

U.S. – Israeli Relations in the Future

A Response to The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy

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PURPOSE

In September of 2007, Professors John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, esteemed academics and prolific members of the realist school of thought of international relations, co-authored a book denouncing the unparalleled and unconditional support the United States gives to the State of Israel. In their book, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, they argue that the “Israel Lobby” has a “stranglehold” on American foreign policy and that the lobby’s disproportionate influence is directed at passing policies that are against the interests of the United States¹. The authors build their case by disputing the popular consensus that supporting Israel is beneficial to the United States from the perspective of moral and strategic considerations.

The purpose of this essay is to show that support for Israel should not be dismissed based on the moral and strategic criteria proposed by Professors Mearsheimer and Walt and that American support for Israel is still in the best interest of the United States. This will be done by first demonstrating that America’s commitment to its founding principles helped it gain the power and prestige it enjoyed throughout most of the post-WWII era. Next, I will argue that America squandered its power and sullied its reputation by enacting foreign policies that went against America’s core ideologies. Finally, I will show how Israel complements the American ideological framework, specifically in the context of Israel’s 2006 war with Hezbollah.

HISTORICAL CREDIBILITY

The United States was founded upon the principles, ideals and beliefs of freedom, justice and equality, which serve as the foundation of the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Looking at America from the perspective of international relations, American foreign policy was remarkably non-interventionist for most of its history. By the end of World War II, however, America was the most powerful nation on earth; it could not be challenged economically and the only potential threat

militarily came from the Soviet Union. Just as perilous, the Soviet Union presented the United States with an antagonistic, ideological alternative.

The postwar balance of power was completely bipolar. Despite its economic and militaristic advantages, the United States had more than enough to worry about as the Soviet Union gobbled up Eastern Europe, and communist parties seemed poised to take power in several other European countries. In order to craft and extend its new hegemonic role in the world, the United States had to make its stand. President Harry S. Truman understood that in order to do this, he had to convince people worldwide that the American way of life was superior to the socialist experiment. Therefore, unexpectedly, America's strongest weapon in its arsenal became its ideals which laid in the foundation of freedom for all. American hegemony relied on it being perceived as the noble, gentle giant as opposed to the Soviet savage.

America garnered worldwide respect and admiration because it was the first superpower in history to bear heavy economic and human costs in its efforts to promote democratic ideals and secure freedom for the oppressed, while gaining marginally less in strategic benefits. America came to be viewed as a nation that stood for something greater than self-interest, whether or not it was acting according to strategic considerations. It can be noted that for the most part, actions taken by the United States in the name of its favorite cause *célèbre*, freedom, have also produced strategically beneficial results. For example, President Truman pledged hundreds of millions of dollars to Turkey and Greece as part of a foreign policy shift that became known as the Truman Doctrine. Obviously, such a move was intended to curb Soviet influence in the region, and this was in the strategic self-interest of the U.S. However, the precursor to this strategic position was based on the fact that American ideology is fervently against the Soviet credo, and a repression of the Soviet Empire would be both in the strategic interests of the United States and in accordance with its moral obligations and interests. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said during his recent campaign to capture the presidency that "Americans have understood their duty to serve a cause greater than self-interest,"² and during the Cold War this belief took form mainly through a policy of opposing communist regimes wherever there was a threat of their coming to power. The implications of such a policy sometimes meant that the U.S. had to ally itself with rulers who were about as evil as the communists it was trying to contain. This is clear upon examining the third wave of democratization that swept Africa, Latin America and parts of Europe during the 1970s. Contrary to the belief that newly decolonized nations unleashed from years of authoritarian rule, or recovering European nations who were trying to rebuild their societies, would emulate America's

political and economic institutions and become more democratic and liberal, some instead embraced revolutionary movements and extreme left-wing governments that were financed by the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, staying the course in opposing any communist expansion sometimes meant allying with brutal dictators and corrupt regimes such as Suharto in Indonesia, Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines and Augusto Pinochet in Chile³. As an extension to the Truman Doctrine, the U.S. government was committed to protecting any country from external aggression, even proclaiming and actually financing internal armed coups against possible communist regimes, such as in Guatemala and Nicaragua during the 1980s. This meant that on many occasions, due to the context of the Cold War and Soviet advances, the U.S. even propped up several dictators and governments that acted in ways opposite to the principles the U.S. endorsed. Such is the game of international politics; in order to stop a larger threat, countries must do things they are not proud of in order to best serve their strategic interests. This does not mean, however, that choosing between the lesser of two evils is a complete deviation from American ideological or moral obligations regarding its foreign policy.

