

## A War for Israel

*“Those in government who dissent and who insist that differences may exist between the security interests of the United States and those of Israel can expect to be publicly trashed and called on the carpet by an Israeli-friendly Congressional committee.”*

- Jeffrey Blankfort

### About Jeffrey Blankfort

Jeffrey Blankfort was raised in a Jewish non-Zionist family. He produces radio programs on three stations and has written extensively on the Middle East. He was formerly the editor of the *Middle East Labor Bulletin* and co-founder of the Labor Committee of the Middle East. His photographs of the Anti-Vietnam War and Black Panthers Movements have appeared in numerous books and magazines.

In February 2002, he won a lawsuit against the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which was found to have had a vast spying operation directed against American citizens opposed to Israel's policies in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza and to the apartheid policies of the government of South Africa and passing on information to both governments.

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## **If Americans Knew Mission Statement**

In a democracy, the ultimate responsibility for a nation's actions rests with its citizens. The top rung of government - the entity with the ultimate power of governance - is the asserted will of the people. Therefore, in any democracy, it is essential that its citizens be fully and accurately informed.

In the United States, currently the most powerful nation on earth, it is even more essential that its citizens receive complete and undistorted information on topics of importance, so that they may wield their extraordinary power with wisdom and intelligence.

Unfortunately, such information is not always forthcoming.

The mission of If Americans Knew is to inform and educate the American public on issues of major significance that are unreported, underreported, or misrepresented in the American media.

It is our belief that when Americans know the facts on a subject, they will, in the final analysis, act in accordance with morality, justice, and the best interests of their nation, and of the world. With insufficient information, or distorted information, they may do the precise opposite.

It is the mission of If Americans Knew to ensure that this does not happen - that the information on which Americans base their actions is complete, accurate, and undistorted by conscious or unconscious bias, by lies of either commission or omission, or by pressures exerted by powerful special interest groups. It is our goal to supply the information essential to those responsible for the actions of the strongest nation on earth - the American people.

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87. *Washington Post*, Dec. 5, 2003
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90. *London Observer*, Sept. 21, 2003
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## A WAR FOR ISRAEL

By Jeffrey Blankfort

Originally in *Left Curve*, Issue No. 28

### Introduction

When Malaysian Prime Minister Mathahir Mohammed declared at an international Islamic Conference in Kuala Lumpur in mid-October, 2003 that "today the Jews rule the world by proxy [and] They get others to fight and die for them,"<sup>1</sup> the reactions in the U.S. and the West were predictable.

It was "a speech that was taken right out of the *Protocols of Zion*," according to one Israeli commentator<sup>2</sup>, and Mathahir would be accused of imitating Hitler and insuring that "Muslims around the world are similarly being fed a regular diet of classic big lies about Jewish power."<sup>3</sup>

Big lies? Given Israel's unchecked dominion over the Palestinians and its Arab neighbors over the past half century, supported in every way possible by the United States, one can assume that Muslims, not to mention intelligent non-Muslims, have no need for additional instruction as to the extent of Jewish power. As further proof of its existence, if such were needed, there would be no attempt to measure the Malaysian prime minister's words against the reality of the times to determine if there was anything accurate in his assessment.

If Mathahir could be accused of anything, it would be of being sloppy historically and using too broad a brush. *The Jews*, as such, control nothing. A segment of American Jewry, however, has been able, with few exceptions, to shape U.S. Middle East policy since the mid-Sixties. Given America's position as a major world power, and now its only superpower, that is not a small achievement.

Over the years, that segment, the organized American Jewish community – in short, the Israel lobby – has amassed unparalleled political power through skillfully combining the wealth of its members<sup>4</sup> with its extraordinary organizational skills to achieve what amounts to a corporate takeover of the U.S. Congress and virtual veto power over the presidency.

There is virtually no sector of the American body politic that has been immune to the lobby's penetration. That its primary goal has *not* been to

improve the security and well-being of the United States or the American people, but to advance the interests of a foreign country, namely Israel, may be debated, but it was acknowledged, in part, more than a dozen years ago by Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio), who complained to an annual conference of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council that "There's only one issue members [of Congress] think is important to American Jews – Israel."<sup>5</sup>

It was no secret that Israel had long been interested in eliminating the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and redrawing the map of the Middle East to enhance its power in the region.<sup>6</sup> Initiating that undertaking became a task for key individuals in and around the White House with deep roots in right-wing Israeli politics. The attack on the World Trade Center supplied the opportunity. That Iraq had nothing to do with it was immaterial. The lobby's propaganda apparatus would make the American people believe otherwise.

The first step has been completed. Saddam Hussein has been removed, not by Israel, but by the U.S. and its "coalition of the willing." From the perspective of the Israelis and, one must assume, the lobby, it is better that American and foreign soldiers do the shedding of blood, Iraqi and their own, rather than those of Israel, the world's fourth ranked military power. Such an accusation will most assuredly draw cries of "blood libel" from the likes of the Anti-Defamation League, but it is a conclusion that one can readily draw from the facts. The degree to which the present Iraq situation, as well as the first Gulf War, can be attributed to efforts of key individuals and the major Jewish organizations that constitute the lobby is what this article will examine.\*

\* *The lobby's existence and power well predate its alliance with what may be called its Christian fundamentalist auxiliary, which has given it unprecedented influence over both Congress and the White House.*

On March 13th, 2003, during a House appropriations subcommittee hearing on foreign aid, of which Israel has long been the dominant recipient<sup>7</sup>, Secretary of State Colin Powell took the extraordinary step of assuring members of Congress that a "small cabal" of pro-Israeli American Jews was not orchestrating President George W. Bush's drive toward war.

"The strategy with respect to Iraq has derived from our interest in the region and our support of U.N. resolutions over time," Powell said, in response to a question from the subcommittee's Republican chairman,

## NOTES:

1. New York Times, Oct. 21, 2003.
2. Jared Israel, *Arutz Sheva, Israel National News*, Dec. 8, 2003.
3. Abe Foxman, quoted in *Forward*, Oct. 10, 2003.
4. *Mother Jones* 400, on-line, Of the top 10 contributors in the 2000 elections, 8 were Jews, as were 13 of the top 20 and approximately 120 of the top 250. In 2002, Israeli-American Haim Saban, a close friend of Ehud Barak, alone donated \$12.3 million to the Democratic Party.
5. *Forward*, Feb. 22, 1991.
6. *A Strategy for Israel in the Nineteen Eighties*, Kivunim (Directions), official organ of World Zionist Organization, translated by Israel Shahak, Association of Arab-American University graduates, 1982; Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman, "Every Spy a Prince," Houghton Mifflin, 1990 pp. 81-82.
7. Since 1949, the total in direct aid is \$84,854,827,200. Interest costs born by US taxpayers on behalf of Israel are \$49,937,000,000 – making the total amount of aid given to since 1949 \$134,791,507,200 (more than \$134 billion). Since 1992, the US has offered Israel an additional \$2 billion in loan guarantees every year. Nearly all past loans to Israel have been forgiven – leading Israel to claim that they have never defaulted on repayment of a US loan – with most loans made on the understanding that they would be forgiven before Israel was required to repay them. Since 1988, the total in loan guarantees and underwritten bonds is \$25.4 billion. *Washington Report on the Middle East*, Dec., 2002. The totals do not include the millions of dollars of tax-exempt purchases of State of Israel Bonds by governmental bodies and unions and charitable contributions by Jewish as well as non-Jewish organizations.
8. *Forward*, March 6, 2003
9. *Ha'aretz*, March 6, 2003
10. *Chicago Sun-Times, Creator's Syndicate*, Dec. 26, 2003
11. *Forward*, Oct. 4, 2002
12. *Forward*, March 14, 2003
13. *Ibid.*
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15. *Ibid.*
16. *Slate*, "J'Accuse, Sort of," March 12, 2003
17. *Ibid.*
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21. *Ibid.*
22. Speech to AIPAC, April 1, 2003
23. *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 28, 1991
24. *Ibid.*
25. Speech in Israel, August 27, 1990
26. Jeffrey Blankfort, "The Israel Lobby and the Left: Uneasy Questions," *Left Curve* #27, 2003, pp. 28-34.
27. *Slate*, Oct. 24, 2002
28. *Forward*, Feb. 28, 2003
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Washington Post*, Feb. 9, 2003
31. *Forward*, April 7, 2003
32. *Ibid.*
33. *U.S. News & World Report*, March 18, 2002
34. *Ibid.* Oct. 28, 2002

major allies in Europe, Asia and the Middle East on the future of Iraq, if not the entire region, places him in the thick of the administration's foreign policy, to put it mildly. From now on, very little is likely to be decided on anything that affects Iraq or US alliances without his input."<sup>95</sup>

If true, this is not good news for either the neo-cons or Israel. Like most of the officials of the first Bush administration, Baker opposed the present Gulf War, believing it would destabilize the oil-rich region but more than that, his relations with Israel and the Israel lobby while Secretary of State were, at times, openly hostile.<sup>96</sup>

Even without the appointment of Baker, the neo-cons were taking nothing for granted. In January, Perle and former Bush speechwriter David Frum came out with a book, appropriately entitled, *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror*,<sup>97</sup> which calls for duplicating the Iraq experience, if necessary, anywhere on the globe, but with a particular focus on Syria, Iran and Hizbollah which, as we have seen, just happens to match Israel's enemies list. For good measure, they are against a Palestinian state.

