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PART 1

The Situation in the United States



How to Interpret American Poll Data on Jews, Israel and Antisemitism

Neil J. Kressel

Despite its evident imperfections, the vast majority of American Jews view the United States as a uniquely hospitable host in the history of a diaspora fraught with nearly endless discrimination.¹ Yet, for many, this positive assessment has always coexisted with a concern that matters, even in this “golden *medina*,” could get far worse on the turn of a dime.² With this historically-understandable

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- 1 Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford, 1994), and others have documented how America from the beginning offered Jews a far more hospitable environment than what they had left behind in Europe, though the encounter with antisemitism frequently remained a part of Jewish life in the New World. Dinnerstein and others document the growth of anti-Jewish hostility in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries followed by its rapid and marked decline after World War II. Nathan Perlmutter (former National Director of the Anti-Defamation League) and Ruth Ann Perlmutter, in *The Real Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Arbor House, 1982), 281, describe the United States as a land “. . . more hospitable to us than to anti-Semitism.” Nathan C. Belth, another writer sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League, concluded his study, *A Promise to Keep: A Narrative of the American Encounter with Anti-Semitism* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 284, by noting: “The nation is a better place today than it was at the turn of the century, before the First World War or the Second; a better place than in the 1930s or 1950s. For all its faults, today it is a kinder, more decent society for all its citizens. Will it still be so tomorrow? The evidence of two hundred years of history would seem to dictate a hopeful answer.” William D. Rubinstein also notes, correctly, that: “Throughout the English-speaking world, the forces of liberalism were sufficiently strong to marginalize and minimize serious or violent anti-semitism . . .” The English-speaking world generally offered unparalleled opportunities for Jewish success and achievement, and rarely if ever ranked among those actively persecuting Jews—indeed, have mostly ranked as a place of refuge and protection for them.” William D. Rubinstein, “Antisemitism in the English-Speaking World,” in *Antisemitism: a History*, Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy, eds. (New York: Oxford, 2010), 164. Yet those who buy into the flawed notion that America has always been an idyllic “golden medina” might do well to revisit accounts of the early years of mass immigration, including Michael Gold’s *Jews Without Money* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009, originally published in 1930), an ideologically-driven (Marxist) yet expertly-drawn portrait of Jewish life on New York’s Lower East Side.
- 2 Leonard Dinnerstein, “Is There a New Anti-Semitism in the United States?” *Society* (January/February 2004), 57, cites a 1988 poll in which 77% of American Jews expressed the belief

anxiety has come a preoccupation with the state of American sentiments. Thus, mainstream American Jewish organizations, notably the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee, have for decades sponsored scientific research to monitor the pulse of the American public with regard to Jews, antisemitism, Israel, and other matters deemed vital to Jewish safety, such as civil rights for all and the separation of church and state. Back in the decades following the Second World War, the efforts of Jewish organizations to understand these issues produced major contributions to social science.³ Then, as now, quantitative surveys of American public attitudes toward matters of particular Jewish concern generally adhered to high methodological standards. As we shall see, the polls during the past half century have brought—mainly—what seems, at least on the surface, to be good news on all fronts.

Still, many Jews persist, to varying degrees, in worrying about whether the American public can really be trusted to remain friendly to Jews, Jewish concerns and Jewish interests. Indeed, several essays in this volume bear witness to an enduring conviction that a nervous vigilance remains the only wise orientation, even in the United States.

For some commentators, including more than a few Jews, “collective Jewish paranoia” provides the most convincing explanation of heightened Jewish fears about the possibility of increased antisemitism. While most acknowledge that this so-called obsession has a genuine historical foundation, such analysts also maintain that there is *no longer* much realistic basis for Jewish anxiety and that, by now, it has become largely dysfunctional.⁴ Thus, for example, the once-prominent Israeli politician Avraham Burg has written a book titled *The Holocaust is Over; We Must Rise from its Ashes* in which he denounces what he perceives to be a dangerous Jewish tendency to dwell on victimhood.⁵ Even

that anti-Semitism could become a severe problem in the near future. See also, for example, Dinnerstein's essay in this volume and evidence in Gary A. Tobin & Sharon L. Sassler, *Jewish Perceptions of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Plenum, 1988).

- 3 See, for example, Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950); Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); Gary T. Marx, *Protest and Prejudice: A Study of Belief in the Black Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967); Gertrude J. Selznick and Stephen Steinberg, *The Tenacity of Prejudice: Antisemitism in Contemporary America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); Charles Herbert Stember et al., *Jews in the Mind of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1966).
- 4 See, for example, Yoav Shamir's film, *Defamation, Anti-Semitism: The Movie* (New York: First Run Features, 2009), DVD.
- 5 Avraham Burg, *The Holocaust Is Over; We Must Rise from its Ashes* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

noted antisemitism historian Leonard Dinnerstein writes in this volume that “What the future may bring is impossible to know but what might be said about the climate of bigotry in the United States today is that antisemitism is too minor an issue to think about.”

In its extreme form, the “paranoia” argument holds that Jewish concern about the potential for virulent and destructive antisemitism is unjustifiable even with regard to the situation in other nations around the world. As I have argued elsewhere, this position can be sustained with regard to large parts of the Muslim world only by ostriches that bury their heads in the sand and fail to perceive abundant and readily available evidence of dangerous bigotry. Anti-Jewish (and not “merely” anti-Israeli) hostility can be easily documented in the words of many influential Muslim secular and religious leaders as well as for large segments of the publics in some Muslim-majority countries.⁶ For several nations in Europe as well, the data from attitude surveys clearly support serious concern about rising hostility toward Israel, of course, but also concern about the possibility of a resurgence of European antisemitism supplemented by the importation of new forms from Muslim-majority countries.⁷ In 2014, the Anti-Defamation League released the results of a well-funded and extensive survey of global attitudes toward the Jews. 53,100 people from more than one hundred countries were interviewed in 96 different languages. On the basis of this study, the ADL concluded that more than one billion people in the world held beliefs that were clearly antisemitic. Even if one questions some of the methodological decisions made by the researchers, one cannot dismiss the overwhelming finding that antisemitism remains a globally significant problem.⁸ Thus, those who attribute Jewish concerns about rising *global* antisemitism to paranoia are, in my view, arguing against the facts.

However, there is much stronger support for the position that anxiety about *American* public attitudes toward Jews is wrongly-directed or excessive. One could, in fact, interpret research conducted in recent years as documentation

6 Neil J. Kressel, *“The Sons of Pigs and Apes”: Muslim Antisemitism and the Conspiracy of Silence* (Washington, DC: Potomac books, 2012), 65.

7 See, for example, ADL, *Attitudes toward Jews in Seven European Countries* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 2009), http://www.adl.org/Public%20ADL%20Anti-Semitism%20Presentation%20February%202009%20_3_.pdf (accessed January 24, 2013) and ADL, *Attitudes toward Jews in Ten European Countries* (New York, 2012), http://www.adl.org/Anti-semitism/adl_anti-semitism_presentation_february_2012.pdf (accessed January 24, 2013). See, also, Denis MacShane, *Globalising Hatred: The New Antisemitism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2008).

8 ADL, *ADL Global 100* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 2014), <http://global100.adl.org/about> (accessed January 30, 2015).

that the vast majority of the American people like Jews a great deal, show very low levels of antisemitism, support Israel through thick and thin, and exhibit few signs of moving away from powerful support for civil rights and the separation of church and state. According to this perspective, those who worry about American antisemitism are possibly confusing the predicament of Jews in some other parts of the world with their situation in the United States. Such worriers fail to grasp that if people in the rest of the world thought and acted like Americans, there would indeed be a firm basis for optimism.