THE SQUANDERING OF AMERICAN POWER

With the collapse of the Soviet Union came the demise of one of the most fearful foes America had ever faced. To most Americans, the world seemed much safer and they felt they no longer had a need to serve as the world's moral police. The conflicts in Somalia in 1993 and Kosovo in 1998 convinced many Americans that it was time to focus on domestic issues. Many saw little reason to intervene in the internal affairs of Third World countries if it wasn't to stop the spread of communism. The delicate balance between prosperity and security was shifting. America was the only superpower in the world; the Soviet threat was gone and with it the greatest threat to freedom worldwide and at home. President George H. W. Bush and the Democratic Congress advocated that it was time for the U.S. to capitalize on its "peace dividend," a term used to describe the economic benefits of reducing the military budget in order to focus on issues needing the most attention on the home front.⁴ The guns versus butter argument struck people as a legitimate reason to stop mediating every squabble on the globe and concentrate instead on fixing crumbling bridges, remedying a broken educational system and advancing a lagging economy at home.

Throughout the 1990s, America restrained itself in actively championing ideological principles, especially when circumstances did not dictate strategic

importance. The rhetoric was as strong as always, but real action seldom followed the grand speeches made by American presidents calling for robust democracy and freedom worldwide. The genocide in Rwanda could have been mitigated if not prevented had America forcibly intervened; however, since the small African country held little or no strategic value to American interests, the grisly massacres were allowed to take place. One can see the effects of such an attitude in the current situation in Darfur. It is shameful that the American government does not reclaim the beacon of hope and justice that it has upheld for many decades, long one of the greatest sources of American hegemony and legitimacy.

Increasingly, American strategic interests are inextricably linked to economic prosperity, paralleled by a sense of indifference to uphold human rights. This means that whereas in the past, the U.S. would assist other nations for reasons that included a genuine concern for the rights of its peoples, nowadays, the U.S. is more concerned about securing its own economic interests. This is mainly a result of the disappearance of the main ideological threat that was the Soviet Union. A side effect is that today, it is much harder for the U.S. to claim ideological hegemony, especially in light of foreign policy errors committed in the past few years which have squandered American power, weakened the American economy, stretched out American military forces and caused a debilitating blow to American leverage, influence and credibility. Strong allies, apprehensive to criticize the U.S. in the past, now openly and vociferously attack U.S. policies. A sense of mutuality and cooperation, always a cornerstone of successful American foreign policy, has all but vanished in the eyes of many of America's past key allies. A prime example of such a situation occurred in 2005 when the U.S. urged Turkey not to attack the PKK, a terrorist-separatist group fighting for Kurdish independence which conducted raids on Turkish territory from bases located in the northern, mountainous region of Iraq. Normally, the U.S. would not relent to an offensive terrorist organization and would not advise its allies to do the same, especially considering the dangerous strategic risks posed by a Turkish capitulation to Kurdish hostility, but since such an attack would potentially cause further destabilization in Iraq (which in turn would harm U.S. interests), the U.S. strongly pressed the Turkish government not to respond with force. The Turkish government did not heed the American advice and instead chose to invade, albeit with quite little success.

The sense that America is losing the moral high ground is evident in America's handling of the "War on Terror." Some of the loudest protests over American operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere have been in response to American actions that do not coincide with the stated American

mission. Evidence of torture at the Abu Ghraib prison, the execution of Iraqi civilians in Haditha by U.S. Marines, and the lengthy internment of suspected terrorists in Guantanamo Bay and other rumored secret prisons are all elements of an American policy involving tactics befitting brutal autocracies, not the most enlightened, freedom-loving country in the history of the world.

It is important to realize that incorporating moral and ideological considerations into its foreign policy is in the strategic and moral interests of the United States. America won the world's admiration for sticking to what it believed in and lost it when it deviated off course. In order for America to be a legitimate, credible world leader, it must adhere to its founding principles which for the past six decades have inspired nations and peoples across the globe to embrace the presence of American benevolence.