A press release for the book claims that it, "will define the conservative point of view [they don't like the term, *neo-cons*] on foreign policy for a new generation – and shape the agenda for the 2004 presidential-election year and beyond."

The younger Bush has an affinity to Baker, who helped him secure Florida's electoral votes in 2000 following the state's contested balloting, but he also is aware of what happened to his father in 1992 when, backed by Baker, the senior Bush boldly challenged Israel and the lobby over Israel's request for \$10 billion in loan guarantees, which many observers believe may have cost him the election.<sup>98</sup>

Given that background, the contest of wills within the Bush administration in the coming months may be at least as interesting and, perhaps, as significant as the 2004 election itself. If the past is prologue, however, expect the lobby to come out on top.

Arizona Rep. Jim Kolbe.

"It is not driven by any small cabal that is buried away somewhere, that is telling President Bush or me or Vice President Cheney or [National Security Adviser Condoleezza] Rice or other members of the administration what our policies should be."<sup>8</sup>

In fact, there *is* a cabal that has been driving U.S. foreign policy under the Bush administration, and some of its members; notably, Elliot Abrams and Michael Ledeen, were part of the last cabal that operated in Washington under the Reagan administration, the one that brought us the Iran-Contra scandal. This one, however, is not nearly as secretive. Ironically, Powell has been and remains one of its favorite targets, and his frequent public humiliations at the cabal's hands have led seasoned observers to wonder why he hasn't resigned.

On this occasion, as he had on others, Powell played the loyal soldier, joining in what *Ha'aretz's* Nathan Guttman described as the Bush Administration's "Every effort to play down Israel's role in the future military conflict... to remove any suspicion that the decision to go to war with Iraq is a pro-Israeli... step. But, as hard as the administration tries," he wrote, "the voices linking Israel to the war are getting louder and louder. It is claimed the desire to help Israel is the major reason for President George Bush sending American soldiers to a superfluous war in the Gulf."<sup>9</sup>

The loudest among them may have been the free-swinging, old-line "conservative," Pat Buchanan, who charged, "That a cabal of polemicists and public officials seek, to ensnare our country in a series of wars that are not in America's interests... What these neo-conservatives seek is to conscript American blood to make the world safe for Israel," Buchanan wrote in the March 24 issue of the magazine he edits, the *American Conservative*. Because of his history of advocating right-wing causes, his comments were largely ignored by the forces mobilizing against the war.

Another of those voices was syndicated columnist's Robert Novak, who several months earlier had written that "In private conversation with... members of Congress, the former general [Sharon] leaves no doubt that the greatest U.S. assistance to Israel would be to overthrow Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime. That view is widely shared inside the Bush administration, and is a major reason why U.S. forces today are assembling for war."<sup>10</sup>

Support for a U.S. attack on Iraq was not limited to Sharon or his Likud Party: in a September 12 dialogue with Rabbi William Berkowitz at the Center for Jewish History, former Israeli Labor prime minister and then for-

eign minister Shimon Peres was asked what he thought of the administration's response to Iraq. Peres, likening the situation to the next world war, replied:

Why speak about an attack when you are defending freedom as you did in World War I, World War II and now in [World War] III? ... I don't think this is a campaign against Iraq, neither their people nor the land, but against a terrible killer, a dictator who already initiated two aggressive wars – one against Muslim Iran for seven years at a cost of 1 million [lives] and against an Arab Kuwait... Who saved Kuwait? The Arab League? You gave Japan an improved Japan, and you gave Germany a better Germany and the Marshall Plan. I believe the strength of freedom is equal to the strength of the United States. I don't see anybody doing the job.[...] So I justify the American position fully. The president speaks loud and clear.<sup>11</sup>

One may speculate whether Powell would have raised the issue had he not been asked, but apparently he felt the need to clear the air following an uproar that occurred ten days earlier when Virginia Democratic Congressman Jim Moran claimed that: "If it were not for the strong support of the Jewish community for this war with Iraq, we wouldn't be doing this."<sup>12</sup>

As could be expected, his comment was condemned by the White House and congressional Democratic leaders, including Senate Minority leader Tom Daschle and Democratic House Whip Nancy Pelosi, two long-time loyal devotees of the Israeli cause. Six local rabbis and *Washington Post* columnist Marc Fisher called on him to resign, with the latter comparing the congressman's remarks to a speech Adolf Hitler delivered to the German parliament in 1939, accusing "Jewish financiers" of plunging Europe into a world war.<sup>13</sup>

"Moran is symptomatic of a problem that we have been watching for several weeks and months," lamented Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), "and that is that the charge that the Jews are instigators and advocates of military action has moved from the extreme into the mainstream," This shift, he added, is emboldening people such as Moran to "have the *chutzpah* to say such things."

"It's out there and therefore we are concerned," Foxman said. "If, God forbid, the war is not successful and the body bags come back, who's to blame?"<sup>14</sup>

Fueling such anxieties, the Jewish weekly *Forward* noted, was "the

turned to Israel for instructions on how to suppress the armed resistance to its presence.<sup>91</sup> The effect of this was predictable. As Israel's occupying forces escalated their attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, even the usual token slap on the wrist by U.S. officials was missing.

Well before the end of the year, American forces were blowing up the homes of suspected "terrorists," bombing some from the air and bulldozing others to obtain clear "fields of fire." Their checkpoints in the Sunni area were identical to their Israeli counterpart's and, by the end of the year, the US was already holding more than 9,000 Iraqis in detention. Moreover, following the pattern of the Israelis, they had set up assassination teams to target resistance leaders.<sup>92</sup>

While the neo-cons were convinced that both the war and the occupation would be relatively risk-free, it is likely that Sharon and his military cadre were aware that, with or without Saddam, segments of the Iraqi public would resist the occupation. Was getting the US mired down in Iraq one of their goals? Perhaps, and it seemed, as the first anniversary of the war approached, as well as the 2004 election season, that President Bush, at least, was beginning to have second thoughts.

"It may take four or five months to take shape," wrote Jim Lobe, "but a new scenario could be unfolding, a shifting balance of power within the Bush administration, a reconfiguration in the interests of realism – and aimed at a Bush re-election victory."<sup>93</sup>

The first sign of what appeared to be a shift in Bush's thinking was the appointment of James Baker, Secretary of State in his father's administration and a long-time family friend, to be his personal envoy to the nations holding Iraq's massive debt. Assigned to the goal of persuading them to forgive the tens of billions of dollars owed by Saddam's regime, Baker immediately found himself sabotaged by Wolfowitz, who declared that the allies that are owed most of that debt would not be permitted to bid on the US\$18.6 billion in reconstruction contracts, since they had opposed the US war effort.

That Wolfowitz's policy was soon watered down was an indication that the neo-cons' influence, at least for the moment, was waning. Ironically, being named the *Jerusalem Post's* Man of the Year for 2003,<sup>94</sup> may have been his last hurrah.

How much Baker will become involved in other aspects of the administration's agenda remains to be seen, but, as Lobe pointed out, "the fact that he is now in the White House and dealing directly with all of Washington's

General Brom was referring to when it reported that: "Israeli intelligence officials have gathered evidence that Iraq is speeding up efforts to produce biological and chemical weapons." Fox News also quoted Ranaan Gissin, a long-time adviser to Prime Minister Sharon, who told the notoriously pro-Israel network that "Any postponement of an attack on Iraq at this stage will serve no purpose. It will only give him [Saddam] more of an opportunity to accelerate his program of weapons of mass destruction."

"As evidence of Iraq's weapons building activities," Fox reported, "Israel points to an order Saddam gave to Iraq's Atomic Energy Commission last week to speed up its work." The network presented no evidence to back up what was an apparent fabrication.

**W**as this a war fought by the U.S. for Israel?

On March 14<sup>th</sup>, a week before the invasion, Chemi Shalev reported in the *Forward* that "Most senior strategists here believe Israel would emerge in a stronger position after a war. A changed regime in Baghdad is widely expected to create new opportunities for Israel vis-a-vis the Palestinians... Israeli intelligence officials, in both the Mossad and Military Intelligence, believe a quick and decisive American victory against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein would send positive shock-waves throughout the East, convincing hard-line and terrorist-supporting regimes to mend their ways for the better."<sup>89</sup>

A year later, those assessments have proved to be more accurate than were their assessments of Saddam's inventory of WMDs. And they have paid off.

