown out of the US just after 9/11 although 15 of the hijackers who destroyed the Twin Towers came from Saudi Arabia. The congressional commission's report about 9/11 was censored: a large section about Saudi Arabia, 28 pages, was not released publicly.³⁹

Most serious analysts now agree that the US does not wish to foster democracy whatever the rhetoric resorted to in order to justify wars. Yet the ideas that the US's foreign policy is shaped by racism or religion are more anchored in opponents' minds. In a way this misconception is similar to the conclusions drawn about the Israel lobby: there are indications which seem to validate the interpretation but the phenomenon is not tackled in its entirety.

The US forms alliances, explicit or tacit, with all kinds of regimes, democratic or Islamic, and attacks all kinds of regimes Christian, democratic or not. In 1999, it launched a war in Kosovo supposedly to help a group of Muslims who had been considered terrorists a few years earlier. It toppled Christian regimes in Latin America and destroyed democracy in Chile. The ethnic or religious explanations for US foreign policy are plainly inadequate. All the explanations for US support based on a common Judeo-Christian and democratic value system miss this key fact. Machiavellians do not care very much about values or identities but rather care about achieving objectives by whatever means, ruse is indeed advocated by the author of *The Prince*. The case of Israel is no different. Just as racism and anti-Islam prejudices, though they are strong visible

realities, cannot fully explain US foreign policy, the visible power of the Israel lobby is not enough to explain the totality of US foreign policy in the Middle East.

US foreign policy has been fairly consistent in its organizing paradigms between NSC 48 in 1949, the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance and the 2002 and then 2006 National Security Documents. It has been focused on the prevention of the emergence of foreign rivals and the creation of a world order based on US hegemony. This is what Benjamin Schwartz called "Making the World Safe for Capitalism."⁴⁰ Within this frame some countries, groups or individuals are useful or necessary at different times but as Lord Palmerston said in the XIXth century: "Nations have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests." Iran was a useful pillar between 1941 and 1979, Israel became a very useful one after 1967, and Britain is often a useful ally but was not during the Vietnam War. These permanent interests are a much better predictor of US foreign policy than any particular friendship at any given moment. The US called on Israel when direct intervention in Latin America was difficult and Israel has mostly proved a very effective secret operations ally. Indeed Israel enjoys the support of the military-industrial complex within the US and also the support of large segments of the US intelligence community, mostly the CIA. Israel's usefulness as a client state may vary according to political circumstances but it has never totally disappeared even when the US stopped being restrained by the Soviet Union.

Does it mean then that Ury Avnery's joke about the dog wagging the tail and the tail wagging the dog has no relation to our topic? Not quite. Israel and its allies within the US, who are numerous and include Christian evangelicals, big business and large segments of the intelligentsia have clout over any US Administration, probably more so than any other country but it does not control the US foreign policy establishment against its will. Benjamin Schwartz talks about the US resorting to "adult supervision" in relation to its allies, mostly Japan and Germany. This is quite an apt metaphor. Indeed as any parent knows in a parent-child relationship the parent does not always control everything the child does. There are cases of children controlling their parents but often the child will push his or her luck and try to obtain as much as possible from a guideline-setting parent. Israel may be the US's current blue eyed boy, as the phrase goes, and therefore benefit from the very lenient attitude of its father yet there is a leash, not a very tight one but still a leash, restraining this favorite client state. The US under George W. Bush is said to have refused to go along Israeli plans to bomb Iran in the spring of 2008 so clearly keeping Israel on a leash.⁴¹