HOW ISRAEL FITS THE IDEOLOGICAL EQUATION

Following the argument that moral and ideological considerations should be weighed when formulating foreign policy, it follows that support for Israel can be assessed, at least in part, based on moral standards. Professors Mearsheimer and Walt's book, *The Israel Lobby*, argues that in the case of U.S. support for Israel, the moral argument does not hold based on their claim that Israel is not morally superior to its enemies and that therefore, support for Israel should not be based on its moral high ground. It is perplexing that Professors Mearsheimer and Walt use ideological and moral standards in their case against Israel in the first place because they are "prominent figures in the realist school of international relations, which discounts international law, human rights, and other legal and moral concerns in foreign policy."⁵ Realists don't believe that moral justifications should be part of foreign policy calculations because morals are beyond the scope of strategic interests. Therefore, one has to wonder why they include such reasoning if, according to their stated school of thought, these criteria do not play a part in their considerations.

Before debating why Israel is presently considered to be an ideological ally of the United States, let us examine the reasons behind initial U.S. support for the State of Israel. There are several strategic factors that historians cite as to why Truman, the U.S. president at the time, immediately recognized the newly established State of Israel. Some have proposed that Truman saw in his support for the Jewish state a chance to capture Jewish votes in the upcoming presidential election, that he was influenced by the Israel Lobby, or that he wanted to create a foothold in the region in order to halt

Soviet advances. While there might be truth to these arguments, they are not sufficient to explain the full scope of the president's decision; Truman's inner circle has proclaimed that he would never sacrifice long-term national goals for the sake of short-term political expediency.⁶ Those who knew him best would say that "[his] pro-Israel outlook 'was based primarily on humanitarian, moral, and sentimental grounds, many of which were an outgrowth of the president's religious upbringing and his familiarity with the Bible.'" ⁷ Truman strongly believed, in light of the continuing spread of communism, that a world based on Judeo-Christian values would finally bring some sort of stability and peace opposed to the imposing evil he saw in communism. Furthermore, through his meetings with Zionist leaders, Truman was reassured that the State of Israel would be a democratic nation founded on principles similar to those articulated in the U.S. Declaration of Independence. The fact that Truman was aware of the ensuing wrath that recognizing Israel would trigger in the oil-rich Arab nations bolsters the claim that his move was done in light of moral considerations. It is a logically and analytically weak argument that Truman would sacrifice Arab oil for Jewish votes, but it is not inconceivable that Truman would act in a way that even the State Department advised against when he firmly believed that such an act was in the moral and therefore strategic best interests of the United States. In fact, Truman said that he would "handle this problem not in the light of oil, but in the light of justice."⁸ Professors Mearsheimer and Walt fail to recognize that today, the ideological commonalities between Israel and the United States form the basis for the American consensus on a foreign policy that emphasizes unconditional commitment to Israel, not, as they maintain, the ability of the Israel Lobby to falsely convince Congress that supporting Israel is still in the best interests of the United States.⁹

In order to back up their argument that American support should not be based on moral claims, Mearsheimer and Walt bring up numerous points regarding supposed Israeli immoral actions that go against American values and hence require that America reconsider its support for a country that is not, in fact, ideologically or morally similar to the United States. Their arguments regarding the "dwindling moral case" against Israel include assertions that the early leaders of the Yishuv (the Jewish community before the establishment of Israel) agreed to the 1947 Partition Plan which divided Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states because they secretly recognized this was the first step in conquering the whole of Palestine. Other contentions include evidence of abuse of Arab minority rights, the continuing occupation of Palestinian territories, accusations that Israel was at fault for its failure to reach final peace talks at the 2000 Camp David

summit due to an unsatisfactory peace offer, that Israel cannot claim the moral high ground in its ongoing battle against Palestinians in the occupied territories, and finally, that the creation of Israel itself involved a moral crime against the Palestinians.

