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Lobbying for Fair Criticism:

**A Critical Look at *The Israel Lobby*
and *U.S. Foreign Policy* by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt**

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1.0 Introduction

In March 2006, two American professors - John Mearsheimer from the University of Chicago and Stephen Walt from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University - published an article titled “The Israel Lobby” (Mearsheimer &Walt 2006). Following publication, a considerable amount of responses to “The Israel Lobby”, positive and negative, has been written and heard. The wave of controversy surrounding the topic of the “Israel lobby” encouraged the two distinguished professors to publish a book containing a more detailed account of the “Israel lobby.” At the same time, Mearsheimer and Walt (henceforth M&W) wanted to respond to criticism sounded by some prominent American figures following the publication of their 2006 article. On 4 September, 2007, the book was published by the publishing house of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, this time titled *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Mearsheimer &Walt 2007).

M&W have been maintaining that the “Israel lobby” has been able to affect US foreign policy in such a way that has been causing continuous damage to the American national interest and even to Israel’s interest (Mearsheimer &Walt preface viii). That is why M&W seem to be genuinely surprised in light of the generous aid that Israel has been receiving from the United States. The two professors argue that such material help and ideological support is not justified and so they conclude that America should reconsider its policy towards Israel (Mearsheimer &Walt 341).

The goal of this paper is twofold: first and foremost, this work will counter M&W’s thesis, taking various factors into consideration such as American history, Israel’s history and the history of American Middle-East policy. Second, this paper will show the conceptual and methodological shortcomings that led to M&W’s flawed and inconsistent analysis. The first part of this paper’s title – Lobbying for Fair Criticism – is meant to convey M&W’s illegitimate criticism and inaccuracy of analysis in both their 2006 article and 2007 book.

While many articles have already been written as a response to M&W’s work, the vast majority of those were not written in academic form (to the exception of Dershowitz’s article, which I find not comprehensive enough).¹ Dershowitz’s essay was written as a response to M&W’s 2006 article. The 2006 article was published prior to some latest developments

¹ The article, which is 44 pages long, describes mainly, though not exclusively, the moral dimension of the US-Israel relationship but somewhat neglects the strategic dimension. The issue of the decision-making process was also not fully addressed in Dershowitz’s article.

concerning Lebanon, Syria and Iran (for instance, the Second Lebanon War in July-August 2006), and so they were included in the 2007 book to serve as further examples of the alleged harmful effect of the “Israel lobby.” Moreover, my bibliographic research has not identified so far any academic work (meaning a work that was published in academic form) criticizing M&W’s 2007 book. Thus, M&W’s 2007 book will serve as my main reference point throughout this paper.

This paper will hopefully add to the debate about the “lobby” an academic flair that will properly refute M&W’s thesis. Although a BA Thesis has its length limitations, this paper will nonetheless be able to tackle *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, which is 355 pages long (484 pages including notes and index), since M&W’s book is characterized by a continuous repetition of some basic assertions and by an abundance of irrelevant and superfluous data.

The first section will deal with the strategic dimension of American Middle-East policy in general and US-Israel relationship in particular. It will provide a contrasting interpretation to M&W’s, who assert that even if there were strategic reasons to assist Israel, the end of the Cold War has changed the political landscape in the Middle East (henceforth ME) and thus since the end of the Cold War the United States should not have treated Israel as if it were a strategic asset (Mearsheimer &Walt 15). In order to refute M&W’s thesis, this paper will analyze the US-Israel strategic relationship by incorporating international-relations theories such as realism and Marxism.

The moral dimension of the US-Israel alliance will be the topic of the second section. M&W argue that there is no moral claim for supporting Israel’s agendas, relating mainly to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Mearsheimer &Walt 15). Section 2.2 will refute this argument and will demonstrate that although Israel may not be a benevolent state, it is certainly not the rogue state the two professors portray it to be. When analyzing the moral aspect of the US-Israel relationship, this paper will mainly refer to the international-relations theory known as Constructivism.

The third section will address the issue of defining what M&W refer to as the “Israel lobby” (Mearsheimer &Walt: “What is the Israel Lobby?” 111-150). This paper will illustrate how hard it is to pin down decision-making within the US government and thus this section will argue that M&W’s view of “The Lobby’s Modus Operandi” (Mearsheimer &Walt 9) and its influence on actual policy-making is nothing more than their own conspiratorial assertion without any real data to back up their interpretation.

The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 is the subject of the next section. Referring to the extremely controversial claim suggesting that the “Israel lobby” was one of the main factors, if not the major cause, of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Mearsheimer & Walt 17), the Bush Doctrine will be outlined and analyzed, demonstrating that other rationales played a much more significant role in conceptualizing the American invasion of Iraq.

After looking into the causes of the Iraq War, the subsequent section will elaborate on issues of Islamic belligerence, starting with a subsection on Al-Qaeda and the roots of Islamic anti-Americanism, followed by subsections on the Second Lebanon War and American-Syrian relations. Since Syria and Iran share some ideological notions concerning the struggle of Islam against the rising power of the West, led predominantly by the United States and Israel, the subsection on Syria will inevitably include the looming crisis with Iran as well. Subsequently, some insights into contemporary US foreign policy that will question the so-called over-proportional influence of the “Israel lobby” regarding the current tense state of affairs between the United States and Iran will be given.

In discussing the conclusions of the 2007 book: “What Is to Be Done?” (Mearshimer & Walt 335-355) I will demonstrate that the latest developments regarding US foreign policy are a result of a sovereign America and not an outcome of a conspiratorial “lobby”. Put differently, I argue that there is such a thing as a Bush Doctrine and scrutinizing this doctrine will be much more productive in trying to understand and hopefully enhance the current state of affairs in the Middle East than to try to “mitigate...the lobby” (Mearsheimer & Walt 349).

My conclusions will summarize the main findings of the analysis and will also discuss the role, significance and possible repercussions of the publication of *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, as yet another product of the confluence of academic ideological battles and the academic industry’s needs of sensational and controversial works, regardless of their academic quality. Mainstreaming of extreme views through academic work is a dangerous trend that requires further understanding to be effectively countered.

2.0 A Critical Look at *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*

M&W begin their book with an analysis and a synopsis of the US-Israel relationship's strategic dimension. This paper will follow M&W's arguments. Thus, the first section of this paper's main part will discuss whether the United States regards Israel as a strategic ally.

2.1: Israel – A strategic Burden for the United States?

M&W begin their book with the section “The Great Benefactor” (Mearsheimer &Walt 23-48). They describe the economic, military and political aid Israel has been receiving from the United States. Their goal here is to indicate that this American “...generous and unconstrained support” (Mearsheimer &Walt 48) for Israel is not justified in light of Israel's strategic insignificance to the United States in a post Cold War era (Mearsheimer &Walt 48).

M&W maintain that during the Cold War Israel was of some strategic value to the United States (Mearsheimer &Walt 51). Since America wanted to contain Soviet influence in the ME, Israel was seen as one of the most important ME allies of the West in its world-wide struggle against the Soviet Bear. The United States considered Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran as its main agents in the ME during the Cold War. The Soviet Union, in turn, allied chiefly with Egypt and Syria (Plitnick 5; LeVine 1). Most international-relations scholars will probably agree with M&W's view of Israel's strategic importance to the United States during the Cold War.

M&W raise some important issues concerning America's security and its connection with US-Israel relationship and then argue that in the post Cold-War era Israel had lost its strategic value and can no longer be seen as positively contributing to the American national interest (Mearsheimer &Walt 5). However, the notion that Israel had completely lost its strategic edge as an American proxy in the ME after 1989 is not supported by facts, as I will elaborate later in this section.

Confident in the validity of their argument regarding the strategic insignificance of Israel post Cold War, M&W conclude that the United States should now change its policy towards Israel and limit its generous aid for the Jewish State (Mearsheimer &Walt 341). To those who share the two professors' opinion, this conclusion would be logical – if Israel is not vital for American interests in the ME, why keep endorsing it?

M&W have two major flaws in analyzing the strategic dimension of the US-Israel relationship. The first flaw is M&W's narrow-minded view of American ME policy. This is an outcome of their sole reliance on the international-relations theory known as realism. M&W are two of the most renowned international relations scholars who belong to the “realist” school of

thought. Realism, as an international-relations theory, contends that independent states compete for power in an anarchical international arena (Cox & Stokes 219). Realism, as this paper will demonstrate, is not sufficient in analyzing the complexity of American ME policy because it tends to observe interests of nation-states in very clear terms that can lead to a “black-or-white” interpretation, not leaving room for any “grey” areas. In subsequent sections of this paper it will become clear that American ME policy is filled with such “grey” areas. Indeed, Toby Dodge, in the 2008 guide for US foreign policy, states that “...a series of damaging critiques of the methodological assumptions underpinning realism have shaped two useful alternatives, constructivism and Marxism” (Cox & Stokes 220). This dependency on realism leads to two of M&W’s major methodological flaws in analyzing American ME policy: simplification in describing the issue at hand and reductionism in analyzing the causes for the current state of affairs with respect to American ME policy.

M&W argue that Israel could either be considered as necessary for American ambitions or not. After all, when examining the ME geo-political map M&W encounter, as David Harris put it, “...22 Arab countries, hundred of millions of residents, energy resources, export markets...” (Harris 4). For M&W the conclusion is clear: since Israel is a tiny country with a population of only seven million people and practically no natural resources, it could not be perceived as vital for US interests in the ME. This is a highly simplistic understanding of American ME policy and in fact, US ME policy is anything but simple. M&W do not fathom that “it is not a zero-sum game. The U.S. enjoys strong ties with a range of Arab and other Muslim-majority countries, and has always thought to juggle its ties with Israel...” (Harris 4). There are a host of other factors that the United States has to take into consideration when conceptualizing its ME policy and its relationship with Israel is merely one of them. M&W argue that Israel has been the major constituent of American ME policy since 1967 (Mearsheimer & Walt 51-52). As this paper will demonstrate, Israel is important to US interests in the ME, but it is certainly not the only strategic element in American ME policy.

The second flaw in M&W’s analysis of the US-Israel relationship’s strategic dimension is viewing Israel’s strategic value only “...through a Cold War lens” (Plitnick 5). This misreading of the ME geopolitical map is clearly tied with the first flaw – an oversimplified view of American ME policy in general and US-Israel relationship in particular.

Some scholars argue that Israel’s main role as an American proxy is containing Arab and Iranian nationalism. Arguably, Israel’s role of countering Arab nationalism, even during the Cold

War, had transcended the role of containing Soviet influence (Cox & Stokes 223-4). M&W vaguely mention this topic under a subsection called “Confronting Rogue States” (Mearsheimer & Walt 70), but they do not elaborate nor do they even once mention the phrase “containing Arab nationalism” (not countering nor constraining, for that matter). M&W obviously dismiss this notion. They argue that Israel could not really assist the United States in its fight against rogue states and so M&W conclude that Israel could not be seen as a counter-force for the emergence of Arab nationalism.