"With the assault on Iraq," wrote the distinguished historian, David Hirst, "the U.S. was not merely adopting Israel's long-established methods – of initiative, offense and pre-emption – it was also adopting Israel's adversaries as its own..." :

To where this Israel-American, neo-conservative blueprint for the Middle East will lead is impossible to forecast. What can be said for sure is that it could easily turn out to be as calamitous in its consequences for the region, America and Israel, as it is preposterously partisan in motivation, fantastically ambitious in design and terribly risky in practice.<sup>90</sup>

One immediate and invaluable benefit for Israel was to have the army of its primary benefactor become a fellow occupier of Arab land, and to have

increasing media focus on the White House's concern with protecting Israel and the views of Jewish hawks within the administration."<sup>15</sup>

**W**hile the mainstream press condemned Moran's remarks, columnist Michael Kinsley<sup>16</sup> pointed out that "The thunderous rush of politicians of all stripes to denounce Moran's remarks as complete nonsense might suggest to the suspicious mind that they are not complete nonsense," and that Jewish organizations were being hypocritical since they were posting comments on their own web sites lauding the Israel lobby's ability to get things done. Wrote Kinsley:

...Moran is not the only one publicly exaggerating the power and influence of the Zionist lobby these days. It is my sad duty to report that this form of anti-Semitism seems to have infected one of the most prominent and respected – one might even say influential – organizations in Washington. This organization claims that "America's pro-Israel lobby" – and we all know what "pro-Israel" is a euphemism for – has tentacles at every level of government and society.

On its web site, this organization paints a lurid picture of Zionists spreading their party line and even indoctrinating children. And yes, this organization claims that the influence of the Zionist lobby is essential to explaining the pro-Israel tilt of U.S. policy in the Middle East. *It asserts that the top item on the Zionist "agenda" is curbing the power of Saddam Hussein.* (emphasis added) The Web site also contains a shocking collection of Moran-type remarks from leading American politicians.<sup>17</sup>

The site he was referring to is that of AIPAC, the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee, Israel's official Washington lobbying arm, which, in testament to its power, is generally referred to in the halls of Congress simply as "the lobby."

From a one-man office when it was founded 50 years ago, AIPAC has grown into an organization of 85,000 members, with activists in every Jewish community in the United States. Each Spring it holds a national three-day conference in Washington. "It's climactic Congressional Dinner attracts hundreds of congress members and dozens of foreign ambassadors," writes *Forward* editor J.J. Goldberg, "all of them eager to curry good will with AIPAC and the Jewish community. Lest the point be lost, the dinner chairper-

son always reads a 'roll call' naming every senator, every representative, and ambassador present in the hall... followed by private receptions by lawmakers courting Jewish campaign support."<sup>18</sup> The organization does not contribute money to candidates directly but advises numerous Jewish PACs and wealthy Jewish donors as to the campaigns where their money might be the most useful to Israel.

AIPAC holds similar conferences, but on a smaller scale, around the country in the winter, with local officials from the respective regions being honored as invited guests.

It so happened that AIPAC's annual conference last year followed the Iraq invasion by a week. Since "AIPAC is wont to support whatever is good for Israel, and so long as Israel supports the war," wrote *Ha'aretz's* Guttman, "so too do the thousands of the AIPAC lobbyists who convened in the American capital."<sup>19</sup>

The *Washington Post's* Dana Milbank did not go quite that far, but noted that the meeting put a spotlight on the Bush administration's "delicate dance with Israel and the Jewish state's friends over the attack on Iraq." While, "officially," he wrote, AIPAC had no position on the merits of a war against Iraq before it started, as delegates were heading to town the group put a headline on its web site proclaiming: "Israeli Weapons Utilized By Coalition Forces Against Iraq." The item featured a photograph of a drone with the caption saying the "Israeli-made Hunter Unmanned Aerial Vehicle" is being used "by U.S. soldiers in Iraq."<sup>20</sup>

A parade of Israeli as well as top Bush administration officials – Powell, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, political director Kenneth Mehlman, Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton, one of the rare non-Jewish neo-cons, and Assistant Secretary of State William Burns – appeared before the AIPAC audience. The meeting – attended by about 5,000 people, according to Milbank, including half the Senate and a third of the House – was reportedly planned long before it became clear it would coincide with hostilities in Iraq. "This is not about Iraq," AIPAC spokesman Josh Block insisted. "This is about going to Congress and lobbying for the Israeli aid package."<sup>21</sup>

House Whip Pelosi, who had reversed her early tepid opposition to the war and was now on the bandwagon, made a point of condemning anyone who sought "to place responsibility for this conflict on the American-Jewish community." In her speech to AIPAC, she expressed America's "unshakable bond" with Israel in a variety of ways at least a dozen times. Echoing the neo-con agenda, she condemned "Syria's and Iran's bankrolling of terror and the

destruction, a critical task of the neo-cons was to convince the American public that there was a link between Al Queda and Saddam. Their colleagues among the nation's major syndicated columnists such as Safire, Will, Tom Friedman, Charles Krauthammer, Jeff Jacoby, and Paul Greenberg were all too willing accomplices. By the time, the U.S. launched its invasion, more than half of the public was convinced that Saddam had been behind the attacks.

Typical was the comment of the *New York Times's* Safire, who frequently brags of his close friendship with Sharon. Criticizing Powell for saying that "President Bush 'has not worked out what he might do in later stages,'" Safire wrote, just two weeks after 9/11, "Now is the time to work out how to strike down terrorism's boss of all bosses. "'Later' may be a stage too late."<sup>86</sup>

When they weren't writing, these longtime supporters of Israel and the government neo-cons became the talking heads for war-mongering pro-Israel hosts of CNN, Fox News, as well as ABC, CBS and NBC. Under this onslaught the critics would eventually be submerged.

Israel's vaunted intelligence service, meanwhile, was doing its part, according to reports that appeared in the world press in December.

"Israel was a 'full partner' in U.S. and British intelligence failures that exaggerated former president Saddam Hussein's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq," the *Washington Post's* Molly Moore reported from Jerusalem.<sup>87</sup>

"The failures of this war indicate weaknesses and inherent flaws within Israeli intelligence and among Israeli decision-makers," Brig. Gen. Shlomo Brom wrote in an analysis for Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies.

Brom, a former deputy commander of the Israeli military's planning division, accused Israeli intelligence services and political leaders of providing "an exaggerated assessment of Iraqi capabilities," raising "the possibility that the intelligence picture was manipulated."

The report did not pull its punches. "A critical question to be answered is whether governmental bodies falsely manipulated the intelligence information in order to gain support for their decision to go to war in Iraq, *while the real reasons for this decision were obfuscated or concealed.*"<sup>88</sup> (My emphasis).

Did that report feed into the opinion of Israeli officials regarding the U.S. going to war?

On August 17, 2002, Fox News presented an example of the "big lie" that



policy pre-emptory strikes, with international support when possible but without it when necessary. It carefully lays out the legal basis for pre-emption.

The document unabashedly calls for American hegemony but simultaneously has a Wilsonian flavor in seeking to make this country a resource for human freedom in the world. The document clearly pulls out all the stops on the neo-conservative internationalist argument from the days when it was first formulated.<sup>84</sup>

**B**y then the neo-cons had already gone beyond putting words on paper. In the very first meeting of the Bush national-security team in January 2001 after the president took the oath of office, Wolfowitz, the newly appointed deputy secretary of Defense, reportedly raised the issue of invading Iraq, and officials all the way down the line started to get the message.

In the days immediately following 9/11, as if it was pre-planned, Wolfowitz quietly initiated a new operation in the Pentagon that was designated the Office of Special Plans (OSP). As exposed by Seymour Hersh, the group of policy advisers and analysts called themselves, “self-mockingly, the Cabal.”<sup>85</sup>

Their goal was to produce “a skein of intelligence reviews that would help to shape public opinion and American policy toward Iraq.” While using data gathered by other intelligence agencies they heavily weighted information provided by the Iraqi National Congress, the exile group headed by Ahmad Chalabi, now of the leading power-brokers in the American-appointed “Iraqi Governing Council”.

By the Fall of 2002, the operation rivaled the C.I.A. and the Pentagon’s own Defense Intelligence Agency, the D.I.A., as President Bush’s main source of intelligence regarding Iraq’s possible possession of weapons of mass destruction and connection with Al Qaeda.

The director of the Special Plans operation is another neo-con Abraham Shulsky, who Hersh describes as, “a scholarly expert in the works of the political philosopher Leo Strauss.” Shulsky had spent three decades working in the government on foreign policy issues, including a stint in the early Eighties under Perle in the Reagan Administration.