While it is true that some elements of the early Zionist movement, members of the Revisionist faction led by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, advocated the creation of a Jewish state within the boundaries of "Greater Israel," a synonym for the biblical lands that once comprised Israel and Judea and Samaria, the bulk of Zionist leaders, among them Theodore Herzl and Chaim Weizmann,

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called for a modern, Western-oriented, liberal democracy, preferably in Palestine. It should also be noted that these Revisionist organizations were dismantled by the Ben-Gurion government, as they were his political opponents and he saw their ideology as a threat to the stability and unity of the fledgling country. Mearsheimer and Walt also claim that there was some sort of conspiracy to take over all of Palestine in the long run based

on quotes that are often taken out of context. For example, the authors use a quote by Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to make it seem that he was in favor of removing the Arab population in Palestine by "brutal compulsion"¹⁰ when, in fact, the quote originally meant to say that because removal of the Arab population would require "brutal compulsion," it should not be "part of our programme."¹¹

Regarding Arab minority rights and the Palestinian question, Mearsheimer and Walt misinterpret the situation as a matter of morality when in fact both are factors of the obsession Israel maintains regarding its own security. Just as the United States sometimes deviated from its moral positions in order to secure more important strategic goals, Israel also acts in ways contrary to principles articulated in its own Declaration of Independence in order to secure what it considers vital strategic and security objectives. Due to this, though Arabs enjoy the same political rights under the law as Jews do, their civil rights are not the same as those guaranteed to Israel's Jewish citizens, while the rights of Palestinians living in the occupied territories are even more limited than those of Arab Israelis. This problem can be linked to security matters – Israel's enemies are mostly Arab with the exception of Persian Iran, so there has been and continues to be a constant suspicion

among Israelis of their fellow Arab citizens vis-à-vis dual loyalty among Israeli Arabs. The recent terrorist attack by an Arab living in East Jerusalem who possessed an Israeli identification card (he refused Israeli citizenship but his ID card gave him unrestricted movement in Israel) is evidence of why many in Israel still have qualms about where Arab Israelis' loyalties lie. Some have even balked at the idea that the notion of an Israeli Arab exists – they contend that they are simply Arabs who live in the State of Israel due to unwanted circumstances outside of their control.

The occupation of Palestinian territories is also a matter of security. This essay will not delve into the question of whether the occupation is or ever was in Israel's best security interests, but it should be noted that the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were conquered in a war, much like the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico and parts of the western United States were acquired. The difference between those cases and the Israeli scenario is that Israel continues to occupy a foreign people, while the U.S. annexed the lands it conquered and forced the lands' inhabitants to become citizens. Israel will never annex the Gaza Strip or the West Bank because the integration of such a large, hostile, Arab population would threaten the identity of Israel as a Jewish state. A few morally disparaging aspects of this situation is that the Israeli government bears responsibility for creating desperate humanitarian conditions and for continuing to build and expand settlements in the occupied territories, despite U.S. opposition.

Mearsheimer and Walt's assertion that the 2000 peace summit at Camp David, held by President Bill Clinton at the end of his term, didn't follow through because Israel's offer was less than satisfactory is factually incorrect. This has ramifications in that it creates an image of Israel as a country intent on sidelining Palestinian rights to their own viable country, when in fact Israel's proposal was generous enough that Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia told Arafat that not taking the deal would amount to a "crime against the Palestinian people."¹² Bruce Reidel, a chief negotiator on the Israeli team, Dennis Ross, chief negotiator for the American team, and even President Clinton have all put the blame for the failure of the peace talks squarely on former Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat. Mearsheimer and Walt's analysis is incorrect because they base their argument on a map that reflected the Palestinian view of what their future state would look like, when in fact, the final draft that was rejected by Arafat included a contiguous Palestinian state in 95% of the West Bank, and all of the Gaza Strip, with a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem.

Mearsheimer and Walt are completely incorrect when they attempt to equate Israeli defensive military operations with Palestinian resistance

tactics. Mearsheimer and Walt fail outright to recognize the difference between “deliberately targeting civilians and inadvertently killing civilians while targeting terrorists who hide among them.”¹³ The point they overlook is that there is a moral, qualitative difference between “unintended wrongs and purposeful wrong.”¹⁴ In one instance, Mearsheimer and Walt simply list the number of Palestinians and Israelis killed during the second Intifada, concluding that Israel killed 3.4 Palestinians for every one Israeli killed.¹⁵ Their statistics overlook the fact that Israeli military operations carried out in response to deliberate Palestinian attacks on civilian targets with the intended purpose of killing as many civilians as possible, including women and children, are legitimate, rightful uses of force to defend the citizens of Israel. On the other hand, Mearsheimer and Walt lightly condemn Palestinian terror tactics while giving them some legitimacy, saying that “[t]his behavior is not surprising ... because the Palestinians have long been denied basic political rights and believe they have no other way to force Israeli concessions.”¹⁶ The analytical technique used by Mearsheimer and Walt implies using even-handed qualitative standards to compare two parties that have behaved very differently. Their argument would be the same as saying that the crimes committed by Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda deserve the same level of condemnation as “collateral damage” that are a result of American bombing campaigns on al-Qaeda strongholds.