When a client state is particularly valuable it is allowed to do things that the dominant power dislikes or even disapproves of as long as it does not step over a red line. The US has, at various times, expressed its preference for the halting of illegal settlements in the occupied territories and then let Israel disregard this preference. The Israel lobby does play a part in this discrepancy between stated preferences and actual realities on the ground. Yet the US does not care much about the fate of Palestinians nor even Arab opinion in general and no force, military, political or even economic counterbalances Israel's and its supporters in the US. As all dominant powers, not to speak of hegemons, have done in the past, the US responds differently depending on the power of its rivals. It does not deal with Cuba in the same way as it does with China. Even Russia which has far more power than Palestinians or even the so-called Arab world is treated in a rather desultory or scornful fashion—except, of course, when it shows it has real power as during the Georgia crisis in 2008. What Israel does in relation to the Palestinians has relatively little geopolitical impact, at least in the short term. Indeed, Hezbollah worried Israel and the US more than Palestine for, with its Iranian and Russian weapons which cannot be stopped from getting to Lebanon, it is a more potent military rival than all Palestinian "terrorists".

The change in the public debate in the US, which Walt and Mearsheimer's publications in fact highlight as do the actions and publications of former President Carter indicate that the very situation Walt and Mearsheimer are describing is itself in a state of flux. They argue that Israel's usefulness has lessened with the end of the Cold War. It is easy to show that with the global war on terror Sharon was skilful at selling another form of usefulness to President Bush. Yet two factors are eroding the closeness of the US-Israeli alliance and the power of Israel's domestic American allies: the emergence of stronger and stronger dissident voices vis-à-vis Israel especially Jewish voices, but also other liberal voices and the changing geopolitical situation. Groups like *Jewish Voice for Peace*⁴² or a magazine like *Tikkun* show that it is more and more difficult for the organised mainstream Jewish organizations to claim to speak in the name of all American Jews. As Judith Butler says: "These groups are small, but they have become a thorn in the side of the mainstream Zionist organizations who can no longer so easily claim to represent all Jews in the U.S."⁴³

The rise of China will force the US to re-think its global hegemony and define its priorities more precisely. China has no particular interest in Palestine and has been involved in arms deals with Israel at different times but it can and probably will use Palestine as a chip in a larger battle. If the US pressures China over Darfur and the

Sudan or if it wants Chinese help in Korea or if it mentions Tibet officially too frequently China will retaliate rhetorically with Iraq, Iran and Palestine. So far the Chinese have mostly tried to benefit from Israeli technology but China also has a vested interest in good relations with oil producing countries and it might play the Palestine card to counter US hegemony or to level the score with the US. The Chinese will no doubt be able to play the Kissinger game of linkage to their advantage. The question of how long the US can maintain its very interventionist foreign policy, and therefore hegemony, in the light of huge domestic problems, from overdependence on oil, to budget and trade deficits and unsound financial practices needs to be asked.⁴⁴ Domestic economic problems will have an impact on foreign policy and therefore on the relationship with Israel.

During the Cold War, segregation in the South of the US projected a bad image of the US which wanted to appear as an anti-colonial power different from Europe. The huge discrepancy between official rhetoric and realities on the ground in Iraq has totally ruined all US efforts at so-called public diplomacy in most areas of the world.⁴⁵ Obama's election seems to have changed things but he is still untested. If he cannot stand up to Israel, by managing to stop further settlements in the occupied territories for instance, then his global popularity will plummet. US support for an Israel that flouts international law and resorts to brutality in its occupation of Palestinian land will also lead to international pressure on the part of stronger and stronger competitors. These pressures will not be stopped by the accusations of anti-Semitism which are leveled at any critic of Israeli policies. When President Carter is called anti-Israel and a bigot by an Israeli ambassador to the UN, when Tony Judt is accused of being anti-Israel, when Norman Finkelstein's mother is accused of having been a *kapo* in concentration camps, when France in 2002 was compared to the Germany of 1938 which carried out the murderous attacks of *Kristallnacht*, when all academics who criticize Israel's actions are slandered and often accused of being Holocaust deniers, it is clear that this frenzy of accusations has lost credibility and links to reality.