The overall chief of the OSP is Under-Secretary of Defense William Luti, a retired Navy captain who was also an early advocate of military action against Iraq.

Besides convincing the public that Iraq possessed weapons of mass

development of weapons of mass destruction,” which she declared to be “a clear and present danger.”<sup>22</sup>

There was a *déjà vu* atmosphere about the AIPAC gathering. A dozen years earlier, following Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, AIPAC leaders acknowledged that the lobby “had worked in tandem with the [first] Bush administration to win passage of a resolution authorizing the president to commit U.S. troops to combat.” A *Wall Street Journal* article at the time noted that the “behind-the-scenes campaign avoided AIPAC’s customary high profile in the Capitol and relied on activists – calling sometimes from Israel itself – to contact lawmakers and build on public endorsements by major Jewish organizations.”

“Yes, we were active,” AIPAC’s director Tom Dine, told the paper. “These are the great issues of our time. If you sit on the sidelines you have no voice.”<sup>23</sup>

And, to be sure, money had its role with Democrats who had benefited from large contributions from pro-Israel PACs being among the swing votes. Having “pro-Israel liberals behind the resolution made it easier to hold moderate Republicans as well.”<sup>24</sup>

While the U.S. Congress was divided over going to war in 1990, “there is one place in the world which is longing for war,” said retired Major General Matti Peled, a former Knesset Member and, before his death, a leader of the Israeli peace camp, “and that is Israel... Every commentator finds it his duty to join the party of the war-mongers. Arrogant statements about the slowness of the Americans are heard every day.”<sup>25</sup>

Anti-war activists paid no attention to such statements or to the activities of the Israel lobby then, nor have they since.<sup>26</sup> While they chanted, “No Blood for Oil,” in national protests on October 25th, Kinsley, a mainstream liberal, described the situation as “the proverbial elephant in the room... Everybody sees it, no one mentions it.”<sup>27</sup>

**A** month before the war, the *Forwards* Ami Eden, commenting on Kinsley’s piece, noted that what was “once only whispered in back rooms... [was] lately splashed in bold characters across the mainstream media, over Jewish and Israeli influence in shaping American foreign policy.”

“In recent weeks,” he wrote, “the Israeli-Jewish elephant has been on a rampage, trampling across the airwaves and front pages of respected media outlets, including the *Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *the American*

*Prospect*, the *Washington Times*, the *Economist*, the *New York Review of Books*, CNN and MSNBC.

“For its encore,” he added, “the proverbial pachyderm plopped itself... smack in the middle of “Meet the Press,” NBC’s top-rated Sunday morning news program.”<sup>28</sup>

It occurred on February 23, when host Tim Russert read from a February 14 column by veteran journalist Arnaud de Borchgrave, editor at large of the *Washington Times*, who argued that the “strategic objective” of senior Bush administration officials was to secure Israel’s borders by launching a crusade against its enemies in the Arab world.

One of Russert’s guests was Richard Perle, at the time chairman of the Defense Policy Board, a key advisory panel to the Pentagon, as well as a fellow of the influential pro-Israel American Enterprise Institute. Of, perhaps, even more significance, Perle had been a founder of JINSA, the Jewish Institute of National Security Affairs, a little known neo-con think tank that will be examined later in the article.

Russert turned to Perle and addressed the question: “Can you assure American viewers across our country that we’re in this situation against Saddam Hussein and his removal for American security interests?” And then came the bombshell: “And what would be the link in terms of Israel?”

Both Perle and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, who has family in Israel, have been routinely described in the press as the “architects” of the war on Iraq, so the question was addressed to the right person.

Clearly Perle was not prepared. Squirming slightly he replied: “Well, first of all, the answer is absolutely yes. Those of us who believe that we should take this action if Saddam doesn’t disarm – and I doubt that he’s going to – believe it’s in the best interests of the United States. I don’t see what would be wrong with surrounding Israel with democracies; indeed, if the whole world were democratic, we’d live in a much safer international security system because democracies do not wage aggressive wars.”

I’ll leave that contradiction for another time and note, as did the *Forward’s* Eden, that:

coined by Canadian-Jewish neo-con David Frum] Israel is targeted in part because it is our friend, and in part because it is an island of liberal democratic principles – American principles – in a sea of tyranny, intolerance and hatred. As Secretary of State [sic] Donald Rumsfeld has pointed out, Iran, Iraq and Syria are all engaged in ‘inspiring and financing a culture of political murder and suicide bombing’ against Israel, just as they have aided campaigns of terrorism against the U.S. over the past two decades... [ ... ] ... the U.S. should lend its full support to Israel as it seeks to root out the terrorist network that daily threatens the lives of Israeli citizens.

The letter also urged Bush to accelerate plans for removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. It had 34 signatories including the familiar neo-cons such as Perle, but this time there was the name of Norman Podhoretz, one of the godfathers of the movement. Also signing were Reagan appointee Ken Adelman, Kagan, Daniel Pipes, and former CIA director Woolsey.

That letter came at a particularly critical moment, as the Sharon government was receiving widespread international criticism for the Israeli army’s barbarous assault on the Palestinian refugee camp of Jenin and its destruction of the old city of Nablus. Under pressure from US allies, Bush was compelled to tell the Israeli prime minister, “Enough is enough” and to withdraw his troops.<sup>82</sup> The PNAC letter, however, combined with critical columns from long-time Republican mainstays, William Safire and George Will, led the president to back down and to describe Sharon as “a man of peace,” despite the prime minister’s refusal to pull out his forces.<sup>83</sup>

The last document in the neo-cons theoretical armor during the pre-assault period was “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.” “Wolfowitz’s influence has been felt most keenly in President Bush’s report” on the security strategy, wrote Murray Friedman in the *Forward*. The report, which was released on September 17, 2002,

... in tone, specificity and gravity... echoes Wolfowitz’s controversial recommendations in a 1992 “Defense Planning Guidance” draft leaked to the press and disavowed by the first Bush administration.

As Friedman admiringly describes it:

The national security strategy introduces as a primary tool and

for a pre-emptive toppling of Saddam, as did other contributors.

“Strengthening our major ally in the region, Israel, should be the base of U.S. Middle East policy,” wrote Abrams, “and we should not permit the establishment of a Palestinian state that does not explicitly uphold U.S. policy in the region.”

In their introductory chapter, on Regime Change, Kristol and Kagan selected Iraq, Iran, North Korea as well as China, as countries that needed to be confronted. They concluded that the U.S. will have to intervene abroad, “even when we cannot prove that a narrowly construed ‘vital interest’ of the U.S. is at stake.”

In an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* two years earlier, Kristol and Kagan had argued that “Saddam Hussein must go” and, to insure “that the Iraqi leader never again uses weapons of mass destruction, the only way to achieve that goal is to remove Mr. Hussein and his regime from power.” According to Kristol and Kagan, the air strikes carried out by the Clinton administration under the “Iraq Liberation Act” were not enough to protect “our interests.”<sup>80</sup> Whose interests they were referring to is open to question.

As the *San Francisco Bay Guardian’s* Camille Taiara put it, “These interests were defined nine months later,” when in another article in the *Weekly Standard* entitled “A Way to Oust Saddam”, Kagan cited those incentives: the protection of “the safety of Israel, of modern Arab states and of the energy resources on which the United States and its allies depend.”<sup>81</sup>

Ten days after the attack on the World Trade Center, an event that conveniently met the description of a “Pearl Harbor-like attack” that PNAC said was needed to launch “the New American Century,” the group issued an open letter to President Bush. What he needed to do, the letter said, was to take the anti-terror war beyond Afghanistan by removing Saddam Hussein, breaking ties with the Palestinian Authority, and to gear for action against Syria, Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon. The 41 signatories on that letter were largely the same as those who signed the letter to Clinton three years earlier, minus those who were now in the government.

PNAC made no secret of its affinity for Israel. In a letter to Bush on April 3, 2002, he was commended for his:

... strong stance in support of the Israeli government as it engages in the present campaign to fight terrorism... no one should doubt that the U.S. and Israel share a common enemy. We are both targets of what you have correctly called an ‘Axis of Evil.’ [a term

... it was a startling question, especially when directed at Perle, the poster boy – along with Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith – for anti-semitic critics who insist the United States is being pulled into war by pro-Likud Jewish advisers, on orders from Jerusalem.

But Russert is no David Duke, nor even a Patrick Buchanan. If Russert is asking the question on national television, then the toothpaste is out of the tube: The question has entered the discourse in elite Washington circles and is now a legitimate query to be floated in polite company.<sup>29</sup>

In a lengthy front page story, the *Washington Post’s* Robert Kaiser described what appeared to be an unprecedented political partnership between Ariel Sharon and George W. Bush, headlined, “Bush and Sharon Nearly Identical On Mideast Policy.”