However, M&W do not mention several important issues that would have undermined their argument. M&W do not bother to mention, for example, Israel’s victory in 1967 that essentially demolished Nasser’s (the Egyptian president at that time) vision of a united Arab world (Plitnick 5), nor do they mention Israel’s victory in the 1973 war - a further example of Israel’s ability to restrain Arab aggression. Israel’s military strike at Iraq’s nuclear reactor in Osirak in 1981 facilitated America’s military actions during the First Gulf War in 1991. In December 1991, Dick Cheney (then Secretary of Defence) thanked an Israeli General for the operation, saying that it helped the US army to accomplish its mission in Desert Storm (qtd. in: Dershowitz 23). M&W also speculate that Israel was too weak to participate in the First Gulf War and therefore Israel was a liability for America. That is inaccurate (Mearsheimer & Walt 58). Israel was willing to fight – it was the United States that asked Israel not to get involved because America feared that an Israeli reaction would further exacerbate the situation (Dershowitz 23).

Israeli intelligence is also of paramount importance for American ME policy and, as noted, Israel’s military capabilities deterred ambitions of uniting the Arab world. This view would counter M&W’s assertion because the theory of containing Arab nationalism would consider Israel a salient feature of American ME policy in a post Cold War era, thus annulling the claim that Israel had lost its strategic stand after the end of the Cold War. In light of Saudi complicity in carrying out the September 11 terrorist attacks (Friedman 234), the United States may not perceive Saudi Arabia to be a completely loyal ally in its struggle against Al-Qaeda. Thus, Israel is today one of the only states in the ME that America can truly rely on.

Both shortcomings – analyzing American ME policy with a sole dependency on the realist school of thought and perceiving American ME policy toward Israel merely through a Cold War paradigm – stem from M&W’s conceptual framework in scrutinizing the strategic value of Israel to the United States. Realism is not sufficient when dealing with the strategic

dimension of American ME policy and so it has to be combined with another international-relations theory – Marxism.

The Marxist theory contends that international relations should not be analyzed through a nation-state paradigm. Marxism claims that an examination of the socio-economic dynamics of the international system necessitates a broader context than states, namely economic modes of production (Cox & Stokes 220). Thus, according to Marxism, powerful multi-national corporations, for instance, can play a salient role (arguably more important than states) in shaping policies – domestic as well as foreign. Contrary to realism, which asserts that international relations are characterized by their anarchical nature, Marxism argues that the international arena is hierarchical. Consequently, according to Marxism, there is one hegemonic power (and perhaps multi-national corporations affiliated with its mode of production) that tries to impose its mode of production on its subordinates. Hence, from a Marxist perspective, American ME policy is designed to maintain or enhance its economic and political supremacy in the ME (Cox & Stokes 221).

M&W dismissal of the Marxist theory is astounding: it either indicates that the two professors have not immersed themselves in the history of American ME policy and its political and economic agendas or that they have chosen not to even briefly mention Marxism because they suspected it would weaken their argument. Indeed, the scholarly debate between realism and Marxism reached new heights after the Cold War had ended. M&W dedicate *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* to their role model Samuel Huntington, one of the most famous realist scholars. Huntington wrote *The Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington, 1996), which leans on the realistic premise of an anarchical international system. But Huntington's book was actually a response to Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History* (Fukuyama, 1992), which basically supports the Marxist perspective for analyzing international relations. Fukuyama asserts that the economic and political modes of production - liberal democracy and Capitalism – have prevailed and he predicts that it is only a matter of time until a “new” history will begin, a narrative that will be characterized by the absolute global domination of liberal democracy and free market societies.

Why did M&W choose not to engage themselves in this scholarly debate? Why did they utterly and categorically ignore Fukuyama's theory? Is it because they really did not consider that economic factors such as the American weapons industry and partly American-owned multi-national corporations could be even remotely related to American ME policy? Is it because they do not believe that political-economic factors such as to try and constrain the emergence of an

Islamic power in order to maintain America's hegemony in the region and allow for the flow of ME oil to the United States could be relevant when analyzing US-Israel relations? M&W's total dismissal of such notions is surprising.

M&W rightly assert that US-Israeli alliance has further contributed to the rise of anti-Americanism in the Arab and Muslim world (Mearsheimer & Walt 8). M&W then maintain that the United States ought to "cool down" its intimate relationship with Israel. The United States, W&M argue, should employ a more even-handed approach towards Israel and limit its uncritical and unconditional support for the Jewish State (Mearsheimer & Walt 348). M&W believe that if such a scenario were to materialize, it would not only benefit the United States, but Israel as well. This is a speculation, but it reveals M&W's dismissal of factors such as the deep division within Muslim societies and their difficulties or even reluctance to modernize. Furthermore, if such an assumption was true, some forces that are arguably more powerful than the Israel lobby might have already acted and saved both the United States and Israel from, say, Islamic terrorism. Put differently, I believe that M&W's assumption is awfully optimistic, naïve and simplistic.

Through military support for Israel the United States has generated a weapons armament-race in the ME. Since countries such as Egypt and Jordan are feeling intimidated by Israel's military advantageous position (as well as by the Iranian-Syrian alliance), they are also interested in acquire weapons in order to create a strong army, an army that could qualify as a deterrent force. America provides Egypt and Jordan with an annual military aid estimated at two billion dollars. Egypt and Jordan then use this money to buy American weaponry – that means a major bonus for the American arms industry (Plitnick 2). According to Daniel Lazare, who quotes from *Blood and Oil* (Klare, 2004), from 1995 to 2002 eight Persian Gulf states had spent roughly 33 billion dollars on American weapons (qtd. in: Lazare 2). M&W lament the annual three billion dollars aid Israel receives from the United States. However, M&W do not mention where roughly 75 percent of this money actually goes to. Israel spends annually some 2.25 billion dollars from the US aid package on American weapons. Thus, American arms manufacturers receive a huge financial subsidy through US military support for Israel. Moreover, Israeli hi-tech development of weaponry and exchange of weapon technologies between Israel and the United States do not only make this kind of partnership lucrative for Israel, but also for the American arms industry (Plitnick 2). Mark LeVine, professor for Middle-Eastern history, culture and Islamic studies at the University of California-Irvine, argues that American alleged ambitions of promoting peace and democracy in the ME (as M&W assert) are a fallacy. The on-going conflict in the ME has

produced more than a trillion dollars in revenues to American oil and arms industries since 9/11/2001 (LeVine 1).

This rationale for Israel's strategic importance can be ascribed to the Marxist theory, where economic interests transcend what M&W describe as the American "national interest". But what is exactly the American national interest? According to M&W, the US national interest is to make America a safe and a prosperous place, in that order (Mearsheimer & Walt 337). No one could disagree with such a boilerplate definition, except that it is rather naïve and simplistic. The United States has other considerations when it conceptualizes its foreign-policy paradigm: political, geo-political and economic. Of course – ideally, America wants to combine all these considerations and achieve two main goals: to be prosperous (economic wise) and safe. Nonetheless, according to America's foreign policy in general and American ME policy in particular, it seems that the former - economic prosperity - is still higher on America's priority list than the latter. America's current ME policy still focuses on enabling US companies easy access to the region's natural resources – primarily oil but also natural gas (more on the issue of oil in section 2.4). LeVine contends that America's goal in the ME is to maintain a certain level of manageable conflicts that will keep reaping tremendous revenues for the American arms and oil industries (LeVine 1). These are short-term goals. I believe that a long-term goal would be to crush terrorism and thus make the United States a safer place.

However, the United States sees Israel's value primarily as its democratic agent in the ME. Contrary to M&W, I argue that the current American ME policy is an interplay and constant struggle between primarily constructivist elements (democratizing the ME), Marxist elements (access to oil and natural gas, American oil and arms companies) and realist elements (maintaining balance of power in the ME). The concept of democratizing the Arab world is extremely important for the current Bush administration (see section 2.4) but the role of Israel as a regional democratic pillar goes beyond the issue of Arab nationalism. America is aware of the rise of China as a major international non-democratic force. One could also argue that the recent Caucasus crisis and Russia's talks with Syria (see section 2.5.3) have further convinced the United States of Israel's salience as a democratic force in the ME. Consequently, when looking at the big picture, the United States believes that the benefits of having Israel as a democratic and stable ally in this volatile region supersede the costs.

After reviewing the strategic rationales for the United States to provide Israel with economic and military aid, the next section will discuss whether America's political support for Israel is justified.

2.2: Israel - Not morally worthy of American Support?

After arguing that there are practically no strategic reasons for the United States to aid Israel, M&W assert that moral rationales for American support for Israel are also nowhere to be found (Mearsheimer &Walt 79). M&W try to make use of the same tactic they employed to supposedly contradict the strategic value of Israel to the United States and implement this tactic to refute the moral dimension of the US-Israel relationship. M&W provide some numbers and data in order to strengthen their argument and make it seem more credible. This method might be useful when dealing with strategic considerations (although under examination, M&W assertion regarding the absence of strategic reasons for American support of Israel is, as has been shown in the previous section, inaccurate) but when examining the moral considerations of US-Israel relations this methodological way does not convince.

M&W's reasoning has two flaws when approaching the moral dimension of US-Israel relationship: First, they erroneously use two international relations theories in order to examine the moral rationale for supporting Israel. These two theories - realism and Constructivism - when simultaneously employed, have essentially no analytical value when dealing with the issue of morality since some of realism's core concepts (e.g. use of military power) are clearly amoral.

Constructivism underscores the importance of ideologies, perceptions and beliefs in shaping foreign policy. Constructivists claim that realism alone is too simple a theory to analyze international relations and that Marxism overstates the influence of economic factors in conceptualizing foreign-policy paradigms (Cox &Stokes 221). M&W, according to their analysis, seem to be amazingly oblivious to the existence of Marxism and the dismissal of the Marxist theory further undercuts their thesis. But approaching the issue of morality shows that the two professors at least recognize the existence of Constructivism, although they completely undermine its importance in shaping policy-making, especially under the current Bush administration (see section 2.3). M&W try to approach the constructivists' elements of US-Israel relationship from a realist point of view. They isolate six different moral rationales for supporting Israel and attempt to counter these one at a time. For each moral rationale M&W provide their own interpretation backed by statistics. This is a false method because - as this paper will

demonstrate - ideologies, beliefs and issues such as ethics and morality cannot be measured as in a mathematical equation. American ME policy and US-Israel relations are much more complex than M&W portray them to be.

M&W's second flaw when approaching the moral aspect of US-Israel relations is their biased account of Israel's history. The issue of the narrative preceding and following Israel's founding is still an extremely controversial topic. M&W depict the Palestinians as being benevolent and Israel as a juggernaut as to show that Israel does not deserve US moral support. The debate surrounding Israel's history is characterized by the dispute between the Old Historians and the New Historians. Basically, the Old Historians are more sympathetic to Israel and the New Historians support the Palestinian claims.² I believe that the real history of Israel is neither the Old Historians' version nor the New Historians' version. The true narrative of Israel's history probably lies somewhere between the pro-Israeli version and the pro-Palestinian version. These numerous narratives regarding Israel's history are constantly being used for various political agendas, where each side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict tries to emphasize a certain version that would serve his/her geo-political goals best.