As Alan Dershowitz wrote in 1997 regarding the orientation of some Jews in the United States:

Like an individual victim who sees his assailant around every corner, the Jewish people have been traumatized by our unrelenting victimization at the hands of Jew-haters. It is impossible for anyone who did not personally experience the Holocaust, or the other repeated assaults on Jewish life throughout our history, to comprehend what it must have been like to be victimized by unrelenting persecution based on primitive Jew-hating. We continue to see antisemitism even where it has ceased to exist, or we exaggerate it where it continues to exist in marginalized form.⁹

Though he worries about the impact of assimilation on the Jewish people collectively, he suggests that—as individuals—American Jews “... have never been more secure, more accepted, more affluent, and less victimized by discrimination or anti-Semitism.”¹⁰

More recently, Edward S. Shapiro—an expert on Jews in America—opined that:

The fears of American Jews regarding domestic anti-Semitism are continually being stoked by organizations whose very survival is at stake should American Jews come to believe that American anti-Semitism has become a marginal phenomenon. Without the existence of domestic anti-Semitism, much of the *raison d'être* of organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith would be called into question. This is not to say that these organizations have outlived their usefulness. Anti-

9 Alan M. Dershowitz, “Assimilation Is a Greater Problem than Anti-Semitism for American Jews,” in *Anti-Semitism*, ed. Laura K. Egenorf (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 1999), 94, excerpt reprinted from Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Vanishing American Jew* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1997).

10 Ibid., 85.

Semitism is a growing phenomenon in Great Britain, Italy, Norway, France, and other European countries, encouraged mainly by immigration from Arab countries, Pakistan, and Turkey. And Jewish “defense” organizations also do valuable work in fostering better relations among America’s many ethnic, religious, and racial groups. But certainly these same organizations have inflated the reality of American anti-Semitism.¹¹

One need not reject entirely the insights of Dershowitz and Shapiro in order to argue that there may yet be data-based and political foundations for realistic concern, even if summary statistics suggest that the problems of Jews in the United States are relatively benign compared to those in other parts of the world and other historical eras. Possibly, Shapiro exaggerates reports of the death of American antisemitism and, at the same time, Jewish organizations do inflate the dangers associated with the remaining residual bigotry. One need not deny that—from a Jewish standpoint, at least—the United States has, now more than ever, largely lived up to its billing by Lincoln as “the last best hope of earth.” Yet, one could still suggest that the costs of a type II error (i.e., missing an incipient antisemitic movement when one is present) are very high because—if something goes wrong here—the gig is up. Jews, worldwide, would be in very big trouble. American support for egalitarian principles (including their application to Jews) has been an important contributor to whatever good fortune the Jews have experienced even in other nations. Moreover, in view of worldwide indifference, neutrality or hostility toward Israel, it is relatively easy to envision scenarios in the not-too-distant future where the survival of the Jewish state and, possibly, millions of its Jewish inhabitants would depend on active American support. And Israel, despite the views of its detractors, remains an essential insurance policy for Jews facing irrational bigotry in many other nations. The Right of Return was designed in response to antisemitism and it remains necessary at least so long as the peoples of many countries retain their ambivalence or ill-will with regard to the Jewish people. Thus, continuing American sympathy for Israel amounts to more than a luxury for Jews who are concerned about antisemitism; it is a necessity.

Lastly, as we shall see, American public opinion is, despite its favorable central tendencies, far from unanimously positive on *any* matters of vital concern

11 Edward S. Shapiro, “The Cognitive Dissonance of American Jews,” *Society* 49: 6 (December 2012), 549. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12115-012-9601-5/fulltext.html> (accessed January 24, 2013).

to Jews; minority positions could evolve into majority positions, rendering the future far from bright. In the study of public opinion as in the study of economic trends and stock market prices, it is not hard to predict future trends based on the past. But whether such projections will be accurate is an entirely different matter.

The chapter has two main purposes: 1) to summarize briefly the evidence from public opinion polls concerning American attitudes toward Jews and Israel, and 2) to consider the extent to which these data justify concern. To address this latter question, the chapter will assess historical trends, demographics, and the limitations of opinion polls as measures of public sentiments.

Needless to say, public opinion data on Jews and the Middle East can be analyzed from many vantage points—for example, from that of people who—for whatever reason—want American support for Israel to diminish or, even, from the perspective of those who want antisemitism to increase. Some may also object that the inclusion of a discussion of anti-Israel attitudes anywhere in the vicinity of a discussion of antisemitism is inherently biased, in that it implies that the two may somehow be connected. These sorts of issues will not be resolved here. It is worth noting, however, that the connection between anti-Israel attitudes and antisemitic ones is, in fact, a partly empirical matter which has been studied—though not altogether resolved—in the published literature.¹²

One might additionally ask why it is important to study public opinion polls in the first place. After all, some question the extent to which polls tap genuine trends; they may, instead, be measuring changes in what people deem acceptable to tell pollsters. Thus, the frequently-observed correlation between tolerance and education may reflect something fundamental about the nature of the educational process, or it may simply show that educated people have absorbed different rules about what is and is not socially acceptable to share in public discourse.¹³ Moreover, some have doubted whether there exists much clear linkage between public opinion and policy. Laws and policies—especially foreign policies—indeed derive from many sources unrelated to

12 See, for example, Florette Cohen, Lee Jussim, Kent D. Harber, and Gautam Bhasin, "Modern Anti-Semitism and Anti-Israeli Attitudes," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 97, no. 2 (2009): 290–306; Edward H. Kaplan and Charles A. Small, "Anti-Israel Sentiment Predicts Anti-Semitism in Europe," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50 (2006): 548–561; Steven K. Baum and Masato Nakazawa, "Anti-Semitism Versus Anti-Israel Sentiment," *Journal of Religion and Society* 9 (2007): 1–8, <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/pdf/2007-31.pdf> (accessed August 12, 2010).

13 See, for example, Selznick and Steinberg, *Tenacity of Prejudice*.

public attitudes and much of the time popular sentiment takes a backseat to more direct sources of foreign policy.¹⁴ Still, to deny that public opinion in a democracy plays any role at all strikes me as an extreme position. In a general sense, few would doubt that (1) public opinion polls provide at least one useful measure of what the public really thinks and feels about the Jews, Israel, and related matters, and (2) that these attitudes, in turn, play some part in determining future policies and events. So it hardly seems a wise option to ignore the huge and detailed body of data that has been so carefully assembled over so many decades.

Public Opinion Data: Jews

When Al Gore named Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman as his running mate in 2000, some pundits wondered whether anti-Jewish attitudes in the United States might hurt the Democratic ticket. Yet, by 1999, 92% of the American people were telling pollsters that they would vote for a Jew for president, up from 46% in 1937 and 62% in 1958. Still, as political scientist Jeffrey E. Cohen notes, a minority of Americans did buy into anti-Jewish stereotypes at the time of the nomination.¹⁵ What Cohen's research found, however, was that such beliefs did not turn out to reduce the likelihood of many people to vote for the Gore/Lieberman ticket. Moreover, the majority of Americans seemed warmly and positively disposed toward both Jews and Lieberman, who—not incidentally—was religiously observant and publicly proud of his heritage. Many people, of course, did not support the Connecticut senator in his bid for the vice-presidency, but Cohen's quantitative analysis traces these decisions,

14 See, for example, the excellent—though somewhat dated—discussion in Bernard C. Cohen, *The Public's Impact on Foreign Policy* (Boston: Little-Brown, 1973). In addition, it is important to keep in mind that polls provide a standard against which policies may be judged; in this sense, they may be used by partisans and lobbyists to legitimate their own direct attempts to influence policymakers. Also, although public opinion polls correlate imperfectly with other sources of domestic influence on foreign policy, there is empirical evidence that they usually provide some sense of trends in newspaper coverage and elite opinion—if better data is lacking. Polls also influence politicians' perceptions of what is popular. Finally, polls would be most likely to have a large impact on policy if they revealed a great disparity between public opinion and public policy. See Neil J. Kressel, "Elite Editorial Favorability and American Public Opinion: A Case Study of the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Psychological Reports* 61 (1987): 303–313.

