



Is It Good for the Jews?: The Crisis of America's Israel Lobby

Stephen Schwartz

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In 2005, two then-officials of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee were indicted for handing over classified information to a foreign power. That the power in question was assumed to be Israel brought fresh credibility to a conspiracy theory that had been floating around Washington for years: that a powerful “Jewish lobby” controls U.S. policy in the Middle East.

The run-up to the Iraq war had provided new grist for this theory. A group of largely Jewish neoconservatives were among the architects of the war, and their motivations for removing Saddam Hussein were alternately ascribed to oil interests and the need to protect Israel. The allegations against these neoconservatives—especially former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz—echoed the case of the notorious Jonathan Pollard who pled guilty of spying for Israel in 1986.

In this biting and incisive polemic, journalist and author Stephen Schwartz confronts the myth of a Jewish lobby head on, asking questions that no one else has dared to pose. What is the “Jewish lobby”? How powerful is it? What was its involvement in the preparations for war in Iraq? Was there really a “cabal” of neoconservative Jews in the administration of George W. Bush? How did AIPAC officials come to be accused, in 2004, of espionage? Above all, what is good for the Jews, and who decides it?

Many of us forget that in the 1930s, a genuine home-grown fascist movement arose in America. At that time, Schwartz reminds us, it was not the official representatives of the Jewish community that stood up to the fascist goons of New York City, but Jewish socialists—the antecedents of today’s neoconservatives. Likewise, today, it has not been the meek and timid leaders of the supposedly all-powerful Jewish Lobby that have defended the Jews but the reviled “neocons” in the Bush Administration. Their strategic vision projects a foreign policy that is both good for America and good for the Jews. As a result, Schwartz predicts an increasing turn for Jewish voters away from their dysfunctional marriage with the Democratic Party and toward the Republicans.

Ultimately Schwartz concludes that in today's America, a “Jewish lobby” may no longer be necessary. In the face of the threatened collapse of the Lobby, he argues, American Jews should openly and proudly assume their proper role as moral and religious exemplars for their fellow Americans and cease acting like a frightened minority.

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