The meretricious use of the Holocaust to justify current Israeli policies is proving less and less successful; indeed it is becoming very dangerous and a source of concern for all those who wish to fight anti-Semitism.⁴⁶ Many New Israeli historians have punctured the official story of Zionism and the birth of Israel.⁴⁷ Some Israeli liberals or left wingers, for instance in the now weaker *Peace Now* movement, are angry at AIPAC for supporting the right in Israel and also for presuming to talk on behalf of Israelis and Israel, a country where they do not live. The political trajectory of someone like

Avraham Burg who was the speaker of the Knesset and the vice-president of the World Jewish Congress and now openly criticizes the way the Holocaust (*Shoah*) is used for partisan purposes in Israel and the pro-Israel lobby shows that a new era is dawning.⁴⁸ Burg, a religious person calls for more humanistic and universalistic values in Judaism, so for an end to exceptionalism. These Israeli developments are bound to have an impact on the so-called pro-Israel discourse in the US. Also not to be discounted is the fact that some Israeli military analysts and members of the secret services (Mossad) are now, with the US impasse in Iraq and the Israeli failure in the Lebanon war, questioning the impact the US has on Israeli politics. So some Israeli academics and military experts, for different reasons, now push for a distancing from the US and therefore a dismantling of the special relationship.⁴⁹

Like the NRA, the Cuban lobby or the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), AIPAC and its affiliated lobbies or PACs are very effective in their corner of US politics. This is something Walt and Mearsheimer document well and, like these lobbies, the pro-Israel lobby does not have to contend with a strong opponent. Israel itself is very effective at lobbying and getting what it wants from the US in terms of weapons, political support or financial assistance. So the Israeli tail does wag the American dog but only in the areas that do not seriously challenge the geopolitical objectives of the US. Like any other relationship this special relationship between two states will change both for US domestic reasons and geopolitical ones. The rise of emergent powers like India and China will change the geopolitical game and the US might have to relent somewhat in its support of Israel. The term "chinamerica" has emerged to underline the mutual interdependency of these two countries.⁵⁰ Already Syria has moved from pariah to courted regional power. The flurry of publications critical of Israel in the US is an indication that the Israel lobby is losing some of its still formidable grip on debate. Yet as states, both the US and Israel are not exceptional, they are "cold monsters" as De Gaulle said of all states, they behave according to Machiavellian lines, that is according to what their ruling elites determine are their interests. Israel may be a turbulent child who violates some of the US's desires, or preferences but is not strong enough to impose its will on a reluctant superpower.

¹ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World*, (New York: W.W Norton & Co, 2008), 316.

² Ibid, 469.

³ "The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy", The longer Kennedy School of Government version on Harvard's site is at: <http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP06-011> See their book

too, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, (New York, Farrar: Straus and Giroux, 2007) Alan Dershowitz's reply is on the same site at:

http://www.hks.harvard.edu/research/working_papers/dershowitzreply.pdf

Walt and Mearsheimer, two American academic stars, made the most scholarly and well-researched claim for undue influence of the "Israel lobby" which they define too extensively. Their article, then book, present a few problems. See below. For readers of French an article written by an American political scientist teaching in Paris: ""Le 'Lobby Juif' aux Etats-Unis : contre les stéréotypes, la transparence", in *Mouvements*, issue 33-34, 2004/3-4., 98-107.

⁴ Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: the United States, Israel, and the Palestinians*, Updated ed, (London: Pluto Press, 1999). See also, Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

⁵ On Iran and the US, see: Stephen Kinzler, *All the Shah's Men; An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, (John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, NJ, 2003). This book indirectly shows that actors had more or less power given the personalities and advisors of various presidents.

⁶ Edward Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

⁷ Paul Findley, *They Dare to Speak Out: People and Institutions Confront Israel's Lobby*, (Westport: Conn, 1985).

⁸ See, among many other similar pieces, Michael Lerner's interview on The Israel Lobby at: <http://www.tikkun.org/magazine/tik0709/frontpage/israellobby> Johann Hari: "The Loathsome Smearing of Israel's Critics", *The Independent* (UK), May 8, 2008 and Mike Marqusee, *The Guardian*, Tuesday March 4 2008, "The First Time I Was Called a Self-Hating Jew".