15 Jeffrey E. Cohen, "Religion and the 2000 Presidential Election: Public Attitudes toward Joseph Lieberman," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (June 2005): 389–402.

largely, to political orientations; in other words, reactions to the candidate, appropriately, seemed to derive in large part from reactions to his politics and other typical factors. To the extent that attitudes toward Jews played a part, Cohen argued, it was because those who held *favorable* attitudes toward Jews were somewhat *more* likely to develop favorable attitudes toward Lieberman than one would otherwise have expected based upon their politics.

Another perspective on the American public's feelings about Jews comes from some startling comparative data collected by the Pew Global Attitudes Project. In 2008, researchers asked samples from around the world whether they had a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the Jews.¹⁶ A fairly large, though varying, percentage of respondents in every country said that they "didn't know" or refused to answer the question. Yet, in Muslim-majority countries or countries with sizable Muslim minorities, large percentages were indeed willing to share their opinions of Jews, saying that these were either "very unfavorable" or "somewhat unfavorable." The percentage who were *very* unfavorably inclined toward Jews was 68% in Turkey, 92% in Egypt, 94% in Jordan, 89% in Lebanon, 65% in Pakistan, 36% in Indonesia, 22% in Nigeria, and 21% in India. In most countries with smaller Muslim populations, the numbers usually looked a bit better—but generally were not good. Thus, the percentage who were either "somewhat unfavorable" or "very unfavorable" in their opinion of Jews was: 44% in Japan (including 9% "very unfavorable"), 41% in South Korea (including 8% "very unfavorable"), 50% in Brazil (including 14% "very unfavorable"), 46% in Mexico (including 23% "very unfavorable"), 55% in China (including 17% "very unfavorable"), 46% in Spain (including 18% "very unfavorable"), 34% in Russia (including 12% "very unfavorable"), and 25% in Germany (including 4% "very unfavorable").

Against these figures, the people of the United States—often maligned around the globe and in international forums for their non-progressive attitudes—scored lowest in the world in unfavorable opinions of Jews with only

16 Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Unfavorable Views of Jews and Muslims on the Increase in Europe," Report Prepared by the Pew Global Attitudes Project of the (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, Washington, DC, September 17, 2008), <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2008/09/Pew-2008-Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-3-September-17-2pm.pdf> (accessed January 24, 2013). See, also, Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Muslim-Western Tensions Persist," Report Prepared by the Pew Global Attitudes Project of the (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, Washington, DC, July 21, 2011), <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2011/07/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Muslim-Western-Relations-FINAL-FOR-PRINT-July-21-2011.pdf> (accessed January 24, 2013).

2% “very unfavorable” and 5% “somewhat unfavorable.” (Based on this Pew study, Australians, British, and French were not far behind the Americans.) Viewed as a whole, the 2008 Pew data—and similar findings obtained in other recent Pew studies—support rather strongly the contention that much of the world remains a very hostile toward Jews. However, the locus of the problem, at least according to these (admittedly incomplete) data sets is *certainly* not in the United States where Jews are very well-regarded by most of their neighbors.

Another conclusion that might surprise some—but that squares well with the Pew studies and Professor Cohen’s research on Senator Lieberman—was reached by authors Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell in their well-received book, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites*.¹⁷ They reviewed a large number of public opinion studies and conducted their own surveys, concluding—as one of many provocative findings—that Jews are the most broadly liked religious group in the United States—more popular than mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics, Evangelical Protestants, Mormons, Buddhists, and Muslims. Reflecting on the book in 2012, historian Edward Shapiro notes that: “Religion is highly respected in America, and it is not surprising that Americans give high marks to Jews when they are viewed mainly as members of a religion . . . Whether Americans would give such high marks to Jews if they were viewed as a religio-ethnic group is another matter.”¹⁸ Notwithstanding that he offers other methodological reasons why the news for the Jewish people may not be quite as superb as Putnam and Campbell report, Shapiro still accepts the main thrust of their conclusion.

He is, in my view, right that positive American feelings toward Jews should not be ignored, dismissed, downplayed, or explained away. But neither should we ignore that there remain a substantial number of Americans who do accept anti-Jewish stereotypes and a smaller number who openly admit to what we might reasonably classify as old-time antisemitism. To understand such numbers in proper context, we might start by looking at historical opinion trends in the United States.

Poll data on American antisemitism dates back to the 1930s. We are best able to assess time trends by looking at similar questions asked repeatedly over the years. A number of competent researchers have paused at several times to review trends in these data. Nearly always, they concluded that the proportion of the American public buying in to negative beliefs had declined since last assessed.

17 Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012).

18 Shapiro, “Cognitive Dissonance,” 550.

Thus, in 1966, sociologist Charles Herbert Stember concluded his comprehensive review of public opinion data, saying: "One fact emerges from our analyses: Anti-Semitism in all its forms massively declined in the United States between the prewar or war years and the early 1960s. This conclusion is strikingly illustrated by . . . those issues for which we have data spanning all or most of the period under study."¹⁹ He later notes that: "In both feeling and behavior toward Jews, our society has undergone a profound change within the span of one generation."²⁰ Thirteen years later, in 1979, political scientist Harold Quinley and sociologist Charles Y. Glock concluded: "While anti-Semitism in America was once virulent and open, such is no longer the case today . . . Extreme hatred and loathing of Jews have all but disappeared . . . Attitudes of this kind are sometimes found within political fringe groups, but they are rejected overwhelmingly by the public at large."²¹

A few years later, Geraldine Rosenfield of the American Jewish Committee analyzed polls from the 1960s until the early 1980s, finding evidence of continued decline in antisemitism. However, she also noted that ". . . in one context or another, a small but varying proportion see Jews as being more loyal to Israel than to the U.S., as unscrupulous, aggressive, or too powerful."²² Then, in 1996, Tom W. Smith, the director of the prestigious General Social Survey at the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, reviewed the data from more than 140 studies of antisemitism. Smith reported that "images of African, Asian, and Hispanic Americans are decidedly more negative than views of Jews on the dimensions of industriousness, self-sufficiency, intelligence, wealth, and not being violence-prone. In fact, on these dimensions, Jews were the only minority group rated more positively than whites in general."²³ However, Smith did not ignore a potential downside to this collective image, explaining: "It can help stoke the traditional stereotype of Jews as powerful manipulators who, through a combination of wealth, cunning and both shrewd and unscrupulous business practices, control the economy

19 Charles Herbert Stember, "The Recent History of Public Attitudes," in *Jews in the Mind of America*, ed., Charles Herbert Stember (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 208.

20 Ibid., 217.

21 Harold E. Quinley and Charles Y. Glock, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 185.

22 Geraldine Rosenfield, "The Polls: Attitudes toward American Jews," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 46 (1982), 432.

23 Tom W. Smith quoted in "Anti-Semitism Decreases but Persists," *Society* 33, no. 3 (March/April 1996): 2. See, also, Tom W. Smith, "The Religious Right and Anti-Semitism," *Review of Religious Research* 40, no. 3 (March 1999): 244–258; Tom W. Smith, "Anti-Semitism in Contemporary America: a Review," *Research in Micropolitics* 5 (1996): 125–178.

and the government.”²⁴ Even after noting the marked decline of antisemitism, Smith reported that one in five Americans still believed in the mid-1990s that Jews had too much power and influence in some spheres of American life.