“Over the past dozen years or more,” Kaiser wrote, “supporters of Sharon’s Likud Party have moved into leadership roles in most of the American-Jewish organizations that provide financial and political support for Israel.”<sup>30</sup>

The leadership does not necessarily reflect overall Jewish opinion. A poll to gauge Jewish opinions on the war – conducted a month before it broke out – found that 56 percent of Jews were supportive of the war which corresponded to that of the general public. The rate was said to be even higher immediately afterward, corresponding to increased support for the war among the American populace in general.<sup>31</sup>

Concern about appearances, however, had earlier led members of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish-American Organizations, a Jewish umbrella group with 52 member organizations, to refrain from taking a bellicose stand.

“Just as we have not issued a public statement, we do not think it’s the right time for the Presidents Conference to issue a public statement either,” American Jewish Committee executive director David Harris told the *Forward* in October of 2002. “Our interest here is to not be out ahead of the administration.” (Emphasis added)

In contrast, the liberal American Jewish Congress had no such reservations. “The final statement ought to be crystal clear in backing the president, having to take unilateral action if necessary against Iraq to eliminate

weapons of mass destruction,” Jack Rosen, president of the American Jewish Congress, told the paper. The AJCongress had already issued its own position supporting the “U.S. administration in its stated position to intervene in Iraq to ensure that Iraq is no longer a threat.”<sup>32</sup>

But already, in March of 2002, Mortimer Zuckerman, the chair of the Jewish President’s conference and editor-publisher of *U.S. News and World Report* and the *N.Y. Daily News*, had made his position clear. He was supporting the administration’s budding plan to remove Saddam:

The next target in the war’s phase, clearly, will be Iraq. The West’s lackluster efforts at non-proliferation have done little more than delay the inevitable – a Baghdad with nuclear weapons... The United States is prepared to take the risks, and is right to do so, in forcing a change in Iraq.<sup>33</sup>

By late October, he was eager to get it on:

The only way to force Iraq to get rid of its terrible weapons is to rid the country of the regime that builds them. Washington must not pause... in its push to depose Saddam... We are in a war against terrorism, and we must fight that war in a time and place of our choosing. The war’s next phase, clearly, is Iraq.<sup>34</sup>

Zuckerman would write six more editorials in the weeks leading up to the war, each more emphatic than the one before in calling for Saddam’s head. If Zuckerman’s opinions carried unusual weight, it was because the Conference of Presidents is the Jewish body whose task it is to lobby the White House and the Executive branch while AIPAC focuses on Congress.

As could be expected, accusations that Israel and its supporters within the government were orchestrating U.S. policy towards Iraq led to accusations of anti-semitism and raised questions as to what extent criticism of Israel, American Jews and Jewish officials working in the White House would be tolerated.

Lawrence Kaplan, senior editor of the *New Republic*, declared that references to Jewish and Israeli pro-war pressure were reminiscent of Buchanan’s claims in 1990 that only soldiers with non-Jewish names would be killed in a war being pushed solely by Israel and its American “amen corner.”<sup>35</sup>

The ADL’s Foxman told the *Forward* that while it was legitimate to raise

Heading the list of over 40 signatures were its authors, Stephen Solarz and Perle, with the rest, beginning with Elliot Abrams, following alphabetically. Among the others were both Feith, and Wurmser, who at the time was heading the Middle East desk at the American Enterprise Institute. It included most of the board of JINSA and Wolfowitz, as well as soon-to-be Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who must have become aware of the direction in which the center of power was moving and what opportunities it would provide.

For those who believe the Iraq invasion was launched in Israel’s behalf, Solarz could well compete with the Clean Break Three to be the war’s poster-boy, given his record in Congress.

Representing Brooklyn in 1980, Solarz sent a newsletter to his Jewish constituents headlined “Delivering for Israel,” in which he boasted how he was able to obtain an additional \$660 million in aid for Israel under difficult circumstances. “It is a story,” in Solarz’s own words, “of how legislative maneuvering and political persistence managed to prevail over fiscal constraints and bureaucratic resistance.”

What were the “fiscal restraints?” Solarz acknowledged that it was “a time of double digit inflation, with all sorts of domestic programs facing severe cutbacks in spending.” After describing the ins and outs of his successful maneuvering, he reminded his constituents of his devotion to Israel:

When I was first elected to Congress six years ago (1974) I deliberately sought an assignment on the Foreign Affairs Committee precisely because I wanted to be in a position to be helpful to Israel... it is only the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the House, and the Foreign Relations Committee in the Senate who are really in a position to make a difference where it counts – in the area of foreign aid upon which Israel is so dependent.<sup>78</sup>

For Bush’s 2000 presidential campaign, PNAC assembled a book, edited by Kristol and Kagan, which seems to have been adopted as the agenda for the Bush administration. It is entitled *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy*, and among its contributors, were the now familiar names of Perle, Wolfowitz, and Abrams.<sup>79</sup>

In his chapter on the Middle East, Abrams laid out the “peace through strength” concept and argued that U.S. military strength and its willingness to sue it will remain “a key factor in our ability to promote peace.” He called

attention, it used the letterhead of the Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf, a largely paper organization that had been put together in 1990 “to support President Bush’s policy of expelling Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.” It read, in part:

Seven years later, Saddam Hussein is still in power in Baghdad. And despite his defeat in the Gulf War, continuing sanctions, and the determined effort of UN inspectors to fetter out and destroy his weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein has been able to develop biological and chemical munitions. To underscore the threat posed by these deadly devices, the Secretaries of State and Defense have said that these weapons could be used against our own people. And you have said that this issue is about “the challenges of the 21st Century.”

Iraq’s position is unacceptable. While Iraq is not unique in possessing these weapons, it is the only country which has used them – not just against its enemies, but its own people as well. We must assume that Saddam is prepared to use them again. This poses a danger to our friends, our allies, and to our nation.

It is clear that this danger cannot be eliminated as long as our objective is simply “containment,” and the means of achieving it are limited to sanctions and exhortations... Saddam must be overpowered; he will not be brought down by a coup d’etat...<sup>77</sup>

The letter called on the president to “recognize a provisional government of Iraq based on the principles and leaders of the Iraqi National Congress (INC) that is representative of all the peoples of Iraq” (presumably incorporated in the person of their favorite, Ahmed Chalabi)... and providing it with the “logistical support to succeed.”

The signatories acknowledged that:

In the present climate in Washington, *some may misunderstand and misinterpret strong American action against Iraq as having ulterior political motives.* [My emphasis]. We believe, on the contrary, that strong American action against Saddam is overwhelmingly in the national interest, that it must be supported, and that it must succeed... We urge you to provide the leadership necessary to save ourselves and the world from the scourge of Saddam and the weapons of mass destruction that he refuses to relinquish.

questions concerning the pro-Israel leanings of certain administration officials, it was obligatory to note that not all the hawks were Jewish and it was most definitely not kosher to portray these individuals and Jewish organizations as composing “a shadowy Jewish conspiracy that controls American foreign policy.”

“It is an old canard that Jews control America and American foreign policy,” Foxman said. “During both world wars, anti-semites said that Jews manipulated America into war. So when you begin to hear it again, there is good reason for us to be aware of it and sensitive to it.”<sup>36</sup> Foxman was correct regarding the world wars but this time there seems to be more than enough proof that a significant number of Jewish aficionados of Israel played a decisive part in getting the U.S. to invade and occupy Iraq.

Retired General Anthony Zinni, former head of the military’s Central Command, which includes the Middle East, appeared to be on the same page as Mathahir. Zinni first raised questions about attacking Iraq in 1998, suggesting that a “fragmented, chaotic Iraq... could happen if this isn’t done carefully [which] is more dangerous in the long run than a contained Saddam is now,” a warning that caused Wolfowitz, then a dean at Johns Hopkins but active behind the scenes, to attack him in print.

Zinni was simply reiterating what had been the policy of the first Bush administration and that, prior to the attack on Saddam, had been repeated not only by former members of the elder Bush’s cabinet such as Secretary of State James Baker, and National Security Advisor Brent Snowcroft, but by the elder Bush himself. (This is worth noting because the first Bush and members of his administration had strong ties to the oil-producing countries as well as the industry, and had this truly been “a war for oil” they could have been expected to support it. As it happened, those who insisted that it was about oil ignored this apparent flaw in their argument.)

As the *Washington Post* reported, “The more he listened to Wolfowitz and other administration officials talk about Iraq, the more Zinni became convinced that interventionist “neo-conservative” ideologues were plunging the nation into a war in a part of the world they didn’t understand.

I think the American people were conned into this... I don’t know where the neo-cons came from – that wasn’t the platform they ran on... Somehow, the neo-cons captured the president. They captured the vice-president.<sup>37</sup>

Zinni is a harder target for the U.S. media than Mathahir, so most of the pro-war shills in the mainstream media chose to ignore him. Not, however, Joel Mowbray, a right-wing ideologue from the *National Review*, whose attack on Zinni appeared on line:

Discussing the Iraq war with the *Washington Post* last week, former General Anthony Zinni took the path chosen by so many anti-semites: he blamed it on the Jews...