⁹ See: John F. Rothmann's article "Nixon's Israel Support Cannot Excuse his Anti-Semitism", *Jewish News Weekly*, December 20, 1996. Available at: http://www.jewishsf.com/content/2-0/module/displaystory/story_id/5185/edition_id/95/format/html/displaystory.html

Here is a quotation by Chaim Herzog, Israel's Sixth President: Though he was considered something of a political pariah -- particularly in light of his unequivocally anti-Semitic statements in the H.R. Haldeman diaries -- did his personal attitudes have any effect on his dealing with Israel and with Jews? None. He supplied arms and unflinching support when our very existence would have been in danger without them. Let his comments be set against his actions. His words may have raised eyebrows -- but not his actions. And I'll chose [sic] actions over words any day of the week."

¹⁰ Andrew and Leslie Cockburn, *Dangerous Liaison, The Inside Story of the U.S.-Israeli Covert Relationship*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 48.

¹¹ Mentioned by Andrew and Leslie Cockburn, *op cit.* p. 250. They add that he also had of portrait of Moshe Dayan.

¹² On the difficult question of a common ethnicity, see: Shlomo Sand, *Comment le peuple juif fut inventé*, Paris, Fayard, 2008 (translated from Hebrew). In another book *Les Mots et la terre; Les intellectuels en Israël*, Paris, Fayard, 2006 (translated from Hebrew) Sand argues "It is sometimes painful to see how much some basic traits of modern anti-Semitism have rubbed off on the definitions given by 'certified' intellectuals of Jewish historical thought and of the national Zionist idea", (177-178).

¹³ Tony Judt who was barred from giving a talk at the Polish consulate in New York in 2006 by a so-called Jewish organization had to say he is Jewish for the *New York Times* to publish an op-ed on the Israel lobby by him. This op-ed was entitled: "A Lobby Not a Conspiracy" and was published on April 19, 2006. See his closely reasoned article: "Israel: the Alternative", *New York Review of Books*, October 23, 2003 and, more recently: "The 'Problem of Evil' in Postwar Europe", *The New York Review of Books*, Volume 55, Number 2, February 14, 2008.

¹⁴ Abe Foxman's *The Deadliest Lies: the Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) is a typical effort to discredit any critic of Israel and demonize him or her. He lambastes Walt and Mearsheimer but also Tony Judt whose research and intellectual status he finds mediocre.

¹⁵ In a *Nation* article, "Lobbying Degree Zero", October 22, 2007, Daniel Lazarre wrote: "To be sure, Mearsheimer and Walt are not anti-Semites, and *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* does not portray Israel as uniquely evil or "singularly pernicious." But just because a book is not bigoted does not mean it is good, and the one that Mearsheimer and Walt have written suffers from significant methodological deficiencies, which is a polite way of saying it's a mess." So the issue of anti-Semitism is quite different from the issue of the validity of the thesis.

¹⁶ Alfred Grosser is a French professor who fled Nazi Germany because he was threatened as a Jew. "Warum ich Israel kritisieren; Die israelische Politik ist unrecht. Wer sie bekämpft, ist kein Antisemit – sondern legt an Jerusalem lediglich gleiche Maßstäbe an". *Internationale Politik*, February 2007.

¹⁷ See my article on US Jews and their diversity: "Fighting for the Hearts and Minds of American Jews; Identity Politics at the Crossroads of Domestic and Foreign Policy" in the online journal, GRAAT <http://www.graat.fr/Pierre%20Guerlain.pdf>

¹⁸ See: Tony Smith, *Foreign Attachments: the Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000).

¹⁹ 25 April 2006, <http://timeintelaviv.blogspot.com/2006/04/uri-avner-on-chomsky-and-symbiosis.html>

²⁰ The article was first refused in the US and published in London by the *London Review of Books* before Harvard put it on its Kennedy School of Government website and then withdrew its logo. Jonathan Cook includes a discussion of this debate in his book: *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations; Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East*, (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 86 & following.