One frequently-used way of measuring antisemitic attitudes is a scale developed by the Anti-Defamation League; it is based on items assessing the extent to which people believe things like whether Jews:

- Stick together more than other Americans,
- Always like to be at the head of things,
- Are more loyal to Israel than to America,
- Have too much power in the business world,
- Have too much influence on Wall Street,
- Have lots of irritating faults,
- Have too much power in the U.S. today,
- Are more willing to use shady practices,
- Are so shrewd that others don't have a fair chance to compete,
- Don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind,
- Are not as honest as other business people.²⁵

Studies using this ADL scale classified 29% of Americans as hardcore antisemites in 1964, 20% in 1992, and 12% in 1998. If the scale had been used during the 1930s or during the war years, one would presume—based on existing survey results from those times—that a much higher percentage of Americans would have been classified as antisemitic than the 29% from 1964.

24 Smith quoted in “Anti-Semitism Decreases,” 2.

25 This scale is discussed in many places, including Selznick and Steinberg, *Tenacity of Prejudice*; Quinley and Glock, *Anti-Semitism in America*; Dinnerstein, “Is There a New Anti-Semitism,” 56. The basic idea is that respondents are classified as relatively more antisemitic based on the number of antisemitic statements with which they agree. To some extent, there, classification as an antisemite is not a “yes” or “no” matter, and must be somewhat arbitrary. David Kremelberg, “Sources and Targets of Anti-Semitism in the United States,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 2009), 35–83, includes a factor analysis of several items commonly used in antisemitism scales. Kremelberg identifies three distinct dimensions of American antisemitism which he names, “denigration,” “status degradation,” and “aversion.” The denigration factor involves vilification of Jews along a broad range of dimensions. The status degradation factor refers to casting aspersions on Jews relating to their presumed power, influence, and wealth. The aversion factor refers to a dislike of contact with Jews. Kremelberg argues that scores on these factors might lead to a better way of studying antisemitism in survey research.

After 1998, it becomes harder to discern a clear downward trend in anti-semitic attitudes. In 2002, for example, the ADL scale yielded 17% hardcore antisemites—up 5% from 1998. In 2005, the number was 14%; in 2009 it was down to the low of 12% but in 2011 it was up again to 15%. It is hard to know the extent to which the slight movements upward and downward in this index represent real changes as opposed to blips due to sampling artifacts and day-to-day random variance. In this sense, one might counsel against headlines proclaiming antisemitism to be on the rise when the number moves upward only slightly.

One recent snapshot of American antisemitism comes from a 2011 ADL poll.²⁶ Fairly large percentages of Americans did buy into some negative beliefs about Jews. For example, almost half of the respondents agreed that Jews “stick together more than most Americans.” Nearly one-third agreed that “Jews were responsible for the death of Christ,” and about the same percentage said Jews “always like to be at the head of things.” About one American in four thought Jews talk too much about what happened to them during the Holocaust. About 15% agreed that Jews were too shrewd, too shady in business practices, or in possession of too much power in the United States.

However, in an imperfect world, many people can possess some unfavorable beliefs about a group without being overall bigots. While nobody should be comfortable with the percentages of people in the United States holding anti-Jewish beliefs, it is—after all—a judgment call, say, just how much talk about the Holocaust is appropriate, and it is hard to know just what individual respondents were thinking when they agreed that Jews were responsible for the death of Christ. Perhaps—to give them the benefit of the doubt—some meant “a few Jews back then.” Agreement with the “responsibility for the death of Christ” item does not necessarily imply a willingness to blame contemporary Jews for the presumed role of a few of their distant ancestors. If, however, one accepts *several* or *many* negative aspects of the antisemitic stereotype, classification as a bigot becomes more reasonable. And that is how ADL makes the call.

Recent American antisemitism is found more in some groups than in others. Of those who did not go further in their education than high school,

26 See “ADL Poll: Anti-Semitic Attitudes on Rise in USA,” *Jerusalem Post*, March 11, 2011, <http://www.jpost.com/LandedPages/PrintArticle.aspx?id=244326> (accessed January 24, 2013); Anti-Defamation League (ADL), *A Survey of American Attitudes Toward Jews in America* (New York, ADL, 2011), http://archive.adl.org/anti_semitism_domestic/ADL-2011-Anti-Semitism_Presentation.pdf (accessed January 24, 2013).

twenty-two percent can be classified as hardcore antisemites; this is more than double the nine percent of antisemites among college graduates.

The worst news in the study, however, concerns African-Americans and Latinos. Twenty-nine percent of African-Americans hold views that can be classified as hardcore antisemitic, a number that has been holding fairly steady in recent years. The percentage of Latinos in whom some antisemitism can be found is much higher among those born outside of the United States than those born in the country (42 percent to 20 percent). One might speculate, then, that as Latinos become Americanized, they also become less antisemitic. On the other hand, African-Americans and Latinos, according to projections, will constitute a larger part of the general population in the future, and—unless their antisemitism levels decline—this might lead to an increase in prevalence of anti-Jewish sentiment in the American public as a whole.

Still, when data are viewed in the aggregate, Jews appear more welcome in the United States now than they have been anytime, anywhere else in the Diaspora. In order for this to change fundamentally, as many have pointed out, America would need to cease being the America we know today. This is not impossible. Catastrophic change can happen. But this is also not on the horizon.

If such an interpretation is correct, one might simply advance the historic agenda of American Jews to preserve and extend American values of tolerance, respect for diversity, freedom of religion, and the like. Beyond that, the fight against antisemitism domestically would amount to a mopping up operation, a monitoring of fringe groups, cooperation with law enforcement, and a requirement for vigilance.

But, as I shall argue shortly, the fight against antisemitism is somewhat more complex, primarily because it takes place in a global context. To understand this point, we first need to review the data on American public attitudes toward the state of Israel.

Public Opinion Data: Jewish State

Barry Rubin, the prominent American-born Israeli expert on the Middle East and terrorism, titled his March 2010 assessment of United States public opinion data: “Americans Love Israel Even More than You Think.”²⁷ Rubin, of course,

²⁷ Barry Rubin, “Americans Love Israel Even More Than You Think,” Gloria Center article, Herzlia, Israel, March 3, 2010, <http://www.gloria-center.org/2010/03/americans-love-israel/> (accessed January 24, 2013).

was very far from naive about the sources of American foreign policy; he noted that “International relations is not a popularity contest.” Nations often act to promote their perceived interests, even when such actions run counter to public sympathies. Moreover, various influential elites and lobbyists with differing perspectives can successfully promote policies that do not necessarily reflect the preferences of most Americans. Still, Rubin suggested, public opinion polls can be useful in fighting “myths” and “examining the impact of policymaker, elite, and media campaigns on the masses.” And, to the extent that mass public opinion does constrain policy, Rubin assigned those points squarely and firmly to the supporters of the state of Israel.

Looking at a 2010 Gallup Poll that measured how Americans feel about different countries, we observe that Americans’ favorites are two English-speaking democracies—Canada and the United Kingdom—followed by Germany and Japan, two countries whose political systems were partly created by the United States.²⁸ Next in the affections of Americans comes Israel. Sixty-seven percent of Americans have a favorable impression of the Jewish state, compared to 25 percent who have an unfavorable impression. But about ten percent of Americans—a sizeable segment of the anti-Israel group don’t seem to like *any* other countries, and only a total of six percent of Americans are very hostile to Israel.

Some additional comparative perspective is useful. Israel’s favorability rating is very slightly above those of India and France. Russia at 47 percent favorability and China at 42 percent favorability score somewhat lower.