Finally, Mearsheimer and Walt close their argument by claiming that the creation of Israel in the first place was a “moral crime” against the Palestinian people.¹⁷ As Harvard Law School Professor Alan Dershowitz puts it, “The authors invert cause and effect by presenting the creation of the State of Israel, without any historical context, as the *cause* of a great crime, rather than the *reaction* to one.”¹⁸ Without trying to explain the history behind the founding of the state or the implications of the Holocaust on the Jewish people, Mearsheimer and Walt opt instead to concentrate on the “crime” Jews committed by trying to safeguard their future survival in a state of their own.

Professors Mearsheimer and Walt’s argument that the U.S. has no special responsibility to Israel based on the fact that Israel itself is not morally up to par with American standards is a weak one that should not determine the extent of American commitment to Israel.

ISRAEL AS A STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

“Instead of being a strategic asset, in fact, Israel has become a strategic liability for the United States,”¹⁹ Professors Mearsheimer and Walt argue. In addition to dismissing Israel as a moral ally, they claim that an intensive

commitment to Israel is not in the best strategic interests of the United States. Included in their rationale for this assertion is the fact that Israel's greatest strategic value as a deterrent to Soviet expansion is no longer relevant, that Israel was a liability and not an asset during the 1991 Gulf War, that Israel is not a true partner in the War on Terror, and most importantly, that unequivocal American support for Israel is the main reason behind global anti-American sentiment that fuels the wrath of terrorist organizations.²⁰ The authors' analytical argument, however, is substantiated on random quotes and figures as they attempt to make their claim against Israel. For example, Mearsheimer and Walt use a quote from Osama bin Laden's 1996 fatwa titled "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of Two Holy Places," that blood spilled in Palestine is the result of an "American-Israeli conspiracy," to conclude that bin Laden's "most prominent grievance" against the United States is its support for Israel²¹. However, it is widely known that the American presence in Saudi Arabia prompted bin Laden to begin planning Sept. 11. Another example includes discounting the claim that Israel is an essential ally in confronting rogue states such as Libya, Syria and Iran based on the fact that those countries' total population and GDP do not come close to those of the United States, and thus, these countries pose no threat to the United States and do not require any assistance from Israel.²² This is not a logical argument; al-Qaeda is an organization that includes merely thousands of members and has access to a very limited funds, unlike the resources available to rogue states that sponsor terrorism, yet it still managed to inflict the most deadly attack on American soil in history.

Mearsheimer and Walt fail to recognize Israel as a legitimate strategic asset. For example, they overlook the fact that, in addition to containing Soviet influence, Israel kept radical Arab regimes in check, with the most notable examples being the Israeli support given to the United States and Jordan during an impending Syrian invasion of Jordan, and the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981. Indeed, after the first Gulf War, then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney thanked the Israelis for taking care of the Iraqi nuclear reactor before the threat could materialize into something worse, and though it has not yet been verified, the same might be said of the recent raid on a suspected future nuclear reactor in Syria in September 2007.

Regarding the 1991 Gulf War, Mearsheimer and Walt claim that Israel posed a threat to the unity of the international coalition due to Arab threats of breaking the coalition if Israel joined. It is true that in addition to dissuading Israel from sending its own troops as part of the coalition, the U.S. also pressured Israel not to respond to Scud missile attacks during the

war in order to prevent dissent amongst Arab members of the coalition. The fact that Israel acquiesced was because the U.S. has a special relationship with Israel, not despite it; in this case, U.S.-Israeli relations were in the best interests of the U.S. Irrespective of this so-called “liability,” Israel contributed to the war effort by providing the U.S. with military equipment such as more effective missiles for U.S. B-52 bombers, pilotless drones for reconnaissance missions, and mobile bridges for the Marine Corps.²³

Concerning the War on Terror, Mearsheimer and Walt dismiss the rationale of an alliance based on fighting a common enemy by claiming that they are fighting the enemy for different reasons. While this might be true, it does not mean that Israel and the U.S. cannot work together to combat the same enemy. Highly important to both countries is Israel’s ability to develop

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advanced military technologies which assist the U.S. in its campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan²⁴. Israel is credited with inventing the Arrow missile defense system which would protect against incoming aerial attacks. Israel contributes to the common effort to fight terrorism by advising the U.S. on matters with which Israelis have much more experience: interrogation tactics, special operations and close fighting

in urban areas.²⁵ Also, Israel provides the U.S. with invaluable intelligence, especially human intelligence, concerning the very same enemies they face.