²¹ See Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: the American Encounter with the World since 1776*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

²² Ariel Sharon carried out a massacre in Qibya a Jordanian village in 1953, as Defense Minister in 1982 during the Lebanon war, he let Christian Phalange militias carry out the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla for which he was censured (Kahan Commission). He had to give up his job as Defense Minister though he remained in the Cabinet, he started the 2nd intifada by paying an inflammatory visit to the Al Aqsa (Temple Mount) area where Muslims pray on September 28, 2000 and in 2002 he was Prime Minister when massacres took place in Jenin.

²³ See the documentary, Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land, *U.S. Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict How Israel manipulates and distorts American public perceptions* available at: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article14055.htm>

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- ²⁴ See the *New York Times* summary of the case at http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/r/steven_j_rosen/index.html
Lawrence Franklin, the person who passed on information to the two former AIPAC officials (Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman) is serving a 12 year sentence in prison. Thus the spies did not get information from a person sentenced for passing classified information.
- ²⁵ Christopher Ketcham, "An Israeli Trojan Horse", *CounterPunch*, September 27/28, 2008.
<http://www.counterpunch.org/ketcham09272008.html>
- ²⁶ See Richard Falk and Howard Friel, *Israel-Palestine on Record: how the New York Times Misreports Conflict in the Middle East*, (New York & London: Verso, 2007) and by the same authors: *The Record of the Paper : how the New York Times Misreports US Foreign Policy*, (London:Verso, 2004).
- ²⁷ <http://www.btselem.org/English/>
- ²⁸ See the *New York Times* article: "Navy Forgoes Courts-Martial for Officers of Stark", July, 28, 1987.
<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DE6DD1439F93BA15754C0A961948260>
- ²⁹ In a lecture delivered at MIT on December 14, 2000 Chomsky stated: "Iraq was permitted to attack the USS Stark, the destroyer, and kill 37 crewmen with missiles, and didn't even get a tap on the wrist. That means you're really privileged if you are allowed to do that. Up until then, the only country that had been allowed to do that was Israel in 1967 in the case of the USS Liberty. And remember, this is an Arab state. That was important. Again, nobody pays much attention here, but in the region people paid attention. In particular, Iran paid attention. This was part of what convinced Iran to capitulate to Iraq as the U.S. wanted." http://web.media.mit.edu/~nitin/mideast/chomsky_lecture.html
- ³⁰ Craig Murray, *Murder in Samarkand; A British Ambassador's Controversial Defiance of Tyranny in the War on Terror*, (Edinburgh: Mainline Publishing, 2007).
- ³¹ http://www.parade.com/export/sites/default/articles/web_exclusives/2007/02-11-2007/dictators08.html
- ³² *Palestine Peace not Apartheid*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).
- ³³ Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds), *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, (London: Verso, 2001) [1988]. Edward Said, "America's Last Taboo", *New Left Review*, Nov-Dec 2000, 45-53. Aruri Naseer Hasan, *Dishonest Broker: the US role in Israel and Palestine*, (Cambridge: South End Press, 2003). Norman Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, (London: Verso, 1995).
- ³⁴ Edward Said, 'America's Last Taboo', *New Left Review* 6, November 2000, 46-47.
- ³⁵ Addison Wesley, Reading, Mass.
- ³⁶ James Petras, *The Power of Israel in the United States*, Atlanta, Clarity Press, 2006. Petras uses the highly problematic expression "Jewish Lobby" thus privileging an ethnic interpretation of policies and silencing the numerous Jewish voices who disagree with the Israel lobby. Jeffrey Blankfort, "A Debate on the Israel Lobby", *CounterPunch*, February 24 / 25, 2007.
<http://www.counterpunch.org/blankfort02242007.html> See also his: " Damage Control: Noam Chomsky and the Israel-Palestine Conflict", <http://www.voltairenet.org/article143519.html>
- ³⁷ <http://infomideast.com/wordpress/?p=434> "This Fundamentalist Quartet – the oil industry, the military complex, AIPAC and Christian Zionists – is strongly behind the present American vision of 'a new