If we examine American feelings toward Arab and Muslim nations in this pre-“Arab Spring” poll, we find considerable variability in the way particular countries are perceived. Egypt, before “Arab Spring,” is not far below Israel with a 58 percent favorability rating, while Saudi Arabia—always an uncomfortable ally—registers 35 percent favorability with 58 percent of Americans viewing the monarchy unfavorably. The Palestinian Authority scores 20 percent favorable (against 70 percent unfavorable) and Iran is at the bottom of the pack—below North Korea—with only 10 percent of Americans having a favorable opinion of the Islamic Republic; 85 percent hold an unfavorable one.

The data set does contain information less comforting to supporters of Israel. It turns out that country ratings are not consistent across political party identifications. Thus, Republicans are much more likely than Democrats to have a favorable impression of Israel (80 percent versus 53 percent);

28 Lydia Saad, “In U.S., Canada Places First in Image Contest; Iran Last,” Gallup Politics, Washington, DC, February 19, 2010, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/126116/Canada-Places-First-Image-Contest-Iran-Last.aspx> (accessed January 24, 2013).

Republicans also rate Egypt, the Palestinian Authority, and Iran less favorably than do Democrats. Although the ordering of preferences for foreign nations is fairly consistent across age categories, the 18–34 age group has a relatively less favorable impression of Israel than the 55 and older group; the younger group also has a relatively more favorable image of the Palestinian Authority, Yemen, Pakistan, Iran, and Egypt. In the 18–34 age group, for example, pre-“Arab Spring” Egypt even achieved a slightly higher favorability rating than Israel. We will return to the impact of age, party identification, and other variables later. But, first, we should place contemporary opinion data in historical context.

The central tendency of American public support for Israel in the Arab-Israeli conflict dates back to the pre-independence years, although at that time and now, large percentages of the public expressed no clear preference for either side. The topic has been heavily polled and—as in the case of studies of antisemitism—reviews of survey data have been compiled at many times over the past 65 years.

Widespread Jewish support for the new state of Israel in 1948 could have been interpreted as evidence of clannishness, dual loyalty, or warmongering for selfish interests by an American public that was still fairly antisemitic. However, for the most part, this did not occur. Although most Americans remained without opinions on the Arab-Israeli conflict, those who had them decisively favored the Jews. From the Fall of 1947 until the Spring of 1949, over a third of the American people consistently favored Israel while only about a sixth favored the Arabs. After independence, according to Charles Herbert Stember and Benjamin B. Ringer who reviewed the poll data carefully, Israel quickly became “accepted by the American public simply as one foreign nation among many—an understandable reaction, considering the dispatch with which the United States government proceeded to normalize its relations with the new country.”²⁹ Although Americans wanted their government to cooperate with Israel, they also wanted to maintain good relations with the Arab states, and—in some polls in the 1950s—Israel did not have much advantage in American public support. To some extent, fluctuations in public attitudes in the fifties—and also more recently—have corresponded to heavily-covered media events from the Middle East and to perceptions of American government policy favorability toward countries in the region.³⁰

29 Charles Hebert Stember and Benjamin B. Ringer, “The Impact of Israel on American Attitudes,” in *Jews in the Mind of America*, 191.

30 Cite Neil J. Kressel, “American Public Opinion and Mass Media Coverage of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948–1982,” Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard University, 1983), 257–258; Kressel, “Elite Editorial Favorability and American Public Opinion.”

By the time of Israel's 1967 victory in the Six Day War, Americans had grown considerably more sympathetic to the Jewish state; 56 percent of Americans supported Israel against 4 percent supporting the Arabs. This represented more than a doubling of support levels for Israel from 1964, although it is unclear whether the change stemmed in some way from Israel's victory or from a more complex web of circumstances, including changing perceptions of Israel's accomplishments and its difficult predicament.

Many Israel supporters worried that Israel's less impressive military performance at the beginning of the 1973 Yom Kippur War—coupled with newly effective Arab wielding of the oil weapon and heightened media attention to the plight of the Palestinians—would reduce American public sympathy for Israel; still, a 1977 review of 27 polls conducted since the Six Day War, found no discernible decline in support by that year. Political scientists Seymour Martin Lipset and William Schneider reported that, to that date, there had “never been a poll that found more support for Arabs than Israelis, no matter how the question has been asked.”³¹ Support for Israel ranged between 35 and 56 percent while support for Arabs fluctuated between 1 and 9 percent.” Demographically, Lipset and Schneider found support for Israel associated with high socio-economic status. The lowest support for Israel was among Blacks, but even Blacks were more sympathetic to Israel than to the Arab states.

About a decade after the Lipset and Schneider study, Israeli political scientist Eytan Gilboa conducted the most extensive published review of polls to that date. He reached several conclusions in 1987: First, “General American feelings for Israel have remained consistently favorable since the inception of the Jewish state in 1948. Various polls, utilizing different methods and measurements, have revealed relatively high percentages of national samples stating that Israel is a close, strong, or reliable ally of the United States. This pattern has remained constant even in times of tension and disagreement between the two governments and during controversial events, such as the 1982 Israeli war in Lebanon.”³² When asked to select adjectives describing parties to the Arab-Israeli dispute, Israel and Israelis have consistently been described with more favorable terms than those used to describe the Arab parties. Gilboa in 1987 also found that quite a few Americans, a fairly large minority, claimed to care

31 Seymour Martin Lipset and William Schneider, “Carter vs. Israel: What the Polls Reveal,” *Commentary* 64: 5 (1977): 21–29; Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Polls on the Middle East,” *Middle East Review* (1978): 11; William Schneider, “Is Israel Losing Popular Support: The Evidence of the Polls,” *Politics Today* (March/April, 1979): 14–16.

32 Eytan Gilboa, *American Public Opinion toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Lexington Books: Lexington, MA: 1987), 306.

deeply about Israel's fate; the numbers made clear that this minority obviously included many American non-Jews.

Generally, between 1967 and 1987, there was substantial fluctuation in the margin by which Israel was favored over the Arabs. On a few occasions, the percentage of the public supporting Israel dropped to as low as a third—once, for example, after a temporary breakdown in Israeli-Egyptian peace negotiations early in 1978 and once in September 1982 after news of the bloody massacres in Lebanon of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila camps by Arab Christian militias allied with Israel.

On first inspection, it appears that from 1987 to the present—despite many major, potentially opinion-defining events in the Middle East—relatively little has changed in the overall orientation of the American public's thoughts and feelings regarding Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict. If true, this is remarkable because that quarter-century included several Middle Eastern wars involving the United States, the ebb-and-flow of a frustrating "peace process," two intifadas, the rise of Hamas and Hezbollah, the fall of Communism, 9/11, a global war on terror, "Arab Spring," a global financial crisis, and much more.

Two good reviews of poll data appeared recently, one by Eytan Gilboa in 2009 and another by Israeli political scientist Amnon Cavari in 2012. According to Gilboa in 2009, "frequent surveys have shown remarkable and stable support for Israel in American public opinion;" he finds this result "even more impressive when compared to the very negative opinion of Israel registered in democratic liberal countries such as members of the European Union."³³ To document this new negativity in the European orientation toward Israel, he cites—among other evidence—a November 2003 poll where respondents in fifteen nations of the EU perceived Israel to be "the greatest threat to peace in the world."³⁴ (It is worth noting in this regard that, during the 1950s, Israel often found *more* public support in Western Europe than in the United States, perhaps owing to the different policies of European governments in those days, the relative weakness of Muslim influence in world affairs, different demographics of the European population, and the freshness of memories of the murder of six million Jews during the Holocaust.)

Despite European developments, Gilboa reports that in the United States: "... on the average, since 1996 about two-thirds of Americans held favorable opinions of Israel while about one-third held an unfavorable opinion. This

33 Eytan Gilboa, "The Public Dimension of US-Israel Relations: A Comparative Analysis," in *US-Israeli Relations in a New Era*, eds. Eytan Gilboa and Efraim Inbar (New York: Routledge, 2009), 54.