Finally, Mearsheimer and Walt assume that once the U.S. stops supporting Israel, Islamic fundamentalists would have no reason to hate the U.S. with such ferocity. This assumption is both naïve and incorrect. Terrorists would simply use other excuses for continuing their attacks on the U.S. regardless of American support for Israel, such as the presence of American troops near the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and accusations of neo-Imperialist ambitions in the region.

In fact, bin Laden was primarily motivated by the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia. 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 Sept. 11 hijackers originated — and not the *Jewish* state that most clearly precipitated Sept. 11.²⁶

SUMMER 2006: ISRAEL VS. HEZBOLLAH

“It did not make strategic sense for the Bush Administration to back Israel’s disproportionate response to Hezbollah’s provocations, and there was also no compelling moral case for supporting Israel’s conduct,”²⁷ say Professors Mearsheimer and Walt regarding Israel’s summer offensive against Hezbollah. It should be evident, however, that in this case, the U.S. was justified in providing consistent military and diplomatic support to Israel. Hezbollah guerrillas invaded Israel, kidnapped two soldiers and killed eight more, and then began to bombard and shell northern Israel with indiscriminant rocket fire. Clearly, Israel was defending its country and its citizens; undoubtedly, Israeli security was threatened. Barry Posen argues, “Security traditionally encompasses the preservation of a nation’s physical safety, the country’s sovereignty and its territorial integrity, and its power position – the last being the necessary means to the first three.”²⁸ Israel’s position of power was threatened by an Iranian-backed, non-state actor which was encroaching upon Israeli territory and sovereignty. By supporting Israel, the U.S. showed that it was not going to capitulate to terrorist aggression, that indeed such provocations should be confronted head-on, as opposed to previous signs of weakness in similar situations, such as after the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon which caused the death of 241 Americans. Principles of sovereignty, national security and territorial integrity are liberal positions based on John Locke’s teachings, which the U.S. Constitution is subsequently based on. It would be ideologically and morally hypocritical not to support an ally whose natural rights had been violated. Mearsheimer and Walt also claim that it would be immoral to support Israel because of the proportion of civilian deaths it caused compared to its own casualties. The U.S. is faced with the same dilemma when it receives intelligence that either Taliban fighters in Afghanistan or insurgents in Iraq are fighting in civilian areas; Hezbollah fighters do not wear uniforms as they do not operate from established military bases. They are enmeshed in the civilian population, thereby forcing Israel to kill civilians; this advances Hezbollah’s cause by arousing sympathy on the international scene and by managing to recruit younger generations to the cause against Israel. Mearsheimer and Walt even mention that large weapons munitions were stored in “caves, homes, mosques and other hiding places.”²⁹ Hezbollah’s goal, on the other hand, is to inflict as much damage as possible and kill as many Israelis as possible, deliberately and indiscriminately. U.S. support for Israel despite controversial missions that sometimes result in large numbers of civilian

deaths, such as the shelling of Qana in 2006, should not be used as reasons to cut off U.S. support for Israel because such incidences are sometimes the tragic consequences of war in populous areas, as the U.S. military knows all too well. Indeed, Israel's response was unexpectedly iron-fisted, but as Dan Gillerman, Israeli Ambassador to the UN, stated, "To those countries who claim that we are using disproportionate force, I have only this to say: You're damn right we are. Because if your cities were shelled the way ours were, if your citizens were terrorized the way ours are, you would use much more force than we are using."³⁰ It is the position of this essay that the U.S. should consider ideological principles in matters of foreign policy and that in this case, supporting Israel is tantamount to sticking to American principles and that sticking to American principles coincides with adhering to America's moral and strategic interests.