Abraham H. Foxman, the head of the ADL (Anti-Defamation League), wrote *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control* (Foxman 2007), which was published just a few days prior to the publication of *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. This book provides readers with some interesting insights and critique of M&W's thesis. However, it repeats M&W's major flaw. While in M&W's world, the Israelis and their supporters in the United States (mostly Jews) are the "bad guys" and Palestinians are the "good guys", in Foxman's world the message is exactly the opposite – Israel and its American supporters are completely benign and Palestinians are an evil force. This "all-or-nothing" attitude cannot lead to a sensible debate about American ME policy and US-Israel relationship. M&W chose an extreme and distorted New Historians' version and describe a narrative that is completely one-sided. This choice that M&W have made, at best, undermines the credibility of their argument and at worst suggests that they have (despite their many disclaimers) some kind of an ideological bias against Israel and/or Jews.

² To say that Old and New Historians are pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian, respectively, is a simplified view and this view is disputable as well. As I have mentioned, due to space limitations and because this paper is being written within the scope of American Studies and not Middle-Eastern Studies, I will not focus on the different accounts of Israel's history. My point here is to stress the fact that M&W only chose one extreme interpretation of Israel's history without even acknowledging that other interpretations might be possible too.

Israel's history, the Israeli-Arab conflict in general and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular were not adequately described in M&W's book or in Foxman's book because these books failed to convey the enormous controversy surrounding these topics. In order to presumably prove that American political support for Israel is not justified, M&W depict Israel as the sole aggressor in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to M&W's narrative there is no controversy surrounding this conflict, although a heated scholarly and diplomatic debate about this issue still takes place as this paper is being written.

The Issue of the original intentions of the Zionist movement is very controversial. Within the scope of this scholarly debate, M&W quote David Ben-Gurion, a Zionist leader and Israel's first Prime Minister, as saying that he would prefer an evacuation of the Arab population from the British Mandate in Palestine (Mearsheimer & Walt 93). However, this quote was taken from a speech Ben-Gurion held in 1937, a speech where Ben-Gurion went on to say that "...nonetheless, partition was the best that Zionism could hope for and should be seized with open arms" (qtd. in: "The Wrong Guys" 2). The quote within this context indicates that Ben-Gurion did not advocate general evacuation of the Arab population.

It is a well established fact that the Zionist leadership agreed to the Balfour (1917), Peel (1937) and UN partition plans (1947) but the Arabs rejected it. The goal of these plans was to establish a sovereign Jewish state on a territory much smaller than today's Israel ("Israel's Quest for Peace" 3-5). These are facts. M&W speculate that the Zionists had ulterior motives and actually wanted to have all biblical Israel for themselves (Mearsheimer & Walt 95). However, as realists, M&W should have recognized that in 1917, 1937 and arguably also in 1947 this kind of ambition would not be perceived as a feasible one. By the same token, one could assert that in light of the recent Caucasus crisis, Russia would now want to regain some (or even all) of the territories that the Soviet Empire lost after the end of the Cold War. This is mere speculation and it might even be true but it does not seem to be a feasible aim in light of the international community's hostile reaction to Russia's invasion of Georgian territory. Based on facts, not speculations, it is clear that the Zionist leadership officially expressed its wishes to live peacefully in a tiny Jewish state alongside a Palestinian state when it agreed to the partition plans mentioned above. The Palestinians were not willing to accept the Jews as their neighbours and so they rejected these plans (Dershowitz 31).

M&W also raise the issue of the Jewish minority in Mandate Palestine. They repeat the statistics mentioned in their 2006 article, indicating that in 1948, 650,000 Jews - 35 percent of

Mandate Palestine's population – inhabited Mandate Palestine (Mearsheimer &Walt 92). However, M&W fail to mention that "...Jews were a clear majority in the areas assigned to Israel under partition, thus making their [M&W's] reference to south Africa's Apartheid inapt" (Dershowitz 23).

M&W argue that "backing the underdog" (Mearsheimer &Walt 81) is mistakenly perceived as another major moral rationale for American support for Israel. They attempt to refute this claim by suggesting that Israel has always been militarily stronger than its neighbouring countries (Mearsheimer &Walt 81). This is also a very disputable topic but M&W, again, present selective statistics as if this issue were completely non-controversial. Actually, upon further inspection, one could argue that this rationale was not much of a consideration to the United States. Until 1967 Israel was seen as a clear underdog and so America did not rush to aid the Jewish state. M&W acknowledge that Israel did not receive much help from the United States when it was still an underdog (Mearsheimer &Walt 7), thus contradicting their own argument that the "backing the underdog" rationale needs to be refuted. Following Israeli victory in the Six Days War in 1967 the United States recognized Israel's strategic value and dramatically increased its support for Israel (Mearsheimer &Walt 7). In my opinion, it seems that the American attitude was more "backing the strong and resilient" than "backing the underdog". Moreover, even if "backing the underdog" was among the several moral reasons for supporting Israel (which is highly debatable) it was not a major one.

"Aiding a fellow Democracy" is the next moral rationale for US support for Israel that M&W attempt to counter. They claim that this rationale is not compelling since Israel's democracy is not as benign and fair as the American democracy (Mearsheimer &Walt 86-91). This issue is debatable as well. M&W admit that the creation of both the United States and Israel entailed an oppression of the local population (Mearsheimer &Walt 80), thus conceding that the United States could not claim moral superiority in this respect.³ M&W attempt to compare between American and Israeli democratic values in order to show that Israel is not as democratic as the United States. I do not believe that such a comparison is of any analytical value, since Israel is the single democracy in the ME and it is surrounded by some dictatorial and hostile regimes. Following 9/11 and the suggestion to tap million Americans' phones in order to facilitate tracking dissenters, there was a heated debate in the United States concerning the fine

³To what extent were the Palestinian oppressed prior to Israel's founding is another controversial subject and there is, to this day, no academic consensus regarding this issue. It is also believed that before the United States was founded, the local indigenous population was oppressed by the Europeans who immigrated to North America.

lines between civil rights and national security. My point is that if Israel were – like the United States - geographically isolated from any kind of threat, then perhaps its democracy could have been even “more” democratic.

The issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Israel’s history are naturally intertwined and thus accounts surrounding this conflict vary. M&W wrongly believe that the Palestinians are “...a largely innocent third party” (Mearsheimer &Walt 92). It is clear that the Palestinian leadership did not want to live in a Palestinian state alongside a Jewish state as it rejected the 1917, 1937 and 1947 partition plans. Moreover, M&W fail to stress that Palestinian terror began in 1929 – well before the Six Days War in 1967. This demonstrates that the Palestinian leadership vehemently opposed Jewish presence and was not willing to allow the local Jewish population that had inhabited small parts of Palestine⁴ to peacefully settle there and create a tiny Jewish homeland. Terrorist organizations, since 1929 onward, have been maintaining that all of biblical Israel is an occupied territory. This means that Palestinian terrorism supported, right from the very beginning, the expulsion or extermination of all the Jewish inhabitants of Mandate Palestine (Dershowitz 22). It is also clear that following Israel’s independence declaration in 1948 five Arab nations and the Palestinians who sided with these Arab nations declared war on Israel, since they did not recognize the Jewish inhabitants’ right to live in their own independent land, however small this land might be (Dershowitz 30). M&W note that in the follow-up to the 1948 war “...some Arab leaders talked about “driving the Jews into the sea” (Mearsheimer &Walt 84) but they conclude – without any evidence supporting it – that “...this [driving the Jews into the sea] was largely rhetoric designed to appease their publics” (Mearsheimer &Walt 84). How do they know? One thing is clear: only three years after the Holocaust had ended, no one in Israel or in the Diaspora could possibly regard this kind of rhetoric as simply “designed to appease” the Arab populations of five Arab nations that declared war on the Jewish state.

Some Palestinians supported the Nazis and even collaborated with them during WWII. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, the leader of the Palestinian people, supported Hitler and was

⁴ Palestine is a name that was given to the ancient land of Judea by the Romans between 3000 and 2200 BCE. The debate about who inhabited the land first is useless. It is highly likely that both the ancestors of the Arab-Palestinians and the ancestors of the ancient Jewish population settled in the land thousands of years ago and so each group should recognize the other group’s right for an independent land. Today, Israel’s leadership claims that it cannot constructively negotiate with the Palestinians, since the Palestinian leadership is divided and especially because factions of the Palestinian leadership – Hamas for example - refuse to recognize Israel’s right to exist. Israeli leadership believes that pressure from Palestinian factions that have always rejected Israel’s existence – mainly pressure from Hamas on Arafat - was the main reason for the failure of the peace talks held in Camp David 2000 and for the failure of Clinton’s parameters in December 2000, since these extreme factions would then have to accept a two-state solution that was unacceptable to them.

interested in sending Jews to Poland in order to solve the Jewish problem in Mandate Palestine as well (qtd. In: Dershowitz 30-31). Today, the Hamas still refuses to recognize Israel's existence.

Lastly, I want to refer to M&W's account of what "really" happened during the peace talks held in Camp David in 2000. Again, M&W basically present Arafat's version and depict this version as the only reliable one. However, from competing accounts one can assume that neither the Israeli side nor the Palestinian side are solely to blame for the failure of Camp David 2000. There are several important facts and quotes that M&W chose not to mention. The most astonishing omission of facts is the map from *The Missing Peace* (Ross, 2004), a book written by Dennis Ross, who – in contrast to M&W – was actually present at Camp David. Ross contrasts the "Palestinian Characterization of the Final Proposal at Camp David" with "Map Reflecting Actual Proposal at Camp David" (Ross 42). Dershowitz shows that "The second map – which reflected President Clinton's proposals and which Arafat rejected – shows a contiguous Palestinian state in the West Bank" (Dershowitz 32). Another quote that was absent from M&W's account: Bandar, the Saudi Prince, after reviewing Israel's offer at Camp David told Arafat that "If we lose this opportunity, it is not going to be a tragedy. It is going to be a crime" (qtd. in: Dershowitz 32). Bill Clinton, the President at that time, told Arafat in December 2000 that "I [Clinton] am not a great man. I am a failure, and you [Arafat] have made me one" ("Israel's Quest for Peace" 13).

There are many more contentious issues regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that could be evoked to illustrate M&W's flawed analysis which will not be evoked in this paper. My point is that this issue is extremely controversial and while M&W's intention to establish an open debate about American ME policy towards Israel is commendable, their way of achieving this end is absolutely flawed. In order to establish their argument M&W mainly quoted from the work of the Israeli historian Benny Morris. Morris was apparently not very pleased with M&W's perverse use of his scholarly research and so he published an article titled "And Now for Some Facts" (Morris 2006) in which he refuted M&W's account of Israel's history. According to Morris "Were *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* an actual person, I would have to say that he did not have a single honest bone in his body" (Morris 1). To depict the Israeli-Arab conflict as a struggle of "Virtuous Israelis versus Evil Arabs" (Mearsheimer & Walt 98) is wrong but to portray the Palestinians as a "largely innocent third party" (Mearsheimer & Walt 92) is equally false.