Technically, the former head of the Central Command in the Middle East didn't say "Jews." He instead used a term that has become a new favorite for anti-semites: "neo-conservatives." As the name implies, "neo-conservative" was originally meant to denote someone who is a newcomer to the right. In the 90's, many people self-identified themselves as "neocons," but today that term has become synonymous with "Jews."<sup>38</sup>

Despite Mowbray's assertion that to criticize the neo-cons is thinly disguised anti-semitism, he is correct in noting that the term has become synonymous with a certain group of Jews. The miniscule handful that are not, such as former CIA chief James Woolsey, long-time Washington insider Frank Gaffney, former Congressman Newt Gingrich and Undersecretary of State John Bolton, are unabashed Israeliophiles.

Russian-born Max Boot, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a contributing editor to the *Weekly Standard*, a veritable neo-con house organ, did not wait for Zinni's comments to realize that the inevitable criticism of the neo-cons' role in producing the Iraq quagmire had to be stopped.

It is a "malicious myth" that the "Bush administration is pursuing a neo-conservative foreign policy." Boot wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, "If only it were true!" Showing contempt for the intelligence of his readers, he trotted out one of the weaker argument the neo-cons have used in their defense, that while their numbers in the Bush administration, "seems impressive, it also reveals that the neo-cons have no representatives in the administration's top tier."<sup>39</sup> (Bush advisor Karl Rove is technically not there either, but no one would argue that he carries no clout with the president).

"The contention that the neo-con faction gained the upper hand in the White House has a superficial plausibility," wrote Boot, "because the Bush administration toppled Saddam Hussein and embraced democracy promotion [sic] in the Middle East," but these policies, he would have us believe,

vital American interests in the Gulf.

All of that might be of purely academic interest were it not for the fact that among the men behind that campaign were such names as, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz. What was, back in 1997, merely a theory, is now, in 2003, U.S. policy. Hardly a conspiracy, the proposal was out there for anyone to see. *But certainly an interesting case study of how columnists, commentators, and think-tank intellectuals can, with time and the election of a sympathetic president, change the course of American foreign policy.*"(My emphasis)

There was something different about this operation, however. Politicians out of power may plot how to return to power, but this group was more than that. It had been organized and was largely being run by the Jewish neo-cons whose activities we have been following, plus neo-con journalists and neo-con think-tank members with a long history of connections to the Israeli right wing and whose faces and opinions dominate the TV screens when issues of U.S foreign policy are under discussion. And as indicated above, it had the support of the leading American-Jewish lobbying organizations.

Heading up PNAC was William Kristol, editor of the *Weekly Standard*, the leading journal of the neo-cons, and Robert Kagan, a columnist for the magazine as well as for the *Washington Post*, whose columns in the *Post* and whose joint columns with Kristol in the *Weekly Standard* have maintained a steady drumbeat for Washington to send more U.S. troops to Iraq and keep to its original unilateralist position.

Asked by Koppel if "part of the larger vision that you and your colleagues had, or have to this day, is the removal, either by force or otherwise, of the current power structure in Iran?," Kristol replied

I think that would be great. I hope we can do it otherwise. And I think we can do it otherwise than by force. I think getting rid of Saddam would help there. But, no, we will have to leave American troops in that region, I think in Iraq, for quite a while... It's a good investment. I think it helps keep stability in the area. And it helps strengthen the forces of freedom in the area...

In February of 1998, PNAC wanted to let President Clinton and the American public know its position on Iraq, but since, despite Koppel's statement to the contrary, the group and its plans had not yet come to the public's

supremacy. The document was leaked to the *New York Times*, which condemned it as extreme, and it was supposed to have been rewritten. As we will see, the original concepts are now part of the current National Security Strategy.<sup>74</sup>

In 1996, as noted above, the scene shifted to Israel and we had Perle, Feith and Wurmser preparing the Clean Break paper for Netanyahu, when Bush Junior was four years from arriving in office.

Then in September of 2002, during the buildup to the invasion, the *Glasgow Sunday Herald* reported that it had discovered "A secret blueprint for U.S. global domination [which] reveals that President Bush and his cabinet were planning a premeditated attack on Iraq to secure regime change even before he took power in January 2001."<sup>75</sup> What it was describing was the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), and it even had a web site which spelled out its plans until they were subsequently removed. That it was discovered by a Scottish newspaper was another telling commentary on the state of American journalism.

Founded in June of 1997, following the Clean Break by a year, part of PNAC's plan was for the U.S. to take control of the Gulf region with overwhelming and deadly military force. "While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification," the PNAC document explains, "the need for a substantial American force-presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein." (My emphasis)<sup>76</sup>

As information about PNAC made its way slowly into the mainstream media, *ABC Nightline's* Ted Koppel could no longer avoid it. On March 5<sup>th</sup>, he told his audience, that "Back in 1997, a group of Washington heavyweights, almost all of them neo-conservatives, formed an organization called the Project for the New American Century.

They did what former government officials and politicians frequently do when they're out of power, they began formulating a strategy, in this case, a foreign policy strategy, that might bring influence to bear on the administration then in power, headed by President Clinton. Or failing that, on a new administration that might someday come to power.

They were pushing for the elimination of Saddam Hussein. And proposing the establishment of a strong U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf, linked to a willingness to use force to protect

are not the result of neo-con cajoling, but rather an outgrowth of the September 11 attacks and the decision by Bush that the U.S. "no longer could afford a 'humble' foreign policy." That's their spin. Let's see how well it holds up in the light of the facts.

The neo-con movement arose during the early 1970s among a small group of disgruntled liberals and former Trotskyists, some of whom had studied under Professor Leo Strauss at the University of Chicago. The group was almost exclusively Jewish, and was defined by "their attachment to Israel [and to] the Reaganite right's hard-line anti-communism, commitment to American military strength, and willingness to intervene politically and militarily in the affairs of other nations to promote democratic [sic] values (and American interests)," all of which "would guarantee Israel's security."<sup>40</sup>

They were opposed as well to the Nixon administration's policy of détente and the easing of tensions with the Soviet Union which meant U.S. acquiescence to its influence over the East Bloc states. The neo-cons wanted to challenge the Soviets through a massive build-up of this country's military strength and a willingness to use American power to further America's hegemonic interests, not dissimilar, as we shall see, to the agenda of the Project for a New American Century.

The neo-cons became in effect the intellectual arm of the Reagan administration... [Elliot] Abrams, as undersecretary of state for Latin American affairs, was a key figure in the effort to counter the Sandinistas in Nicaragua... ; Perle... spearheaded the drive to deploy Pershing missiles in Western Europe [and] the overall guru formulating these policies was Paul Wolfowitz.

Well, the same team is back guiding the decisions of the Bush administration in its war against terrorism and in challenging Iraq to give up its weapons of mass destruction. Judging by his past record, Abrams can be expected to be a strong advocate for linking Israel's war against terrorism to America's war, in muscular terms made familiar by the neo-cons.<sup>41</sup>

Quite a different appraisal than that offered by Boot.

There is probably no more appropriate place to begin our probe of the neo-cons than with Perle who came to be known as "The Prince of

Darkness” while serving as Deputy Secretary of Defense in the Reagan administration, and who has been described by Joshua Micah Marshall as the neo-cons’ *eminence grise*,” whose “acolytes... are also Jewish, passionately pro-Israel, and pro-Likud. And all are united by a shared idea: that America should be unafraid to use its military power early and often to advance its interest and values.”<sup>42</sup>

Since the invasion of Iraq, Perle has been involved in several scandals, including a conflict of interest situation which caused him to resign as chair of the Defense Policy Board, but remain as a member. I will, however, limit this article to examining his role in fomenting the present war in Iraq.

To do so, we need to go back to 1975 and the administration of Gerald Ford. In that year, Ford, like Richard Nixon before him, tried his hand at achieving a Middle East peace settlement and was confronted with an intransigent Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin, then in his first tour of office.