34 *Ibid.*, 72.

represents a more positive impression of Israel than ever before, although support for the Arab side has also increased in recent decades. (Both sides have drawn supporters from the previously unaware and/or undecided.) The highest favorability ratio in recent years, 69 percent to 25 percent, was registered in 2005, while the lowest, 58 percent to 35 percent, was registered in January 2002.³⁵ Interestingly, elites were often found to favor Israel by a greater margin than the general public. Looking at a 2007 poll, for example, Israel held a 63 percent to 30 percent advantage in the general public, but a 63 percent to 14 percent edge among the elite public. (In this study, elites were a fairly large and diverse group, defined by possession of a college degree, a household income of at least \$75,000, high media usage, and a self-declared intention to vote).³⁶ More specific, better-defined, and higher-level elites, of course, may have altogether different orientations toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, but their attitudes cannot be readily identified from mass opinion surveys.

The general American public, however, has been very likely to view Israel as a reliable ally. In a July 2006 poll, for example, Israel—along with Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Japan—was most likely to be seen as close American allies (among a list of 25 countries that were studied).³⁷ While Americans, as a whole, seem to have mixed feelings about some recent Israeli leaders, the American public overwhelmingly (65–75%) believed—at least in 2006 and 2007—that Israeli leaders were very serious about wanting to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians.³⁸ The American public also shared the Israeli leadership's view that Iran constituted a major threat to world peace.³⁹ Even on matters related to foreign aid, about which the American public generally lacks enthusiasm, there is consistent support for aid to Israel.⁴⁰

Cavari's review of survey data generally confirms Gilboa's findings, though he attends more to fluctuations in support over time.⁴¹ He also points out that, although a majority of Americans continue to endorse support for Israel, the level of support for Israel in June 2010 was 58 percent, which was 5 points lower than a year earlier. A month later, support dropped to 51 percent. Such num-

35 Ibid., 56.

36 Ibid., 56, 72.

37 Ibid., 59.

38 Ibid., 62.

39 Ibid., 63.

40 Ibid., 62.

41 Amnon Cavari, "Six Decades of Public Affection: Trends in American Public Attitudes toward Israel," in *Israel and the United States: Six Decades of US-Israeli Relations*, ed. Robert O. Freedman (Boulder, CO: Perseus/Westview, 2012), 120.

bers still greatly exceeded support for the Arab side and remained high by historical standards, yet Cavari mentioned a possible downward trend. Still, by February 2012 and after Cavari's chapter went to press, support for Israel was back up to 61 percent, and was still at 59 percent in November of that year, after Israel started an operation in Gaza. Support for the Palestinians, at that time, stood at 13 percent. Thus, Israel's support in 2012 exceeded its support in the days following the dramatic victory in 1967 (56 percent)—a time that some erroneously look back to as the high point in American sympathy for the Jewish state.⁴² Various polls taken during the 2014 Gaza campaign showed that overall support for Israel remained high, though perhaps a bit lower than the 2012 peak.⁴³

In analyzing contemporary public support for Israel, it is important to look beyond overall trends. Cavari suggests that "... the aggregate support [for Israel in its early years] may have been mostly due to the support of Democrats..." However, he notes that—since the 1990s—"public opinion toward Israel has taken on a [new] partisan dimension that did not exist before."⁴⁴ A breakdown of responses to the sympathy question by party identification shows that, during the past fifteen years, Republicans have been consistently and considerably more supportive of Israel than Democrats have been—though affiliates of both parties supported Israel more than the Arab nations or the Palestinians.⁴⁵ A 2012 poll, for example, showed 78 percent of Republicans supporting Israel versus the Palestinians, compared to 56 percent of Independents supporting Israel and 53 percent of Democrats.⁴⁶ The partisan split shows up in another way. Although 66 percent of respondents in one 2010 survey felt that the American president *should be* a strong supporter of Israel, only 34 percent of Americans thought that (Democratic) President Obama *was* a strong supporter while 42 percent thought he was not.⁴⁷

42 Mitchell Bard, "American Public Opinion Toward Israel," (Jewish Virtual Library, December 2012), http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/American_attitudes_toward_Israel.html (accessed January 24, 2012). See, also, Elizabeth Mendes, "Americans Continue to Tilt Pro-Israel," Gallup Politics, March 2, 2012, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/153092/Americans-Continue-Tilt-Pro-Israel.aspx> (accessed January 24, 2012).

43 Adam Taylor, "Is It True that American Support for Israel is Waning?," Washington Post World Views, July 29, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/07/29/is-it-true-that-american-support-for-israel-is-waning> (accessed February 4, 2015).

44 Bard, "American Public Opinion."

45 Cavari, "Six Decades," 118.

46 Mendes, "Americans Continue."

47 Cavari, "Six Decades," 119. See, also, Taylor, "Is It True?"

Another importer predictor of support for Israel is age, with younger people, those aged 18–34, less supportive of Israel than older ones, aged 65 and up. Gilboa has an explanation for the age difference, suggesting: “Younger Americans . . . who are subjected to constant aggressive manipulations and intimidation of Arab and Muslim organizations and radical left-leaning groups on college campuses are prone to adopt a highly distorted view of Arab-Israeli relations and American-Israeli relations.”⁴⁸ Blacks and Latinos are generally more supportive of Israel than of the Arabs or Palestinians; however, their level of support is typically lower than that of whites and non-Latinos.⁴⁹ Surveys have also identified a substantial gap between Protestant Christian conservatives (evangelicals) who typically number among the strongest supporters of Israel and mainline Protestants (especially liberals) who are less supportive.⁵⁰

One final point is critical. Despite American sympathy for Israel—sometimes manifested by as much as a 4 or 5 to 1 edge in the percentage that support Israel versus the Arabs—about three-quarters of the public say that America should take *neither* side in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The ones who would take a side are nearly unanimous that America should side with Israel (32 percent to 1 percent for the Palestinians in a 2011 poll). Still, most Americans—despite their sympathies—prefer not to take sides. Moreover, three-quarters of the American people also believe that Palestinian-Israeli “peace” is either “important” or “very important” to the United States.⁵¹ Still, only 34 percent of respondents in a 2007 poll believed there would come a time when there would be such peace; 63 percent disagreed.⁵²

When fighting has erupted in recent years—against Hezbollah in 2006 and several times in Gaza—about one American in four usually arrives at

48 Gilboa, “The Public Dimension,” 71.

49 Cavari, “Six Decades,” 111–119. Perhaps African-Americans have been influenced by Palestinians have adopted characterizations of Israel as an “apartheid” regime and attempted to paint their struggle as akin to the civil rights movement. Regarding Latinos, see: Shlomo Shamir, “Poll: Nearly 50% of Hispanic Americans believe U.S. too supportive of Israel,” March 28, 2011, Haaretz.com, <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/poll-nearly-50-of-hispanic-americans-believe-u-s-too-supportive-of-israel-1.352409> (accessed January 24, 2013). But see also Esther J. Cepeda, “A False Story About Latinos, Chicago Daily Herald, February 27, 2012, <http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20120227/discuss/702279939> (accessed January 24, 2013).