The United States provides Israel with moral and political support – the controversial nature of Israel’s conflict with the Palestinians notwithstanding – for mainly the following reasons:

First, Americans identify the Jewish people who immigrated to Israel and the European immigrants who came to the United States as groups that escaped religious persecution in Europe. Americans are also aware that both Israel’s founding and the founding of the United States entailed injustices toward the local population. However, this does not undermine Americans’ support for Israel because Americans have understood the historical necessity of the Jewish people to establish their own land as well as the necessity of the religious refugees from Europe to establish their land in North America (Plitnick 3). Second, Americans see a resemblance between the pioneering spirit of the Zionists and the early settlers who immigrated to North America (Goldberg 5). Third, Americans also identify with Israel because it is a Western democracy. Israel is a democracy that is surrounded by non-democratic regimes. Americans appreciate Israel’s democracy, because they understand (particularly since 9/11) that it could be mighty difficult to perfectly combine democratic values with national security issues, especially when a country is surrounded by overt and covert enemies (Zunes 7). Fourth, Americans identify with the social and ethnic diversity in Israel and perceive Israel – as the United States – as a melting pot society (plitnick 3). Fifth, Americans support Israel because Israel is pro-American. Arab and Islamic resentment toward the United States had increased following American meddling in the ME, especially following American involvement with Saudi Arabia in the 1940s. While American support of Israel is a major source of anti-Americanism, it is important to mention that anti-Americanism had become a salient part of radical (and also not so radical) Islam well before Israel’s founding (Paz 6-8). Americans could side with pro-America Israel or with anti-America Arabs. The choice was clear.

Stephen Zunes, chair of the Middle-East Studies program at the University of San Francisco, argues that Americans “prefer” the Israelis over the Palestinians in part because of the “...widespread racism in American society against Arab and Muslims...” (Zunes 6). Zunes contends that while right-wing pro-Israeli figures and organizations have been encouraging this deplorable trend of Muslim xenophobia, this phenomenon has its roots in American society in particular and in Western culture in general for centuries - well before Israel was founded (Zunes 6-7).

M&W provide readers with some statistics and polls that are supposed to underline their argument and demonstrate that most Americans understand the Israeli-Arab conflict as M&W do. However, M&W portray the exception rather than the rule. They fail to convey the general trend: “Forty years of polling has consistently shown that Americans support Israel in its conflict with the Arabs” (Goldberg 5). M&W did not, for instance, cite an August 2007 national poll that “...revealed that Americans ranked Israel as our country’s [America’s] fourth closest ally, after Britain, Canada and Australia” (Harris 4). Nor did M&W cite a Gallup poll from February 2006 that “...reported 68 percent of Americans have a favourable opinion of Israel with 23 percent unfavourable, and that Americans support Israelis over Palestinians by 59 percent to 15 percent” (Frankel 7). Mitchell Plitnick, a political analyst, notes that even the polls M&W chose to cite – polls that show that most US citizens favour American even-handedness in approaching the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – demonstrate “...a substantial minority of Americans who simply believe that Israel is entirely correct in its stances and policies, while only a tiny number believe this of the Palestinians” (Plitnick 3).

In sum, Americans support Israel from a variety of reasons. Some reasons may be completely legitimate and justified and some perhaps less so. But at the end of the day, the American perception of Israel as a Western democracy that was founded by pioneers and the perception of Israel as a nation that constantly fights for its survival in a hostile Islamic region transcend all other rationales. Put differently, I believe that Constructivist elements are the main ingredients that comprise the special relationship between Israel and the United States. Marxist and realist elements are also there, but they are not as important.

M&W do not convince when they argue that there are no strategic reasons for America to support Israel (see section 2.1). The goal of this section was to demonstrate that M&W have not done a better job when they try to persuade readers that there are practically no moral rationales for the United States to aid Israel either. As a consequence of M&W’s erroneous understanding of the strategic dimension of American ME policy and their false view of the moral dimension of US-Israel relationship, M&W fallaciously conclude that since there are no compelling reasons for the generous American aid for Israel, “something else” (Mearsheimer &Walt 110) must be the reason for this generous help. This “something else” is the “Israel lobby” (Mearsheimer &Walt 111).

2.3: What does the Israel Lobby really mean?

The title for the next section of M&W's book asks "What is the Israel Lobby" (Mearsheimer & Walt 111). I do not believe that M&W do a particularly good job when they try to answer this question. They define the "Israel lobby" as:

...the loose coalition of individuals and organizations that actively work[s] to shape U.S. foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction. The lobby is not a single, unified movement with a central leadership, however, and the individuals and groups that make up this broad coalition sometimes disagree on specific policy issues...the lobby operate[s] out in the open and in the same way that other interest groups do. (Mearsheimer & Walt 112)

M&W then say that "lobby" might not be the adequate term since some parts of the "Israel lobby" do not actually lobby. Thus, they suggest "pro Israel community" or "help Israel movement" as alternatives. But then they claim that since "lobby" is also used to describe the farm lobby or the gun lobby they will proceed with describing the "Israel lobby" as, indeed, the "lobby" (Mearsheimer & Walt 112-113).

This is one of the weakest points of M&W's argument, as their definition is inconsistent and contradictory. M&W contend that some groups within the "lobby" occasionally disagree on policy issues but, on the other hand, M&W compare the "Israel lobby" to, for instance, the gun lobby. The gun lobby or the farm lobby are defined as lobbies because their members have very specific agendas and they are united on all the lobbying issues. This is, indeed, what makes them to be a lobby. If the "Israel lobby" is not completely cohesive on all policy issues it cannot possibly be defined as a lobby – not even as a "convenient shorthand term" (Mearsheimer & Walt 112). If M&W would have wanted to analyse pro-Israel lobbies they could have chosen specific pro-Israel PACs (Political Action Committees) or other organizations such as AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), which M&W argue is the most important part of the "lobby" (Mearsheimer & Walt 117) or, for instance, Jewish Voice for Peace. While AIPAC is more oriented to the political right, Jewish Voice for Peace, Americans for Peace Now, Israel Policy Forum, the Tikkun Community, Meretz-USA etc. are more oriented to the political left and so they favour a two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. M&W amalgamate all these organizations – both the right-oriented and the left-oriented - under the umbrella of the "Israel lobby." M&W go to great lengths to show that the "Israel lobby" is a political lobby and so its members do not have to be Jewish. M&W claim that the Christian-Zionists, the neoconservatives and Americans who want to shift US foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction are also a part of the "Israel lobby" (Mearsheimer & Walt 128-139).

By defining the “Israel lobby” as such a broad coalition of very different interests, M&W contradict themselves once more. Organizations such as Meretz-USA might even have a lot in common with M&W’s views of US-Israel relationship, by supporting a two-state solution, for example. In addition, organizations from the political left often regard criticizing Israel and withholding American aid from Israel as methods that might work in coercing the Jewish state to make painful concessions on the way to peace with the Palestinians. M&W say the following:

...[We] support its [Israel’s] right to exist, admire its many achievements, want its citizens to enjoy secure and prosperous lives, and believe that the United States should come to Israel’s aid if its survival is in danger. But we are obviously not part of the lobby...To be part of the lobby, in other words, one has to actively work to move American foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction. (Mearsheimer &Walt 113-114)

M&W claim that a change in US-Israel relationship would also serve Israel’s interests (Mearsheimer &Walt 341-344) and so by writing *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* M&W have actively engaged themselves, among other, “...to move American foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction (Mearsheimer &Walt 114). M&W say “But are obviously not a part of the lobby” (Mearsheimer &Walt 114). In fact, according to their own definition of the “Israel lobby”, M&W are undoubtedly a part of the “lobby” (Mead 2). In sum, there is no such thing as an “Israel lobby”. There are many Israeli lobbies with various views, ranging from the political left to the political right. Hence, every pro-Israel lobby has a different understanding as to what pro-Israel actually means (Harris 2).

It is surprising that instead of analyzing AIPAC and/or another right-oriented pro-Israel organization which could provide some elements to characterize their implicit definition of a “pro-Israel direction”, M&W chose to stick with the broader, easily refuted, lobby definition. Again, this choice – apart from methodologically incorrect - is not neutral considering the repercussions and implications of the publication of M&W’s book, on which I will elaborate later. According to their definition, M&W note that the “lobby”, like other interest groups, mostly operates in legal and legitimate ways. “What sets it [the Israel lobby] apart, in short, is its extraordinary effectiveness” (Mearsheimer &Walt 150). M&W basically blame the “Israel lobby” of being too good and successful in what it does.

M&W use of information is highly selective, bordering at times the manipulative: for dozens of pages M&W quote every member of the American political community (Jewish or not) who has ever said something that could support their argument, and none that would contradict it. M&W either display their lack of knowledge of lobbies’ politics or they underestimate their readers’ intelligence when they quote people saying how powerful the “lobby” is. M&W

purposely ignore that some lobbies in the United States openly declare their clout – regardless if they are powerful or not - in order to receive more contributions for their next political campaign (Mead 3).

M&W provide readers with some statistics and figures in order to demonstrate the “lobby’s” power. As with the quotes they cite, the statistics M&W show were also selectively picked. Let us look at some numbers ignored by M&W to illustrate this point: The “Israel lobby” (meaning many organizations with different agendas) has contributed during 2006 roughly 9 million dollars mainly for Congressional campaigns. This is a relatively small amount if compared to the real lobbies contributions: during the same period of time PACs (Political Action Committees) supporting the interests of lawyers (\$58 million), retirees (\$36 million), the real estate industry (\$33 million), health professionals (\$32 million), securities and investments firms (\$29 million), the insurance industry(\$21 million), the commercial banks (\$16 million) and the pharmaceutical industry (\$14 million) have contributed a total of roughly \$240 million (qtd. in: Zunes 5). Walter Mead from the Council on Foreign Relations notes that “Pro Israel PACs contributed slightly more than \$3 million to House and Senate candidates in the 2006 election cycle – less than one percent of total PAC spending in that cycle” (Mead 3). The “lobby” is powerful, but according to these numbers, it is not as powerful as M&W portray it to be.

M&W claim that the “lobby” (meaning AIPAC and perhaps some other right-oriented PACs or organizations) wields considerable influence in Congress and in the American media (Mearsheimer &Walt 151-162, 168-175, respectively). Assuming this speculation is correct, the question remains: how much power AIPAC truly has? Contrary to good academic practice, M&W did not conduct a thorough analysis of AIPAC to support their point of view. It would be interesting to examine this question in light of the analysis of AIPAC conducted by the journalist Michael Massing. Massing wrote several articles about the “Israel lobby” and he argued that the “lobby” is indeed powerful (Massing 2006). In their book, M&W cite some data from Massing’s work but they chose not to cite Massing’s conclusion from his 2002 article: “Needless to say, US support for Israel is the product of many factors--Israel's status as the sole democracy in the Middle East, its value as a US strategic ally and widespread horror over Palestinian suicide bombers. But the power of the pro-Israel lobby is an important element as well” (Massing 1-2). Massing, unlike M&W, puts things into perspective.