In March of that year, exasperated with Israel’s behavior, Ford had made a speech calling for a “reassessment” of U.S. policy towards Israel. On the advice of his secretary of state, none other than Henry Kissinger, Ford “conspicuously delayed delivery of weapons to Israel, including the F-15 fighter plane [and] suspended negotiations for pending financial and military aid to Israel”<sup>43</sup>

Within White House circles, a consensus for a peace plan was emerging which “looked very much like UN Resolution 242 and the Rogers Plan” that would have required Israel to return to its pre-1967 borders, with provisions that its security would be guaranteed. The idea was for President Ford to make a major speech, spelling out America’s basic interests in the Middle East, and those interests required Israel’s withdrawal.<sup>44</sup>

It was not to be. As J.J. Goldberg noted in his book, *Jewish Power*, “Rabin and his aides entered the Kissinger negotiations as hard bargainers with a clear sense of the bottom line... And one of the most potent weapons at their disposal was the American Jewish community...”<sup>45</sup>

Two years before, after the end of what the Israelis describe as the Yom Kippur War, with an Arab oil embargo causing gasoline shortages and widespread resentment around the country, the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations voted to launch an emergency public-relations campaign in behalf of Israel. It would be endowed with a \$3 million emergency public-relations fund and administered by a special task force on Israel. The campaign would combine the “national clout and know-how of the major [Jewish] agencies with the local resources of the federations and community-

Elliott Abrams – Libby “is able to run circles around Condi,” according to a former NSC official cited by Lobe.

As former CIA agents Bill and Kathy Christison summed it up:

The Bush administration... is peppered with people who have long records of activism on behalf of Israel in the United States, of policy advocacy in Israel, and of promoting an agenda for Israel often at odds with existing U.S. policy. These people, who can fairly be called Israeli loyalists, are now at all levels of government, from desk officers at the Defense Department to the deputy secretary level at both State and Defense, as well as on the National Security Council staff and in the vice president’s office.<sup>69</sup>

As noted earlier, Israel loyalists, outfitted as lobbyists, worked behind the scenes to drum up public and Congressional support for the first Gulf War and were happy when the U.S. started bombing Iraq in 1991. They weren’t pleased with the results. Like their friends in Jerusalem, they had wanted Saddam taken out completely, and the sanctions did not meet their standard of what was required. They did not spend their time writing letters to the editor.

He has been called “Wolfowitz of Arabia” in jest by the *New York Times*’ Maureen Dowd,<sup>70</sup> and, with respect, “the intellectual godfather of the war... its heart and soul,” by *Time*’s Mark Thompson.<sup>71</sup> If the war on Iraq is anybody’s war it is Paul Wolfowitz’s.

Wolfowitz is also no stranger to Israel or to Israelis. As a teenager he lived briefly in Israel, his sister is married to an Israeli, and “he is friendly with Israel’s generals and diplomats.”<sup>72</sup> He is also “something of a hero to the heavily Jewish neo-conservative movement” and a close friend of Perle’s.<sup>73</sup>

In 1992, as Under Secretary of Defense for policy in the Clinton administration, he supervised the drafting of the Defense Policy Guidance document. Having objected to what he considered the premature ending of the war, his new document, contained plans for further intervention in Iraq as an action necessary to assure “access to vital raw material, primarily Persian Gulf oil,” and to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and threats from terrorism.

It called for pre-emptive attacks and, since “collective action cannot be orchestrated,” the U.S. should be ready to act alone. The primary goal of U.S. policy would be to prevent the rise of any nation that could challenge U.S.



Award” and he was declared to be “excellent” on issues of U.S.-Israeli security cooperation, according to JINSA’s director of special projects Shoshana Bryen.<sup>64</sup>

If he was a neo-con at the time, he failed to show it, telling the Senate Budget Committee in February of 1990, “America should continue to anchor its strategy to the still-valid doctrines of flexible response, forward defense [and] security alliances... Even the extraordinary events of 1989 do not mean that America should abandon this strategic foundation,” certainly a statement more Powell than Perle.<sup>65</sup>

By the time he became the VP, however, he was firmly on board and feeling impregnable. News of Wurmser’s participation in the Clean Break project, and questions raised in the press, didn’t stop Cheney from adding him to his security staff last September, joining a team led by another Jewish neo-con, national security adviser, Lewis “Scooter” Libby.

Wurmser, described in the *Forward*<sup>66</sup> as “a neo-conservative scholar known for his close ties to the Israeli right... boasts a complex network of relationships to a variety of pro-Likud think tanks and activist groups [and] has frequently written articles arguing for a joint American-Israeli effort to undermine the Syrian regime.”

“The vice president undoubtedly chooses staff whose views are compatible with the policies of the administration,” wrote Judith Kipper, a Middle East scholar with the Council on Foreign Relations, in an e-mail to the *Forward*. “The question is, how does the vice president’s [national security staff] function in relation to the president’s national security staff, and how important policy decisions are made in the White House. While the vice president has a critical role to play, the secrecy surrounding his unusually large foreign-policy staff raises many questions which the American public needs answered.”<sup>67</sup>

To this date, they haven’t been.

Not only did Cheney bring Wurmser as well as Feith into the administration, “It was Cheney’s choices [as opposed to Powell’s] that prevailed in the appointment of both cabinet and sub-cabinet national-security officials,” as Jim Lobe has pointed out, including securing the Deputy Defense Secretary position for “his own protégé, Paul Wolfowitz.”<sup>68</sup>

Libby, “a Wolfowitz protégé, is considered a far more skilled and experienced bureaucratic and political operator than [Condoleezza] Rice,” writes Lobe. “With several of his political allies on Rice’s own staff – including deputy national security adviser Stephen Hadley and Middle East director

relations councils”<sup>46</sup>

As Goldberg describes it, “President Ford was the first to taste its power, when he spoke about his ‘reassessment’ of U.S.-Israel relations. Within six weeks, Ford gave up the idea after 76 senators signed a letter, drafted by AIPAC, demanding that he “back off.”<sup>47</sup> The letter’s key paragraph put the president on notice that:

... within the next several weeks, the Congress expects to receive your foreign aid requests for fiscal year 1976. We trust that your recommendations will be responsive to Israel’s urgent military and economic needs. We urge you to make it clear, as we do, that the United States acting in its own national interests stands firmly with Israel in searching for peace in future negotiations, and that this premise is the basis of the current reassessment of U.S. policy in the Middle East.<sup>48</sup>

Senator Charles Mathias, (R-MD) acknowledged that, due to lobbying pressure, “Seventy-six of us promptly affixed our signatures although no hearings had been held, no debate conducted, nor had the administration been invited to present its views. Mathias added that “as a result of the activities of the [Israel] lobby, congressional conviction has been measurably reinforced by the knowledge that political sanctions will be applied by any who fail to deliver.”<sup>49</sup>

**D**espite their victory in this situation, certain Jewish supporters of Israel in Washington were determined that such a potential crisis in U.S.-Israel relations would not to be allowed to happen again. Enter Perle and JINSA, the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

As a staffer for Democratic Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson in 1972, Perle had been working with others in Washington to draft a law linking U.S.-Soviet trade relations to the right of Jews to emigrate from the Soviet Union.<sup>50</sup>

Much to the displeasure of President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger<sup>51</sup>, who saw the resulting Jackson-Vanik amendment as interference in the president’s ability to determine foreign policy, their effort would ultimately prove successful. Now, in 1976, it appears that Perle had a larger goal: to insure that the maintenance of the military power and security of Israel would become an integral part of U.S. foreign policy.

JINSA’s actual origins are as murky as the activities it carries out, but the organization that Perle established together with Max Kampelman, “an arms

control negotiator whose old law firm is a U.S. agent for Israeli government military interests,<sup>52</sup> was the precursor of the more well-known Project for a New American Century and the well from which has emerged the collection of Jewish neo-cons and their fellow travelers, whose signatures and thumb prints are all over America's current adventure in Iraq, as well as its threats against Syria and Iran.

According to its web site, JINSA has a two-fold mandate:

1. To educate the American public about the importance of an effective defense capability so that our vital interests as Americans can be safeguarded and
2. To inform the American defense and foreign affairs community about the important role Israel can and does play in bolstering democratic interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Its activities in behalf of the first mandate it has done out of the public's view. Other than the *Wall Street Journal* article in 1992, JINSA's existence was virtually unknown even to the political left until an article by Jason Vest appeared in the *Nation* in September, 2002.<sup>53</sup>

It is JINSA's second mandate that demands our attention. "Under a program called 'Send a General to Israel,' hundreds of thousands of dollars of tax-deductible contributions bankroll an annual tour of Israel by retired U.S. generals and admirals."<sup>54</sup> Judging from a look at JINSA's board of advisers, at least 25 of these ex-generals and retired admirals have subsequently been recruited into the organization, as have executives from a number of the major arms manufacturers. Consequently, it was no surprise when a JINSA protégé, former General Jay Garner, was named the first U.S. pro-consul in Iraq following the fall of the regime.

As Vest noted:

Almost every retired officer who sits on JINSA's board of advisers or has participated in its Israel trips or signed a JINSA letter works or has worked with military contractors who do business with the Pentagon and Israel. While some keep a low profile as self-employed "consultants" and avoid mention of their clients, others are less shy about their associations.<sup>55</sup>

Washington for separate talks this week and suggest that the United States also take care of Iran and Syria because of their support for terror and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>62</sup>

They must have been buoyed when, in the week following the invasion, Secretary of State Powell announced to delegates at AIPAC's annual conference that Syria and Iran are "supporting terror groups" and will have to "face the consequences."