50 Cavari, “Six Decades,” 111–119.

51 Bard, “American Public Opinion.”

52 Karlyn Bowman, “Americans Lean toward Israel,” January 5, 2009, Forbes.com, http://www.forbes.com/2009/01/03/israel-arab-palestine-oped-cx_kb_0105bowman.html (accessed January 24, 2013).

the conclusion that Israel has “gone too far.” When bodies begin to pile up, even more Americans may deem Israeli actions unjustifiable—as many as four in ten during the Summer 2014 Gaza campaign. But this number does not approach the seven in ten who consider Hamas’ actions to be unjustifiable. All in all, Americans like Israel, but they like peace more. Thus, even when Israel becomes embroiled in a war with Hamas which is committed to its destruction, a fairly large segment of Americans are apt to direct a portion of the blame in its direction—even though most of these people assign a greater share of the blame to Hamas and many retain some affection for the Jewish state.⁵³

Making Sense of It All: Antisemitism

Around the world there is plenty of bad news—not only for Israel’s supporters but also for those who genuinely oppose old-fashioned antisemitism. Yet, if one is speaking solely about the United States, the most reasonable conclusion is that the country is—now more than ever—a singularly hospitable abode for the Jews. America emerges without irony as a beacon on a hill, a nation that is, at least with regard to the Jews, living up to its lofty promise. The United States sometimes finds itself fighting against a current of world opinion but, even so, it has to date stood by its principles more consistently than is typical for nation-states. In the battle against antisemitism, the USA has some allies that seem sincere, especially in parts of Europe. In confronting unjustifiable anti-Israel hostility, the United States more and more frequently stands alone or almost alone. If there is a criticism to offer of America’s behavior from the perspective of those who oppose antisemitism, it is that the nation has not always spoken loudly, consistently, and frequently enough about the failure of other nations to live up to the standards by which Americans live at home. Yet even this criticism must be tempered by a sense of the complexities of fighting antisemitism in a world where the United States must balance many interests and values.

There is relatively little basis at present for worrying about imminent deterioration in overall tolerance for Jews in the United States. Despite occasional blips in measures of antisemitic incidents and opinions, Americans on the whole are not becoming more antisemitic. The old anti-Jewish stereotypes retain some of their potency, with nontrivial segments of the American public still believing that Jews are too powerful, crafty, corrupt in business, interested only in their own kind, responsible for the death of Jesus, and disloyal to the

53 Taylor, “Is it True?”

United States. But those who buy wholeheartedly into this vision are relatively few, and lacking in power and major media access. Most Americans express tolerant and positive feelings about Jews; they have no problem voting for Jews, living near Jews, and supporting the Jewish state.

In spite of all this, there are several problems worth monitoring:

- Polls reveal that African-Americans, recent Latino immigrants, and the uneducated remain disproportionately committed to antisemitic viewpoints. While most members of these groups are not antisemitic, and many have positive feelings about Jews, the cultural taboo against expression of Jew-hatred does not appear as strong among African-Americans, recent Latino immigrants, and the uneducated as it does in American culture as a whole. The difficulty in eradicating antisemitism from the African-American and Latino communities may become increasingly important as these groups will probably constitute a larger proportion of the American public in the future.
- Pockets of relatively extreme antisemitism exist among groups too small to show up on national surveys. Research is needed to identify, understand, and better combat these groups. A particularly hateful antisemitism exists among some parts of the very far right and there still persists a fair amount of religious antisemitism in a few Christian groups. As a rule of thumb, liberal Christian groups tend to be more hostile than the general public to Israel, though sometimes less antisemitic. Conservative Christian groups tend to be more sympathetic to Israel than the general public, though perhaps somewhat more antisemitic. But few people in mainstream Christian groups are overtly antisemitic, at least by the standards that prevailed seventy-five years ago. The most extreme Jew-hatred is found among very small pockets of extremists who rant and rail against ZOG, the so-called Zionist-occupied government. At present, there is probably less of a threat that such groups will proselytize large segments of the American public, but possibly a greater danger that they will radicalize and carry out bloody acts of terror against Jewish targets.
- In light of the prominence of antisemitic ideology in many parts of the Muslim world, it is important to monitor the extent to which such mindsets have crossed into the American Muslim community.⁵⁴ Polls, thus far, have not provided much good information about this issue. With the Internet, media from Muslim majority countries are consulted frequently by native speakers from those countries. Some research has found substantial

54 Kressel, *The Sons of Pigs and Apes*, 22–55.

evidence of radicalization among young American Muslims, with one reasonably well-designed study—for example—showing that about one in four young Muslims supported suicide bombing under some circumstances.⁵⁵ For the most part, mainstream Muslim organizations reject direct expressions of old-fashioned antisemitism, although they may support various overseas organizations that espouse extreme ideologies. On occasion, direct antisemitism has emerged in the American Muslim community, as for example when a Paterson New Jersey newspaper published an Arabic translation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Better data is needed to assess the extent to which the antisemitism that prevails in Muslim-majority countries has carried over into public opinion in the American Muslim population. In addition, we need to know more about the extent to which Muslim political positions on the Middle East carry over into delegitimation, demonization, and double standards regarding the Jewish state—all of which can be considered antisemitic under the official definition now used by the United States Department of State. When thinking about small enclaves of extreme antisemitism in the Muslim community—as in the case of extreme right-wing antisemitism—it is important to understand that even a handful of radicalized haters can do a great deal of damage if they engage in terrorist violence.

- A very different concern is that the American public may feel more comfortable with Jews as individuals of a different religious faith and less comfortable with Jews acting as a Jewish people supporting its interests, for example, expressing concern about the Holocaust, the state of Israel, Muslim antisemitism, etc. This vague discomfort may show up in responses to various poll questions, including the frequently-asked one about Jewish disloyalty. This tendency to reject Jewish peoplehood, to the extent that it can be reliably documented, needs to be monitored and further studied, lest it turn into something more dangerous. This matter is important because many American Jews now view their Jewish identity as based at least as much in ethnicity as in questions of religious belief.
- Finally, we may also need to heed, at least partly, the caveat about the inability of polls to reveal fully the content of souls. It is certainly possible that some Americans have not changed their truest and deepest feelings about Jews so much as the rules have changed about which views may be expressed in public. I think, however, that this argument grows weaker over time; in

55 David Morgan, "Poll Finds Some U.S. Muslim Support for Suicide Attacks," Reuters, May 22, 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/05/22/us-usa-muslims-poll-idUSN2244293620070522> (accessed March 6, 2013).

any case, the openness to Jewish political candidates, Jewish neighbors, and Jewish coworkers implies that something important and real has changed. Moreover, considerable social psychological evidence establishes that if you can modify the behavior of people, their hearts and minds will likely follow.⁵⁶

It remains directly in the Jewish interest and consistent with liberal Jewish values to oppose prejudice-based intolerance of any group in the United States. Intolerance of any group can readily lead to intolerance of other groups. These days—as Chelsea Schafer and Greg Shaw recently reported in a roundup of polls on tolerance in the United States—tolerance has been increasing toward most groups in the country. Gay and lesbian people have probably experienced the greatest increase in public acceptance in recent years, but the authors also speak of “. . . broad patterns of growing acceptance of people whose ethnicity, beliefs, and lifestyles are unlike their own.”⁵⁷ Two groups are not faring so well, according to the authors’ reading of the poll data. There is growing distrust of Muslims and increasing intolerance toward immigrants. Regarding both of these groups, I think, some of what Schafer and Shaw call intolerance, arguably, reflects legitimate disagreements concerning policies and differing judgments about the acceptability of ideologies perceived as intolerant or opposed to the public interest. However, some of what the polls are tapping is genuine bigotry and intolerance.⁵⁸ Thus, as the ADL and other mainstream Jewish organizations have long suggested, fighting intolerance and bigotry against Muslims (and other groups) should be a key part of the agenda of the Jewish community and those who care about it.

Right now, in the United States, antisemitism seems to function mainly as a normal prejudice, and this in itself is very unusual. Viewed historically and globally, antisemitism has behaved differently from most other forms of

56 Perhaps a bigger long-term risk concerns the potential for cynicism to arise concerning the overextension of political correctness rules, prohibiting thoughts and speech regarding various groups. For the most part, changing norms about what can and cannot be said about minority groups have been constructive. When people change their linguistic behavior, there is at least some evidence that they ultimately change their internal attitudes. But enforcement of these norms are best when they come from peers, when they are not too rigid, when they don't stifle legitimate debate, when they don't infringe of the important first amendment principles, and when they do not make interactions between people in different groups too awkward and uncomfortable.