M&W also claim that other lobbies are not nearly as influential as the “Israel lobby” without further elaboration or evidence (Mearsheimer & Walt 142). Conversely, LeVine argues that “...the two groups most happy about the publication of the book [*The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*] are the oil and arms lobbies, unquestionably the most powerful, and invisible, lobbies in the United States” (LeVine 2).

All of the previous flaws of M&W’s work are dwarfed by their failure to prove the core of their thesis. The core of M&W’s thesis is that the “Israel lobby” has been able to shape and distort US foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction, a direction that has harmed the American national interest (Mearsheimer & Walt preface viii). Even if the “Israel lobby” is really influential in Congress (legislative branch), **M&W, despite their desperate attempts, fail to prove how the “lobby’s” clout is being translated into actual policy-making in the US government administration (executive branch).** Who is responsible for the making of US foreign policy? The following subsection will provide some insights regarding this issue.

2.3.1: The Making of American Foreign Policy

Judging by M&W’s line of argument, it seems that the two professors believe that the “lobby’s” influence in the legislative branch (Congress) equals influence over policy-making in the executive branch (US administration and presidency). This misconception results from their lack of understanding of the executive branch’s decision making process in America. This is not to say that Congress has no influence at all when it comes to US foreign policy. Nonetheless, unlike in domestic politics, in the foreign policy sphere the Congress’ influence is limited.

Michael Foley addresses the issue of “Congress and the challenge of co-equality” (Cox & Stokes 115). Foley describes the relationship between Congress and presidency with regard to policy-making within the field of US foreign policy. He argues that the Congress can either be seen as “a model of compliance [with the executive branch – the president]” (Cox & Stokes 116), as “a model of assertion” (Cox & Stokes 117), or “as a mixed model [between the legislative and executive branch]” (Cox & Stokes 118). After scrutinizing America’s foreign-policy history, Foley concludes that within the field of US foreign policy, the executive branch – the president – is more powerful than the Congress when it comes to decision-making (Cox & Stokes 115). The executive branch is more influential than the legislative branch for four reasons: First, particularly within the foreign-policy sphere, the president is the one who makes the final decisions (Mitchell 174). Second, the issue of national security and intelligence seriously

undermines the Congress' influence, since certain considerations regarding national security will not be discussed with Congress members. These considerations will only be handled in the executive branch. The current Bush administration is a classic example of an administration that "...has been extremely concerned about secrecy of internal discussions" (Mitchell 174). Third, Foley argues that decision-making in the executive branch can be influenced by "specialist elites in the international affairs" and by "foreign policy exemptions from the rule of law and due process" (Cox & Stokes 123). Fourth, the vast majority of the resolutions passed by Congress supporting Israel were **non-binding resolutions**, meaning that the executive branch did not have to implement these resolutions. Even if the "lobby" is really as influential in Congress as M&W portray (e.g. when they list the many Congress resolutions supporting Israel that were passed by great margins) they omit that when AIPAC tried to pass binding resolutions, such as moving the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, it almost always failed (Zunes 4-5).

Referring to the current Bush administration, it is clear that although the president makes the final decision, there are several other important advisors that actually create a policy and present it to the president. However, it is important to note that Bush was the one who chose his advisors and he made sure that these advisors' world views would be compatible with his own ideology and beliefs (Mitchell 175). Bush then had to choose from several suggestions that were conceptualized in various committees within the executive branch. The National Security Presidential Directive-one (NSPD-1) and the National Security Council Principals Committee (NSC/PC) are the two main committees in which US foreign policy is being conceived. There are also six National Security Council/Policy Coordination Committees (NSC/PCC) that are responsible for six global regions and eleven thematic committees that are in charge of developing policies regarding specific issues such as Humanitarian Assistance, Arms Control, etc. (Mitchell 176).

Given the information mentioned above, it is quite remarkable that in a book about the making of US foreign policy, within the context of the final stage of the decision-making process, M&W did not mention **even once** the roles of the President of the United States - George W. Bush, the Vice President Dick Cheney, the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice or the former and current Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld and Robert M. Gates, respectively. M&W obviously do not believe that these persons are a part of the "lobby". Therefore, this amazing disregard to their roles in decision making stems from a shallow "conspiracy theory" approach, where the top of the US government administration would have been either coerced or duped by

the predominantly Jewish “lobby’s representatives” in the executive branch (Paul Wolfowitz, Scooter Libby, Douglas Feith and Richard Perle) into implementing a pro-Israel policy that has damaged the American national interest.

This is to ignore that George W. Bush and his administration have a specific world view, especially since 9/11/2001, which has shaped US foreign policy to this day (fall 2008). Bush and his administration as a whole, have honestly believed that pursuing the policy that has been pursued since the invasion of Afghanistan in 2002 would serve the American national interest best. Contrary to M&W’s assertions, this vision was shared by both the Christian and Jewish team members; moreover, the Christian members of the US administration were in charge of taking the final decisions since they were higher ranked than their Jewish colleagues.

M&W argue that a predominantly Jewish lobby, which (considering the division within American Jewry) represents between one and one and a half percent of America’s population, quasi controls the making and implementing of US foreign policy. This part of M&W’s analysis brings back to mind some well-known anti-Semitic clichés.

2.4: Why did the United States invade Iraq?

One of M&W’s boldest attempts to distort history is their assertion that the “Israel lobby” was the main factor for the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 (Mearsheimer &Walt 17). It is important to note that except for Bush’s official version of the reasons behind America’s invasion of Iraq, there has been a lot of controversy surrounding this issue. However, one could summarize the heated debate about the war in Iraq by listing three main reasons for the invasion: (i) toppling Saddam Hussein, eliminating his WMD program and stabilizing Iraq, (ii) fighting terrorism and spreading democracy in the ME and (iii) control over or better access to oil and other natural resources such as natural gas that would give the United States a huge political and economic leverage in the ME and elsewhere (Mearsheimer &Walt 253). The debate relates mainly to America’s chief motives: was fighting terrorism and eventually transforming the ME into a stable, peaceful and democratic region the main rationale behind the invasion? Or was it, as the majority of Arabs, Muslims and perhaps also many Europeans would say, American imperialism that was mostly interested in expanding its economy on the back of the Iraqi people?

M&W probably find these reasons too mainstream. Instead, they claim that the main reason for the American invasion of Iraq is the “Israel lobby” (Mearsheimer &Walt 17, 229-262). M&W argue that the neoconservatives – a part of the “lobby” according to M&W - were the

main supporters of the idea to invade Iraq. Neoconservatives are characterized by their voluntarism, leading to somewhat imperialistic and militaristic perceptions. They believe that democratizing the ME through a US-led military campaign would not only serve America's interests but also all the countries that would become democracies. Neoconservatives have reached this conclusion by demonstrating that throughout history, a democracy has not fought against another democracy. Neoconservatives believe in the "band-wagon" principle: countries in the ME will eventually understand the advantages – economic and political – of being a democracy and will then hop on the American wagon. Neoconservatives therefore believe that following the democratization of Iraq it will become increasingly easier to accomplish America's benign mission and transform the ME into a democratic region with free-market economies and free liberal societies (Mearsheimer & Walt 129).

M&W's depiction of the neoconservatives' agenda is quite accurate except for one crucial point: neoconservatives are not a part of AIPAC or of other right-oriented pro-Israel organizations i.e. neoconservatives do not constitute a part of the "Israel lobby". By conflating neoconservatives with the "lobby", M&W have exposed their ignorance of Israeli politics. M&W cite several Israeli politicians who were expressing their support of an American invasion of Iraq and use this as "evidence" to demonstrate that Israel, her American "lobby" and the neoconservatives are one and the same (Mearsheimer & Walt 234-238). In fact, Israel and AIPAC did not support the invasion of Iraq. Israel's Prime Minister at the time, Ariel Sharon, and other Israeli officials actually advised the Bush administration against the invasion, claiming that an invasion without a specific exit strategy could prove disastrous and further destabilize the region. Moreover, Israel feared that Iran would become stronger in case the invasion would go astray (Zunes 2-3). Indeed, Sharon's fear was unfortunately materialized. M&W are perhaps right when asserting that the invasion of Iraq has not advanced the US national interest but they fail to mention that **it has been much more detrimental to Israel**: Iran has become stronger and consequently Syria and Hezbollah too (Plitnick 5). Politicians say a lot of things and they have multiple agendas when saying those things. After it was clear that the US administration – mainly Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Rice - had already decided to invade Iraq, Israel and its politicians felt obligated to back their staunchest ally. After all, the United States has helped Israel in many occasions. Israeli politicians felt they the least they could do would be to express their solidarity with the American decision to invade Iraq (Goldberg 7). Moreover, Zunes argues that Israel backed the American invasion under the condition that "Iran would become the next target"

(Zunes 3). Israelis have hoped, at least as Americans have, that the invasion would be a success since they actually live in the ME and therefore would be much more vulnerable in case the invasion would not go according to plan (Plitnick 5).

Israelis and AIPAC do not share the neoconservatives' optimism regarding the transformation of the ME into a democratic region. Israel and most of its American supporters – what M&W call the “lobby” - do not believe Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon and perhaps even moderate Arab nations would hop on the American democratic wagon. Israel has had a lot of experience with some of these nations and - unlike the neoconservatives - Israeli leadership and Israelis in general do not believe that the leadership in Iraq, Iran, Syria, or Lebanon truly wants to transform these countries into democracies. Even if Iran, Syria or Lebanon would want to transform themselves politically and economically, Israeli leadership is highly skeptical of their neighbours' capabilities to do so (Mead 3). Zunes argues that even in a right-oriented Israeli government under Sharon many Israeli “...government officials...saw Israel's political and strategic interests at odds with the grandiose American neo-conservative designs on Iraq” (Zunes 3).

Moreover, not only Israel does not regard neoconservatives as allies, but the neoconservatives also do not regard Israel as a vital element in their agenda. Zunes argues that neoconservatives saw Iraq under Hussein as a countering-force for American hegemony in the ME and Israel was certainly not a major factor in the Iraq equation. In fact, Zunes asserts that neoconservatives' support for Israel “...only goes as far as they [neoconservatives] see American and Israeli interests converging” (Zunes 3) and he argues that the neoconservatives did not play a salient role regarding the invasion of Iraq. They were merely used by the administration to provide an intellectual rationalization for a policy – invasion of Iraq – that would have been pursued anyway (Zunes 4).