Middle East'. This coveted Middle East will be subjected economically to the needs of the American way of life and in it, Israel would be allowed to take over most of historical Palestine and slowly cleanse the native population out of it. Around the expanded Jewish state there will be only secular Arab regimes that support US policy and reconcile with Israel." Ilan Pappé is the author of *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

³⁸ *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, (Cambridge: Harvard U.P, 2005).

³⁹ "The Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities Before and After the Terrorist Attacks of September 2001".

⁴⁰ "Why America Thinks it Has to Run the World", *The Atlantic Monthly* June 1996. Available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/96jun/schwarz/schwarz.htm>

⁴¹ See the article in *The Guardian*, September 25, 2008, "Israel asked US for green light to bomb nuclear sites in Iran". It is quite significant that it is the Bush Administration, the one closest to Israel, which made this decision. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/25/iran.israelandthepalestinians1>

⁴² Website: <http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org>

⁴³ *Logos* 3.1 – Winter 2004 Available at: <http://www.logosjournal.com/butler.htm> (accessed April 28, 2008).

⁴⁴ See: Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Limits of Power, The End of American Exceptionalism*, New York, Metropolitan, 2008 and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Alternatives: the United States Confronts the World*, Boulder, Colorado, Paradigm Publishers, 2004 and by Wallerstein too: "The United States in the Middle East, The Evolution of Its Israeli Policy", *New Politics*, Summer 2008, vol.11, n°5, 59-66 which is a very good potted history of the US-Israel relationship since the 1940s.

⁴⁵ For a presentation of the illegal activities encouraged by a small group around Vice President Cheney see: Jane Meyer, *The Dark Side, The Inside Story of How the War on Terror Turned into a War on American Ideals*, (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

⁴⁶ See Tony Judt's article in *Haaretz*, May 5, 2006. "In many parts of the world this is in danger of becoming a self-fulfilling assertion: Israel's reckless behavior and insistent identification of all criticism with anti-Semitism is now the leading source of anti-Jewish sentiment in Western Europe and much of Asia. But the traditional corollary — if anti-Jewish feeling is linked to dislike of Israel then right-thinking people should rush to Israel's defense — no longer applies. Instead, the ironies of the Zionist dream have come full circle. For tens of millions of people in the world today, Israel is indeed the state of all the Jews. And thus, reasonably enough, many observers believe that one way to take the sting out of rising anti-Semitism in the suburbs of Paris or the streets of Jakarta would be for Israel to give the Palestinians back their land." And Norman Birnbaum: "Is Israel good for the Jews", *The Nation*, August 5, 2006.

⁴⁷ See, among many: Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge U.P, 2005) and in French a general presentation of all this new historical research: Dominique Vidal and Sébastien Boussois, *Comment Israël expulsa les Palestiniens (1947-1949); Les Révélations des nouveaux historiens*, (Paris: Les Editions de l'Atelier, 2007).

⁴⁸ See his *Vaincre Hitler, Pour un judaïsme plus humaniste et universaliste*, (Paris: Fayard, 2008, (translated from Hebrew). The English version, *The Holocaust Is Over, We Must Rise From its Ashes*, was published in London by Palgrave Macmillan in October 2008.

⁴⁹ See Gabriel Kolko, "Israel, Iran and the Bush Administration", *CounterPunch*, February 10-11, 2007.
<http://www.counterpunch.org/kolko02102007.html>

⁵⁰ The term "chinamérique" is used by Michel Rogalski in his editorial for the October- December 2008 issue of *Recherches Internationales* (N° 84) "Chine/Etats-Unis, le nouveau G2".