Regardless of their moral case, their strategic argument regarding the American position during the war is also faulty. Despite the fact that Israel was acting in self-defense, it was the focus of worldwide condemnation, partly because other major powers do not consider Hezbollah to be a terrorist organization but a political and social one. As such, by siding with Israel diplomatically, unlike the rest of the international community, the U.S. would appear strong and decisive in its mission to reduce the power of a radical, militant organization in the region. It would also work to counter Iran's influence via Hezbollah. By providing military aid to Israel, it would also avoid having to face a stronger enemy in the future. Indeed, "former U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig once described Israel as the largest and only unsinkable U.S. aircraft carrier in the world"³¹ because of its ability to carry out American interests. The most significant cost of U.S. support for Israel during the war was a rise in anti-American sentiment in the region, which was already present in an overwhelming amount. It is mistaken to say that the benefits of avoiding further inflaming the Muslim and Arab world are worth the costs of abandoning Israel as a strategic ally.

GRIEVANCES

Israeli interests are not always the same as American interests, and there have been cases where both the United States and Israel acted in ways that are in conflict with the notion that the two countries share an unbreakable bond. Israeli settlements are perhaps the best example of this kind of situation. The U.S. has always adamantly opposed the construction of settlements on Palestinian lands, while Israeli officials have always maintained that settlements were and continue to be in Israel's security interests. Today, it is

rather obvious that settlement expansion is one of the more egregious acts, if not the most egregious act, that continue to inflame Palestinian passions. In this case, I support harsh U.S. criticism and real action, including a freeze on financial aid to Israel as long as settlements continue to be expanded, and a deal on withdrawing from those settlements in the context of a larger peace initiative. It is important to note that allies may have divergent interests, but this is not reason enough to break ties or strain relations. Israel must realize that it cannot continue the settlement policy, and U.S. action can influence that decision. Nevertheless, Mearsheimer and Walt use cases where Israel has acted in defiance of American interests to conclude that Israel is a “dubious ally” that cannot be trusted to fully cooperate with the United States.³² One of their examples is that during the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, at a time when the U.S. was arming Iraq before the Iran-Contra affair, Israel supplied Iran with a significant amount of arms. Israel, however, should not be expected to act in ways that threaten its very existence. This occurred while Israeli intelligence had already confirmed Iraqi advances in the realm of nuclear power; thus, Israel would naturally want Iran to defeat a belligerent, hostile Iraq that repeatedly made threats to annihilate Israel. Another example that still conjures sour memories is the case of the Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard, who tried to “steal spy-camera technology from a U.S. firm” in 1986.³³ Israel defended itself, claiming that it was not spying *on* the U.S., only spying *in* the U.S.

These are real cases and they should not be overlooked; however, they are rare and their consequences do not involve dire threats to either country. Therefore, while such cases should be noted, they should in no way imply that there exists a pattern or a firm tendency for Israel to act in ways that constitute its alliance with the U.S. as “dubious” or “disloyal.”

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER: U.S. STRATEGY AND THE WAR ON TERROR

It would be of optimal importance to incorporate a lasting alliance with Israel as part of the U.S. strategy on the War on Terror and as part of its broader foreign policy. Neglecting Israel would mean ignoring an ideologically aligned ally in a highly important strategic region. Abandoning Israel would embolden terrorists to continue aggressive operations, not lessen their anger. The United States should support Israel from a moral perspective because Israel shares and acts upon the same principles the U.S. espouses, and it should support Israel from a strategic point of view because the special relationship between the two countries is beneficial for both. It

should be clear that the benefits of supporting Israel far outweigh the costs.

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 - 2 John McCain, "An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom," *Foreign Affairs* vol. 86 no. 6 (Nov/Dec 2007).
 - 3 Carpenter, Galen Ted. "The United States and Third World Dictatorships: A Case for Benign Detachment." Cato Institute Policy Analysis 58, Aug. 15, 1985.
 - 4 Eland, Ivan. "We've Earned a Peace Dividend." *Orange County Register*, July 1, 1998.
 - 5 Stephen Zunes, "The Israel Lobby: How Powerful is it Really?" *Foreign Policy in Focus*, May, 2006 [journal on-line]; available from <http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/3270>; Internet; accessed 13 November, 2007.
 - 6 Benson, T. Michael. *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel*. (Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1997).
 - 7 Daniel Pipes, review of *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel*, by Michael T. Benson, *Middle East Quarterly* V (September 1998).
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