M&W contradict themselves again when examining the rationales for the invasion of Iraq. On the one hand, they underestimate Bush's role and influence because they do not hold him accountable for the ill-fated invasion of Iraq. Instead, M&W believe that the “Israel lobby” should be considered as the main factor for the invasion. On the other hand, M&W write that “...the neoconservatives were unable to sell the idea of war against Iraq during the Clinton years...” (Mearsheimer & Walt 244), thus essentially conceding that the president is responsible for making the final decision and should be therefore held accountable for his actions. In short, according to M&W, what separates Clinton from Bush is that Clinton was not duped by the

“lobby” and Bush was duped by the “lobby”. Jeffrey Goldberg asked Rumsfeld in 2005 to respond to allegations that he and the administration were manoeuvred into war by the Jewish lobby. Rumsfeld replied: “I suppose the implication of that is [that] the president, the vice president, myself and Colin Powell just fell off a turnip truck to take these jobs” (qtd. in: Goldberg 7).

A more plausible explanation for the invasion of Iraq would be that when Clinton was the president he regarded that an invasion of Iraq would be at odds with his view of the American national interest. The “lobby” was then able to “sell” Bush the idea of an invasion because of two main factors: Bush has had a different world view than Clinton and the circumstances were very different after Bush assumed office. Bush thought – especially after 9/11 and regardless of Israel or its American lobbies’ interests – that an invasion of Iraq would serve the US national interest best. This is actually where it all boils down to: M&W cannot accept the fact the Bush’s view of American ME policy is simply different than their view. Bush is not a realist. Bush is an ideologist and he, with the help of his advisors, has formulated his own foreign-policy doctrine that is widely at variance with M&W’s world view (Cox & Stokes 233). This leads me to the next point – the Bush Doctrine.

It is widely believed that the Bush Doctrine was conceptualized as a response to the September 11 attacks on the United States. The doctrine was announced at the State of the Union Address in January 2002 (Cox & Stokes 220). Other scholars see Bush’s speech at West Point on the first of June 2002 as the official proclamation of his doctrine (Callinicos 42). In his speech, Bush argued that the strategy of containment against terrorists is not a useful one since terrorists have no fear of retaliation because they do not operate within the framework of states. According to Bush, if terrorists were to obtain WMD they - as opposed to nation-states - could not be deterred by American power since America would have a serious problem in retaliating with WMD against a geographically undefined enemy. If the United States would not be completely sure who provided the terrorists with WMD (for instance Iran, Russia, China or dissenters from Western Europe) it would then face tremendous difficulties in effectively countering terrorists’ belligerence. Bush then concludes that American ME policy would shift from a strategy of containment to “strategic pre-emption” (Pauly & Lansford 39-41). According to Dodge, the Bush Doctrine entails three elements that are intertwined: Bush announced that the United States would (i) lead a global war against terror, (ii) curb the proliferation of WMD and (iii) spread democracy

in the ME. Dodge further asserts that the invasion of Iraq appeared to combine all three motives (qtd. in: Cox & Stokes 233).

This doctrine seems to be predominantly characterized by constructivist elements. That is the main reason why realists such as M&W cannot fathom how such a doctrine could enhance America's position in the world. Indeed, in 2005 Mearsheimer criticized the Bush Doctrine and argued that "...it [the Bush Doctrine] was a miscalculation driven by ideology, not a rational assessment of US interests" (qtd. in: Cox & Stokes 233). It is perfectly legitimate to criticize the Bush Doctrine but M&W, especially in the last 2-3 years, have been working assiduously to prove that the Bush Doctrine was not a "miscalculation driven by ideology" but a miscalculation driven by the "Israel lobby", with its conspiratorial, "witch-hunt"-like overtones.

Why did the United States invade Iraq? Books such as *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (Jervis, 2005), *Strategic Preemption* (Pauly and Lansford, 2005), and *America's Secret War* (Friedman, 2004) demonstrate that the ideological factor was the main rationale behind the invasion of Iraq. These books also mention economic considerations such as oil but they claim that it was not the main reason for the American invasion in March 2003. Books that were written by Marxists, such as *The Mandarins of American Power* (Callinicos, 2003), *The End of Oil* (Roberts, 2005) and *Blood and Oil* (Klare, 2005), emphasize the economic factors – primarily oil but also other natural resources as well as the American weapons industry - and question America's benign intentions of spreading peace and democracy in the ME. Kevin Phillips indicates that most of the books mentioned above predict that "world oil supplies will be tightening in the 2010s and the 2020s even as commercial demand mushrooms" (Phillips 5). Even Noam Chomsky (not a big fan of Israel) acknowledges the fact that the "Israel lobby" is not that powerful and he questions the popular claim that the current campaign in Iraq has been a debacle, arguing that American energy corporations could hardly consider the invasion of Iraq as a failure (Chomsky 2).

M&W assert that if the United States was truly interested in fighting Al-Qaeda and gaining control of oil, then it would have invaded Saudi Arabia, not Iraq (Mearsheimer & Walt 254). This is an over-simplified view, contrasting with a much more complex situation on the ground:

The United States knew that Al-Qaeda was operating in Saudi Arabia and it also knew that it received money from Saudi sources. However, the United States did not want to displace the House of Saud, a long-time business and strategic ally of the United States (longer than

Israel), because it understood that overthrowing the House of Saud was not going to eliminate Al-Qaeda – if anything, it would have strengthened Al-Qaeda. It was also becoming clear to the United States that the House of Saud was reluctant to try and crack down on Al-Qaeda because of internal divisions within the Saudi society. The United States also believed that the House of Saud was not only reluctant to fight Al-Qaeda, but that it was also incapable of effectively countering Al-Qaeda. Therefore, the United States had to find a way to coerce the House of Saud to cooperate with America and eliminate Al-Qaeda. The answer was Iraq. America's intelligence community believed that an occupation of Iraq would create a situation where America would have two significant levers over the Saudis: a military leverage and an economic leverage. The Saudis would feel much more threatened by a – this time hostile – American military presence. The US administration also believed that Saudi Arabia had lost the economic edge it had at the beginning of the 1970s. Consequently, the US administration believed that bringing large quantities of Iraqi oil into world markets would provide America with a huge economic and political leverage over the House of Saud (Friedman 245-253). In other words, Friedman argues that oil was part of the means to achieve a certain end, not vice versa, because "...the United States understood that the cost of a military action would dwarf any potential savings in the price of oil" (Friedman 248).

Of course, this is not to undermine the importance of the Bush Doctrine – on the contrary: toppling Saddam Hussein, eliminating threats of WMD, fighting terrorists in Iraq and then spreading democracy in the ME were inexorably linked with the Saudi issue.

2.5: Islamic Belligerence: Al-Qaeda, the Second Lebanon War, Syria and Iran

2.5.1: Al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden and Islamic anti-Americanism

The Bush Doctrine has also been shaping American ME policy with regards to America's stance against Al-Qaeda, American support of Israel during the Second Lebanon War and America's relations with Syria and Iran.

M&W correctly argue that US support for Israel has been one of the reasons for anti-American sentiments throughout the Arab and Muslim world in general and another useful recruiting tool for Al-Qaeda in particular. However, they overemphasize this point when they write about possible reasons for the attacks on the United States on 9/11. Especially when they mention Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, quote bin Laden's relatives and selectively quote from bin Laden's *fatwas* (letters), M&W implicitly indicate that American support for Israel and

especially that America “favoured” Israel over the Palestinians were bin Laden’s main motivations for attacking the United States at 9/11 (Mearsheimer & Walt 63-70). This is a highly disputable conclusion, especially considering that the Palestinian cause came much later into Al-Qaeda’s discourse. M&W do not provide readers with any groundbreaking information regarding Al-Qaeda’s origins, which makes the subsection on bin Laden absolutely pointless. Indeed, M&W reach the same conclusion most fair-minded statesmen and scholars already know

While some Islamic radicals are genuinely upset by what they regard as the West’s materialism, and venality, its alleged “theft” of Arab oil, its support for corrupt Arab monarchies, its repeated military interventions in the region, etc., they are also angered by U.S. support for Israel and Israel’s harsh treatment of the Palestinians. (Mearsheimer & Walt 65)

M&W mention several reasons for the emergence of Islamic anti-Americanism. M&W correctly point that the origins of anti-Americanism are actually anti-Western sentiments, which began long before the United States was founded. More precisely, Islamic anti-Western sentiments began in Prophet Mohammad’s time, then continued with the Crusaders, and subsequently re-emerged as a consequence of Muslim defeats in the twentieth century. Anti-Americanism is one element of anti-Western sentiments. Since America is a Western society and because the United States is a superpower, it is obvious that the most dominant form of the current Islamic anti-Western doctrine would be anti-Americanism. Paz notes that “The United States is just another force in history that represents the devilish factors seeking to fight the true believers [Muslims]” (Paz 1).

In fact, if M&W would truly want to learn about the emergence of one of the latest incarnations of global terrorism, they could have asked former president Jimmy Carter. At the beginning of the 1980s, Carter worried about the Soviet presence in Afghanistan because of its geo-political importance to the United States. Carter supported establishing a coalition that had only one agenda in common: to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan. This coalition also included groups of Islamic extremists – mainly Afghan and Arab. By forming and endorsing this “...alliance of convenience...Carter unintentionally empowered a transnational network of Islamic radicals [Al-Qaeda], who, having defeated one superpower [the Soviet Union] were on 9/11 emboldened to strike at the other” (Cox & Stokes 225).

M&W did not mention the fact that it was Saudi Arabia that encouraged the United States to station American soldiers in the Arabian Peninsula in order to contain Iraqi belligerence. That happened before the First Gulf War (1991) broke out (Dershowitz 27-28). Bin Laden’s *fatwas*

from 1996 and 1998 clearly indicate that bin Laden's acrimony towards the United States was chiefly a result of American soldiers' presence in Saudi Arabia (qtd. in: Dershowitz 27-28).

M&W argue that if America would not have supported Israel, Al-Qaeda would probably not have attacked the United States on 9/11. M&W skip the discussion of the origins of Islamic anti-Western sentiments and of the concept of the *Global Jihad*. *Global Jihad* means that the world is basically divided into two groups: the "true believers" (Muslims) and the "infidels" (the West). *Jihad* means "holy war" or "sacred war" that must be waged against the "infidels". Islamic radicals will always try to fight and defeat the "West" (Paz 3-6). For Islamic radicals in the Philippines, some of the local population is an agent of the "West" and should therefore be eliminated. The same goes for Islamic radicals in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir (the Indian part), Bali, Nigeria, etc. The terrorists who struck at Madrid and London also see Spain and Great Britain as evil Western powers that should be destroyed, and yes – bin Laden also sees Israel as an agent of the West. Remnick writes that in M&W's world "...if the Israelis and the Palestinians come to terms, bin Laden will return to the family construction business" (Remnick 2).

2.5.2: The Second Lebanon War and Hezbollah

The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy is biased when it deals with the Second Lebanon War, which was fought in 2006 between July 12 and August 14. Again, M&W depict a simplified view of the conflict and present every piece of information that would support their argument without providing readers with information that would cast doubt on their thesis.