Was it any wonder then that Israel's first air raid on Syria in 30 years was greeted sympathetically by both the president and members of Congress? While "ostensibly, it was retaliation for an atrocious Palestinian suicide bombing," in journalist David Hirst's view, "it was also a blatant attempt by Israel to recast itself as an operational ally of the U.S. in 'reshaping' the region, and in punishing an autocratic regime in Damascus that, in the neo-cons' view, was next for treatment."<sup>63</sup>

So it is hardly a surprise that 2004 dawned with Syria in Washington's cross-hairs. In what can only be described as a Pavlovian response to Israel's wish list, both houses of Congress last year approved the Orwellian Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act.

While technically calling for the Bush administration to apply sanctions against Syria if it does not cease support for what Israel and Washington consider to be terrorist organizations, eliminate what they allege to be its weapons of mass destruction, and end its occupation of part of Lebanon, the act essentially gives both Israel and the administration the go-ahead to do whatever either government wants to a country that has never attacked or ever posed a threat to the U.S. The votes, 389-4 in the House, and 89-4 in the Senate, should be an embarrassment to any country that pretends to be a democracy. And yet in the climate of an American election season, the significance of those votes has been almost completely ignored.

Not only did passage of this act represent another major victory for the neo-cons, it also served notice that their agenda had been adopted by the leading American Jewish organizations. Those that had any questions about it were content to keep them within the community.

Without the presence of Cheney in the White House, the neo-cons' road to power would have been far more difficult, and this is where his recruitment into JINSA paid off.

In 1991, the organization had given him its "Distinguished Service

With the invasion of Iraq, it became apparent to some in Israel, that the U.S. had adopted the Clean Break crew's agenda. Within a week of the invasion, former Israeli Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, now his country's Defense Minister, was calling for the U.S. to neutralize all those countries in the region with whom Israel had not signed a peace treaty.<sup>59</sup>

Two weeks later, Mofaz was still singing that tune, as *Ha'aretz's* Brad Burston wrote:

That while Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld took on Syria in an oratorical shock and awe campaign this week, Israel gave signs of what it would like to see Washington do to bring Damascus to heel, and what the Jewish state could gain from the effort. The Americans have taken out a "yellow card" on them, and were right to do so.<sup>60</sup>

Mofaz was referring to a soccer referee's warning card for players who have broken the rules of the game, and, if infractions continue, may be expelled.

According to Burston, Mofaz "set out a long list of demands he said the [U.S.] administration would be asked to press on Syria."

Mofaz's statements attracted the attention of the *Financial Times* of London, which reported that even: "Before the war against Iraq was launched, members of Israel's rightwing government had been open in expressing their hope that the U.S. would next turn its attention to Syria, saying it harbors anti-Israeli militant groups, and also to Iran, for providing weapons and military support to such groups."<sup>61</sup>

The article quoted from an interview that Mofaz had given to the Israeli daily *Maariv* in which he said, "We have a long list of issues that we are thinking of demanding of the Syrians and it is proper that it should be done through the Americans." [...] "It starts from removing the Hezbollah threat from southern Lebanon," and for "an end to Iranian aid to Hezbollah through Syrian ports."

The headlines in the Israeli press made no effort to hide the government's agenda, nor the Sharon government's arrogance in expressing it.

Mofaz was not just speaking for himself. Less than a month into the invasion of Iraq, beneath the headline, "Israel to U.S.: Now deal with Syria and Iran," *Ha'aretz's* Aluf Benn, wrote:

Two of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's senior aides will go to

In other words, what JINSA represents can best be described as the Military-Industrial-Israeli complex.

Sitting on its board, in addition, are such public figures as former UN ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick, former CIA chief James Woolsey, former Congressman Jack Kemp, Michael Ledeen, an un-indicted co-conspirator in the Iran-Contra affair, and former Congressman Stephen Solarz, a very important player whom we will look at later in the article, and, of course, Perle. Of all those recruited into the ranks of JINSA, none would be prove to be more important than Dick Cheney, the former congressman who served as Secretary of Defense in the first Bush administration.

Looking towards the future, JINSA makes sure it is not just generals and admirals who get the grand tour. It also provides a study program in Israel for cadets and midshipmen from the Naval Academy, West Point and the Air Force Academy, from whose ranks will come the next generation of generals and admirals.

It should be noted that both of these programs are in keeping with the practice of Jewish organizations and federations across the country that routinely send public officials, such as mayors, supervisors, city councilors, police chiefs, etc. – the pool from which future members of Congress are likely to arise – on all-expense paid trips to Israel, thereby virtually assuring their support for the Jewish state in the future. No base is left uncovered.

JINSA has been "industrious and persistent," writes Vest, and has "managed to weave a number of issues – support for national missile defense, opposition to arms control treaties, championing of wasteful weapons systems, arms aid to Turkey and American unilateralism in general – into a hard line, with support for the Israeli right at its core."

On no issue, he points out, is the organization's "hard line more evident than in its relentless campaign for war – not just with Iraq, but 'total war,' as Ledeen, one of the most influential JINSA's in Washington, put it [in 2001]. For this crew, 'regime change' by any means necessary, in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian Authority, is an urgent imperative."<sup>56</sup>

Interviewed for David Horowitz's *Front Page* web site at the year's end Ledeen's message had not changed.

When asked about the Israel-Palestine conflict, Ledeen disingenuously replied:

I don't follow it, as you know," then added that "I don't think it is

possible for anyone to do anything meaningful about it until we have defeated the terror masters in Tehran, Damascus and Riyadh, because the terrorism against Israel gets a lot of support from those evil people. In other words, you can't solve it in situ, it's part of a regional war. Maybe, once we have liberated the Middle East and the peoples have a chance to make their own decisions, it will be easier.<sup>57</sup>

Those in government who dissent and who insist that differences may exist between the security interests of the United States and those of Israel can expect to be publicly trashed and called on the carpet by an Israeli-friendly Congressional committee – whether it is Powell or someone from the State Department, from the CIA or the military, or ex-military as in the case of General Zinni.

If there was a single “smoking gun” that led to accusations against the neo-cons that the attack on Iraq was a war for Israel, it was the revelation that, in 1996, Perle directed a task force that included two other high ranking American-Jewish neo-cons, current Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, and David Wurmser, senior adviser to John Bolton, Under-Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, that produced a white paper for then Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It was entitled, “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm,” and the name referred to putting an end to Israel’s negotiating with the Palestinians, and the concept of trading land for peace.

The paper, which might have been lifted from JINSA’s web site, advocated the overthrow by Israel of Saddam Hussein as the beginning of an Israeli policy to redraw the map of the Middle East in Israel’s favor, a task that is now, apparently, being carried out by U.S. soldiers in Israel’s behalf. This effort, it said, “can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq... Iraq’s future could affect the strategic balance in the Middle East profoundly.”

“Whoever inherits Iraq dominates the entire Levant strategically,” said the paper, which was commissioned by the Jerusalem-based Institute for

Advanced Strategic and Political Studies (IASPS), where Wurmser was working at the time. Presumably Israel was to have a say as to who would do the dominating.

Well before 9-11 and before the junior Bush could even formulate the thought, the paper called for “re-establishing the principle of preemption.”

It didn’t stop there. “Israel can shape its strategic environment... by weakening, containing and even rolling back Syria by sponsoring proxy attacks in Lebanon and striking at selected targets in Syria. “Given the nature of the regime in Damascus,” the paper argued, “it is both natural and moral

that Israel abandon the slogan ‘comprehensive peace’ and move to contain Syria, drawing attention to its weapons of mass destruction program, and rejecting ‘land for peace’ deals on the Golan Heights.”

But what surely must raise the question of “dual loyalties,” a charge which quickly subjects the questioner to accusations of “anti-semitism” from Jewish organizations, are statements such as this that appear in the text:

We have for four years pursued peace based on a *New Middle East*. We in Israel cannot play innocents abroad in a world that is not innocent. Peace depends on the character and behavior of our foes. We live in a dangerous neighborhood, with fragile states and bitter rivalries. Displaying *moral ambivalence* between the effort to build a Jewish state and the desire to annihilate it by trading “*land for peace*” will not secure “*peace now*.” Our claim to the land – to which we have clung for hope for 2000 years – is legitimate and noble. It is not *within our own power*, no matter how much we concede, *to make peace unilaterally*. Only the unconditional acceptance by Arabs of our rights, especially in their territorial dimension, “*peace for peace*,” is a solid basis for the future. (Emphasis in original)<sup>58</sup>

In 1999, Wurmser would publish a book (with a foreword by Perle) called *Tyranny’s Ally: America’s Failure to Defeat Saddam Hussein*. It provides a detailed description of a dramatically improved Middle East, from the hawk point of view, after regime change in Iraq.