At the beginning of the Lebanon section M&W define Hezbollah as "...a Shia organization that controls the southern part of Lebanon..." (Mearsheimer & Walt 306). This definition is not sufficient. Hezbollah is not just a "Shia organization" but primarily a terrorist organization that refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist ("Talking Sense" 15). Hezbollah physically controls south Lebanon but it is also influential in other parts of the country. Notwithstanding being a terrorist organization, it is also officially represented at the Lebanese government, which makes Lebanon both complicit with and accountable for Hezbollah's actions (Byman 1-2). M&W also do not mention the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah alliance in the Lebanon war section, which I will discuss later in subsection 2.5.3. By killing three soldiers on Israeli territory and kidnapping two soldiers from Israeli soil (Mearsheimer & Walt 320) Hezbollah unequivocally declared its official stance – Israel has no right to exist. Lebanon should have confronted

Hezbollah but it did not and so Israel had to convey a clear message, namely that if Hezbollah attacks Israelis on Israeli soil, Lebanon could not expect Israel to accept this.

M&W attempt to show that Israel was the one that initiated the war. They assert that although Hezbollah fired a few dozens rockets at Israeli towns on July 12, 2006, that could not have been considered the official commencement of the war, since the launching of these rockets was intended to divert the IDF attention from the soldiers' abduction site; they further add that "no Israeli civilians were killed in those diversionary attacks" (Mearsheimer &Walt 320). The fact that there were no casualties does not make Hezbollah's actions less of a trigger for war.

Hezbollah fought against a country with clear borders whereas Israel fought against a "country within a country" with no clear borders. Israel fought with its soldiers and Hezbollah fought a guerrilla war. Consequently, it was extremely difficult for the IDF (Israeli Defense Force), if not impossible, to distinguish between Hezbollah terrorists (which unlike Israeli soldiers did not always wear uniforms) and ordinary Lebanese citizens. In fact, every Lebanese civilian could have supported Hezbollah – directly or tacitly. Listen to what the UN's humanitarian chief, Jan Egeland, had to say: "Hezbollah must stop this cowardly blending... among women and children. I heard they were proud because they lost very few fighters and that it was the civilians bearing the brunt of this" (qtd. in: Simmons &Benson 2).

Israel wanted to make sure that its citizens would not be barraged by Hezbollah's rockets from south Lebanon. The IDF announced on radio that broadcasted also in south Lebanon - two days prior to an Israeli operation - that local Lebanese civilians should leave houses that were used as Hezbollah rocket-launching sites. Israel spread leaflets during the war, urging south Lebanese to leave their homes in order to be saved from the armed conflict between the Israeli Army and Hezbollah that occasionally (if not often) operated from dense civilian centers in south Lebanon (Simmons &Benson 1-2).

M&W have no time for such details. They rely on sources such as Amnesty International and Humans Right Watch to determine that Israel was again the "bad guy" and therefore should not have been considered morally worthy of US support. For instance, M&W correctly point that the IDF used the inaccurate and deadly cluster bombs during the war (Mearsheimer &Walt 322) but they choose not to mention that Hezbollah fired rockets filled with metal ball bearings, which were used by Hezbollah in order to kill as many Israeli civilians as possible (Raday 9). Unlike the IDF that targeted Hezbollah and its facilities, Hezbollah targeted mainly civilian areas. M&W provide readers with data in order to demonstrate that Israel broke the laws of war. Curiously,

M&W do not hold Hezbollah accountable to the same laws of war. For example, they omit that the same Human Rights Watch cited by them also notes that Hezbollah was "...lobbing rockets blindly into civilian areas" and concludes that "it is without doubt a war crime" (qtd. in: Raday 9). As noted, Hezbollah broke another major law of war when it operated from densely populated civilian areas. Actually, it is legally problematic to define the Second Lebanon War as a war since it was not a case where two legitimate armies fought each other, but rather an army that confronted a terrorist organization – an armed militia that fought from an area that had no clear borders.

M&W seem to forget that except the Lebanese, Israelis also suffered during and after the war: Hezbollah had launched 4,000 rockets aimed at civilian population centers in north Israel (qtd. in: "Israel under Attack 5) and as a result 330,000 Israelis had to flee their homes (qtd. in: "Israel under Attack" 6).

It is a fact that Israel inflicted considerable damage to Lebanese facilities and it is a fact that some 1100 Lebanese lost their lives during the war (Mearsheimer &Walt 306). However, some details remain unclear: How many people among these casualties collaborated with Hezbollah? What percentage of the infrastructure and facilities that was damaged by the Israeli Army attacks was used by Hezbollah to transfer or to store weapons that were used against Israel? There are many more questions of this sort that will probably remain unanswered.

M&W claim that the "lobby" was "discouraging the Bush administration from exercising independent judgment and influence either before or during the war" (Mearsheimer &Walt 334). M&W argue that since America was practically the only country that supported Israel during the war, the "lobby" must have been the reason for this support (Mearsheimer &Walt 307). This is to ignore that several other countries explicitly supported Israel during the war: Australia, Great Britain, Canada, the Czech Republic, France and Germany. There were even reports in the Saudi press and Arab press that expressed their empathy for Israel ("Talking Sense" 3-22).

M&W dismiss the notion that the Second Lebanon War was a proxy war. M&W believe that proxy war in this case would mean strictly that America wanted to test its weapons on Hezbollah (Mearsheimer &Walt 333). Contrasting with this limited view, LeVine argues that the war was not only America's way of testing its own weapons but also testing Iran's warfare capabilities and tactics since the United States knew that Iran was providing weapons to Hezbollah and because the United States wanted to be better prepared for a possible future confrontation with Iran (LeVine 1). M&W naively conclude that this argument is not compelling

because “There is no evidence-at least in the public record...” (Mearsheimer &Walt 333) that would validate this argument. Do M&W truly believe that Bush would have openly declared that the war was, among others, a way to test Iran’s weapons and tactics?

Israel is no saint. But Israel recognizes Lebanon’s right to exist while Hezbollah, which is operating in Lebanon, does not recognize Israel’s right to exist. Even in M&W’s “realist” world it is clear that Hezbollah initiated the war by both launching rockets at Israeli civilian targets, kidnapping soldiers from Israel and killing Israeli soldiers on Israeli soil on 12 July, 2006. Syria has also been a part of the Hezbollah-Iran alliance, an alliance that was at least partly responsible for the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War. Thus, Syria and Iran will be the subject of the following subsection.

2.5.3: Syria and Iran - An Unholy Alliance

In “Taking Aim at Syria” (Mearsheimer &Walt 263-279) M&W omit information that would provide readers with a more objective depiction of current American-Syrian relations. In M&W’s view, American hostility towards Syria is largely an outcome of the “lobby’s” efforts to distance Washington from Damascus. Hence, M&W argue that without the “lobby’s” influence, America would have had a better relationship with Syria (Mearsheimer &Walt 264).

In fact, America’s stance towards Syria is predictably in sync with the Bush Doctrine (see section 2.4). The United States knows that Syria supports terrorism. Hamas’ headquarters are situated in Syria and some of Hamas’ training facilities are located in Syria as well. Moreover, Syria provides Hezbollah with Iranian-made weapons and it promotes Hezbollah by functioning as a safe haven for Hezbollah leaders. Syria also occupied Lebanon between 1976 and 2005 and especially within this time period Syria was involved in the assassination of several Lebanese journalists and politicians who expressed anti-Syrian opinions. The former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, a resolute opponent of Syrian presence in Lebanon, was assassinated on 14 February, 2005 (“Syria: Brokering Hate” 9-15). Syria's support of Hezbollah should be seen as one of the factors that led to the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War (see section 2.5.2). Furthermore, Syrian President Bashar Assad and Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem openly admit that Syria is an ally of Iran, a vowed US enemy (“Syria: Brokering Hate” 13).

Israeli-Syrian relations are tense for a few reasons. One of them is the dispute over the Golan Heights, a territory that became a part of Israel following the Six Days War in 1967. Syria demands that Israel will withdraw from the Golan Heights. This issue is highly contentious and

M&W cite a poll from October 2006, which indicates that 70 percent of Israelis oppose giving Syria the Golan Heights and 16 percent support it (qtd. in: Mearsheimer &Walt 267-268). M&W fail to fathom that since Israel is a democracy, even if the Israeli Prime Minister would support an Israeli withdrawal, he/she would face tremendous difficulties in implementing it because a majority of Israel's population still opposes giving the Golan Heights to Syria. Moreover, the Golan Heights area is perceived by some seniors from the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) as a vital strategic region for Israel. In light of the Syrian-Iranian alliance and Syria's support of terrorism, some Israeli military officials and senior politicians believe that Israel should not withdraw from the Golan Heights (Mearsheimer &Walt 268).

M&W argue that it is the "lobby" and Israel that try to damage the American-Syrian relations. This assertion is easily refutable. In fact, it is the other way around. In the last two years or so, Israel has been negotiating with Syria on a non-formal level and it has been the United States that sometimes strongly advised Israel to stop those negotiations because the Bush administration was not pleased with Syria's complicity with terrorism ("The Wrong Guys" 2). America's view of Syria has recently worsened because of the Caucasus crisis. Syria has taken Russia's side in its conflict with Georgia and has held talks with Russian officials about military cooperation between Russia and Syria. This has infuriated the Bush administration that has pressured Israel to halt talks with Syria (Nachmias 1). An official from the US State Department said that Syria, instead of lining up with Russia, should focus on fulfilling a more positive role in the ME (Ben-Churin 1).

M&W incorrectly argue that the "lobby" (meaning mainly AIPAC) has encouraged the United States to strike Iran (Mearsheimer &Walt 305). Brad Gordon, AIPAC's co-director of policy and government affairs, said that AIPAC's official stance is not to lobby for a military strike against Iran, but rather to lobby for legislation that would "...dry up foreign funds Iran can use to develop a nuclear bomb and to supply aid to anti-government groups there" (Frankel 7). M&W assert that it was not only the "Israel lobby" in the United States that influenced the Bush administration's judgment with respect to Iran, but that it was also Israel that tried to distort America's otherwise less confrontational Iran policy (Mearsheimer &Walt 282). Countering this argument is the fact that, especially in the last few years, Iran has been pursuing a very confrontational policy towards America and Israel. Iran's president Ahmadinejad has publicly called for Israel's eradication (Goldberg 4) and he admitted that Iran has been backing Hezbollah in general and during the Second Lebanon War in particular ("Talking Sense" 2). Furthermore,

Ahmadinejad said during the Second Lebanon War that the war was “...the frontline between the Islamic world and the world of arrogance [the West]” (qtd. in: “Talking Sense” 2). Iran’s president, as Al-Qaeda, believes in the concept of Global *Jihad* and so even if Israel would not exist, Ahmadinejad would still view America as evil and arrogant. Hence, the Bush administration has enough reasons to pursue a confrontational policy towards Iran even without the “lobby’s” clout.

M&W diminish the Iranian threat by arguing that Iran would not attack Israel with nuclear weapons since it will then face a deadly retaliation from Israel. M&W probably did not read the Iranian press. A former president of Iran, Hashemi Rafsanjani, (as well as some other Iranian leaders) said that if Iran would attack Israel with an atom bomb, most Israel and its population would be destroyed because Israel and its major population centers are tiny. On the other hand, Rafsanjani said, if Israel would retaliate the damage to Iran would be relatively minor, since Iran is a huge country and it has several population centers that are remote from each other (qtd. in: Dershowitz 33). With a leadership that expresses such opinions, the United States and Israel cannot rule out the possibility that Iran will not only provide terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah, with conventional weapons, but that it will also provide them with nuclear weapons. Hence, terrorist organizations with a nuclear capability would not only pose a threat to Israel - they would pose a serious threat to the international community and to American national security as well.

Since the current regime in Iran seems to have an “...apocalyptic vision of history...” (Mearsheimer & Walt 284), European countries such as Britain, France and Germany and moderate Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have also been trying to prevent Iran from going nuclear. Would that mean that the “lobby” is also extremely influential in Germany or in the United Arab Emirates?

The next section will conclude this paper, referring, among others, to M&W’s conclusion and final thoughts described in *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*.

3.0 Conclusion and some Final Thoughts

M&W's conclusion, despite their repeated attempts to nuance and refine their thesis, is unambiguous: The "Israel lobby" has practically taken hostage the American political system. Consequently, M&W argue, the "lobby" has managed to shrewdly create a pro-Israeli, anti-American US foreign policy (Mearsheimer & Walt 335-6).

This paper thematically follows *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* and counters M&W's arguments that led to their conclusion mentioned above: First, this paper takes account of the US-Israel strategic relationship and refutes M&W's view of Israel as insignificant for American interests (section 2.1); second, this paper elaborates on the moral dimension of the US-Israel relationships and counters M&W's narrow-minded and biased view of Israel's history and its special relationship with the United States (section 2.2); third, this paper addresses the issues of lobby-politics in America and the foreign-policy decision-making process within the US executive branch. This section (2.3) also contradicts M&W's notion of an all-powerful "Israel lobby" that essentially controls US foreign policy. Section 2.4 describes the complexity and the constellation of events that led to the American invasion of Iraq, contrasting M&W's simplistic presentation of a "lobby" that pushed the United States to invade. The fifth section of this paper is divided into three subsections that have to do with Islamic belligerence. Section 2.5.1 describes and explains the origins of global terrorism and counters M&W's argument that Israel and its American "lobby" were one of bin Laden's principal motivations to attack America on 9/11. Section 2.5.2 counters M&W's one-sided account of the Second Lebanon War and demonstrates that M&W's arguments with regards to the "lobby's" influence during the war were incorrect. Section 2.5.3 refers to latest developments in the American-Syrian and American-Iranian relations, and shows that the Bush Doctrine - not the "lobby" - has been shaping US policies towards these countries. In short, this paper completely refutes M&W's thesis.

After stating their conclusion, M&W discuss possible steps that could be taken in order to solve America's ME problems. M&W undoubtedly have a very different world view than the Bush administration and they are clearly not satisfied with the current American ME policy. This huge gap between two different world views is explainable in methodological terms. M&W are leading members of the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy (Frankel 9). One of realism's core principals is the "...amoral maximization of power" (Cox & Stokes 234). M&W, as many other realist scholars and policy makers, believed that the invasion of Iraq would exemplify this amoral use of power and so they fiercely objected the Bush administration's decision to invade

(Frankel 9). Bush and his administration, especially after 9/11, have maintained that a maximization of American power in the ME would be the moral thing to do because spreading democracy in the ME would also save Middle-Eastern citizens from living under despotic regimes that support national and international terrorist movements. Here is what Bush thinks of realists:

Some who call themselves 'realists' question whether the spread of democracy in the Middle East should be any concern of ours. But the realists in this case have lost contact with a fundamental reality. America has always been less secure when freedom is in retreat. America always is more secure when freedom is on the march. (qtd. In: Jervis 80)

From this excerpt it is obvious that Bush's world view is much closer to Constructivism or to Idealism than to realism. Jervis argues that the "Bush administration believes that only a foreign policy that seeks a wider good will be supported by Americans" (Jervis 80). Bush thinks that his doctrine is morally just and he believes that "foreign policy, contrary to realist cynicism, is the realm of moral choice" (Jervis 80). Bush's world view is very optimistic and actually neither Israel nor the "lobby" share Bush's enthusiasm and optimism regarding regional transformation (Mead 3).

M&W claim that America's support for Israel makes America look hypocritical (Mearsheimer & Walt 335). When Bush speaks of realist cynicism he means that containment strategies that were implemented by realists until the invasion of Afghanistan in 2002 had also made America look hypocritical. The containment strategy known as "Offshore Balancing" (Mearsheimer & Walt 338), which is M&W's solution for the crisis in the ME, means that America will keep its soldiers offshore and will only ally with some ME countries, groups or organizations in order to contain their adversaries and prevent from any Islamic power to control the Persian-Gulf region (Mearsheimer & Walt 338-9). When America implemented this strategy, it also allied with some Arab dictatorships in order to contain their enemies. For instance, America supported Saddam Hussein during the 1980s in order to contain Iranian belligerence and, as noted in section 2.6.1, Carter allied with a group of Islamic radicals in order to defeat the soviets in Afghanistan. Those Islamic radicals are called Al-Qaeda. **Hence, Bush argues that it has been the strategy of allying with tyrannical regimes in order to gain political and economic leverage – the same "offshore balancing" strategy M&W offer as a solution for America's problems - that caused America to look hypocritical and possibly led to 9/11. Even M&W concede that this strategy has been one of the main reasons for anti-Americanism (Mearsheimer & Walt 65).**

M&W then say that America should treat Israel like a normal country. Indeed, M&W believe that the United States should treat Israel the same way it treats Mexico, Thailand or France (Mearsheimer &Walt 341). M&W's simplistic presentation of US foreign policy is astonishing. Mexico's, France's, or Thailand's national security problems are not even remotely comparable to Israel's. Iran's president does not publicly say that France, Mexico or Thailand must be wiped of the map, but he did announce that Israel must be erased (section 2.5.3). Moreover, M&W undervalue the US-Israel special relationship because "they are blind to history and tone-deaf to ideology" (Lazare 1).

M&W suggest that the United States should implement a new Israel policy and pressure Israel to make peace with the Palestinians and with Syria. M&W conclude that if Israel will not comply with US wishes, America should withhold its military and diplomatic aid for Israel. M&W do not suggest that the Hamas or the Hezbollah should be disarmed or that they should recognize Israel's existence. M&W do not mention the fact that Syria supports Hamas and Hezbollah (section 2.5.3). Their current view of the Israeli-Arab conflict is as biased and distorted as their view of Israel's history (section 2.2).

M&W express their hope that their book would encourage America to candidly debate about the impact of the "lobby", about US interests in the ME and particularly about US-Israel relationship. Actually, if M&W would want to have a truly comprehensive and meaningful debate about the history of American foreign policy, they would have incorporated the realization that America's Israel policy is pretty consistent with other policies the United States has been pursuing. It is true that America has not really pressured Israel to stop building settlements in the West Bank, but America "has never pressured Turkey, Morocco, or Indonesia to freeze their settlements in their occupied territories, which are also illegal" (Zunes 5). Furthermore, America has never supported an independence movement "...unless it was a US-sponsored movement...Thus, supporting the Palestinians would represent the break with traditional US policies, not supporting Israel" (Plitnick 5).

M&W also claim that fostering a more open debate about these issues would not be easy because of the "lobby's" influence on American media. M&W argue that the "lobby" would try and stifle such a debate (Mearsheimer &Walt 196). If this is the truly case, the "lobby" was ineffective in stifling this debate. The fact that *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* was published, the fact that it became a best-seller, the fact that M&W became minor international celebrities and were invited to many debates, and the fact that a documentary film was made on

their work run counter to their argument (Harris 2). M&W believe that by writing their book they have initiated this candid debate. They have certainly initiated a debate, but I would hardly define it as candid. In fact, M&W's work, their 2006 article and their 2007 book, is sharply at odds with qualities such as honesty, objectivity and academic integrity. It is also ironic that M&W speak of the necessity of "even-handedness" in American ME policy towards Israel (Mearsheimer & Walt 5) when *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* is not even-handed in its approach towards the "lobby" and Israel. M&W's book deals with America's multifaceted problems - its struggle with Al-Qaeda, with Iraq, with Iran and others – and then it is amazingly capable of tracking the main source of all these problems, namely Israel and its American "lobby". Surely there are clearer ways to express even-handedness.

M&W engaged themselves in a pseudo-scholarly endeavour. They did not conduct a scholarly research. They simply took every quote, statistics, or interpretation that could support their thesis – regardless of the context in which these quotes and information appeared – and placed them in their book. Fierce critics claim that *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* conveys the same message as the tsarist canard *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*: a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world. M&W repeatedly claim that this was not the message they meant to convey and that they are truly sorry if someone got the wrong impression. Apparently the German publishers of *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* did get the wrong impression: the cover of the German edition of M&W's book shows an American flag. But the stars on the flag are replaced with Stars of David.

M&W have chosen a certain world view that, until now, was expressed by either left- or right-extremists and have allowed it to enter the mainstream and the academia. David Duke, the white supremacist and former leader of the Ku Klux Klan said about M&W's 2006 article that "The great thing is that now the most prestigious school of government in the United States has adopted the same position I took..." (Clyne 2). Duke is correct. M&W have taken a conspiracy theory and gave it academic imprimatur.

It is remarkable that two realists such as M&W simply refuse to accept the obvious reality that "All the lobbying in the world on Israel's behalf couldn't have succeeded had there not also been enough voters, the vast number of them non-Jews, who genuinely do believe in the moral and strategic foundations of the unique, and uniquely controversial, U.S.-Israeli relationship" (Freedman 3).

I always thought that to strive for perfection, accuracy, objectivity and integrity are core academic values. If my assertion is true, then *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* should not be considered as an academic work, even though it was written by two professors from America's best universities. M&W have proven that even if one writes a book with 106 pages of notes, it does not necessarily mean that the work is academic.

Mearsheimer and Walt begin the preface of *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* with a quote from the British philosopher Bertrand Russell: "In all affairs it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted" (qtd. in: Mearsheimer & Walt preface). Generally, I could not agree more. However, in light of M&W's 2006 article, their 2007 book and the controversy it has produced, M&W have to hang a question mark on several issues themselves. It does not seem that M&W are truly aware as to what exactly they question and I seriously doubt that either US support for Israel or American ME policy are topics that have been taken for granted. Moreover, I believe that even in free democratic societies there are legitimate ways to hang a question mark on a certain topic as well as illegitimate ways. M&W have unfortunately chosen the latter.

How come two professors from America's best universities publish a book with such conspiratorial notions? Does it have to do with their personal views? Is it because of the American publishing industry's need for sensational products, their academic quality notwithstanding? Would it be possible that anti-Israeli groups, which are quite active in US-universities, could have anything to do with the publication of such a book? If some of these questions are relevant to the topic of this paper, one should ponder whether M&W truly believe in their own thesis. In any case, mainstreaming of extreme views is a worrying phenomenon and in order to better understand this trend one should further explore the questions mentioned above.

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