57 Chelsea E. Schafer and Greg M. Shaw, “The Polls—Trends: Tolerance in the United States,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73 (2009), 429.

58 I have attempted to sort these issues out in Kressel, “*The Sons of Pigs and Apes*,” 134–139.

prejudice. Thus, German scholar Clemens Heni calls it—a “specific phenomenon” and Israeli historian Robert Wistrich calls it—“a lethal obsession.”⁵⁹ Hostility toward the Jews has assumed many forms in different times and places, and some of these have been similar to other forms of prejudice. Yet antisemitism draws its potency from several unique aspects:

- 1) Jews have been charged with deicide in the Christian tradition and Jews have been accused of perpetual treachery in the Islamic tradition. These are difficult stains to cleanse.
- 2) Jews were officially-approved targets of expulsion and mass murder (i.e. the Banu Qurayza Jews) in the founding tradition of Islam and many saints in the Christian tradition have reinforced the doctrinal importance of keeping the Jews down (e.g. St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas).
- 3) As adherents to a pre-existing, non-universalizing faith, Jews have frequently been portrayed as evil or ignorant in order to establish the need for a new religious tradition seeking to convert everyone.
- 4) The very longevity and cross-cultural pervasiveness of Jew-hatred seems to add to its perceived legitimacy. How, the antisemite asks in every generation, could so many people with so many different outlooks have been wrong in opposing the Jews? So much smoke must mean fire.
- 5) Unlike many (though not all) targets of other prejudice, Jews have typically been hated not because of their perceived inferiority but because of their perceived potency and cleverness. Thus, envy has often been more important than disdain in the genesis and perpetuation of Jew hatred.

For all the above reasons, antisemitism has had a peculiar and dangerous capacity to inspire murderousness in many lands over a great period of time. Even in the United States, some parts of the uniquely pernicious antisemitic mindset can be detected in the poll data.

Yet, all in all, as antisemitism currently manifests in the United States, it is somewhat different—but not worse—than other prejudices against white ethnic groups. Indeed, hostility toward Jews in the United States seems less intense and widespread, at present, than that experienced by some other groups, including—probably—Muslim-Americans, Mormons, immigrants, and various nonwhite groups. Those with an awareness of the long history of ebb and flow—but never the disappearance—of powerful and deadly

59 Clemens Heni, *Antisemitism: A Specific Phenomenon* (Berlin: Edition Critic, 2013). Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010).

antisemitism will argue for alertness and vigilance. For now, however, we may cautiously conclude that the United States remains one principal bastion of genuine tolerance and liberal virtue with regard to the Jews. Other nations around the world still have much to learn from its example. Nonetheless the rise of antisemitism always has indicated severe core problems in a host society. If antisemitism were to rise in the United States, it would be the canary in the coal mine, the sure sign of more fundamental problems in the nation, of broader disasters to come.

Making Sense of It All: Israel

American public opinion findings on Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict shed important light on the vociferous and angry critics of the Israel lobby (or as some—including Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel—have inappropriately called it, “the Jewish Lobby.”)⁶⁰ There are, of course, numerous lobbyists attempting to influence American policy in the Middle East, including three important ones that claim to be supportive of Israel in different ways.⁶¹ J-Street, for example, often finds itself at odds with the Israeli government, although it sees itself as pro-Israel. But, to the extent that AIPAC, the largest and most mainstream pro-Israel lobby, influences American policy towards support of Israel, it is largely making such policy more responsive to the will of the American people. There are many other official and unofficial lobbyists who attempt to influence American policy in the Middle East. Some of these are supported by oil companies, anti-Israel Americans, Middle Eastern nations, religious groups, and others who see conflicts in the region from a variety of vantage points. AIPAC can be successful, largely, because it has a sizable segment of non-Jewish public opinion behind its principal goals. For those who contend that such public opinion supports Israel only because Jewish money, power, and media manipulate the hearts and minds of America, I suggest a reality check. This hardly seems plausible, given the diversity of media and other forces bearing on the formation of political attitudes. Beyond that, I would urge a careful reading of the Czarist-forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, wherein such antisemitic canards of Jewish manipulation find one of their earliest, clearest, and most influential expressions. Fears of Jewish money

60 See, notably, John J. Mearsheimer & Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007).

61 Dov Waxman, “The Pro-Israel Lobby in the United States: Past, Present, and Future,” in *Israel and the United States*, 79–99.

pushing around congressmen against the public will turn out to be little more than bigotry, madness, and gross misperception masquerading as analytic theory, albeit sometimes under the cover of professorial robes.

In any event, according to the polls, public support for Israel in the United States is very strong. Despite differences in levels of support, it is—for the most part—bipartisan; it also cuts across categories of race, class, gender, and—mostly—religion. In few American demographic groupings is sympathy ever greater on any matter for the Arab side than for Israel.

As in the case of antisemitism, challenges to the public standing of the Jewish state do not come from large and clearly-defined segments of the general public. Instead, the greatest challenge comes from certain elite intellectual groupings in the media and academia—those charged with shaping the next generation, critiquing American policy, and framing the terms of the debate regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. Again, data are limited, but one ADL study shows that—although 79% of college faculty members are without prejudice—over 60% possessed an “unfavorable impression of the current Israeli government” in 2002.⁶²

Still, we should be cautious in over-interpreting this finding (and others like it) as an unfavorable impression of an Israeli government is hardly the same thing as an anti-Israel position overall. Another study found that 20.9% of faculty sympathized more with Israel and 10.7% more with the Palestinians; 51.3% said “both” and 17.1% “neither.”⁶³ While still supportive of Israel, these findings indicate somewhat less sympathy for the Jewish state than one would find in the general American public. In all likelihood, the support for Israel would be substantially less in elite academic institutions and among social science faculty, as these groups possess a larger share of radicalized professors.⁶⁴ Thus far, careful quantitative evidence about the disparity between the general American public and the social science faculty at elite academic institutions is lacking. But anecdotal and other forms of support exist, including—for example—Martin Kramer’s study, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America*.⁶⁵ If Kramer’s thesis is correct, and I believe it is,

62 Dinnerstein, “Is There a New Anti-Semitism,” 54.

63 Scott Jaschik, “The Liberal (and Moderating) Professoriate,” *Inside Higher Ed*, October 8, 2007, <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/10/08/politics#ixzzzMzBjFqNz> (accessed March 7, 2013).

64 Ibid.

65 Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand: the Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001). See, also, continuing discussion of the issues Kramer raises at www.campus.watch.org.

those professors charged with teaching the next generation about the Middle East will be doing so from a perspective that is much less supportive of Israel—if not openly hostile—when compared to the standard of the American public or the mainstream American political parties.

The potential problem for Israel's friends is less that Americans are at risk of changing sides in the foreseeable future, although this is not impossible. The more likely problem is that even a relatively small loss of enthusiasm for Israel can have major consequences, as America is almost singlehandedly backing Israel. If Americans come to see the Arab-Israeli conflict as nuanced, foggy, complex, or unclear, America could decide to weaken its support at some critical juncture in the future.

Moreover, given the tendency of American public attitudes to follow American government policy, support for Israel could be especially vulnerable to a president whose political agenda involved a radical change away from supporting Israel. One can envision this possibility in part because few Americans, regardless of their personal sympathies, vote for president on the basis of policies toward the Middle East. In addition, a "pitch" arguing for "peace over partisanship" would be likely to have the greatest emotional appeal particularly if it could overcome Americans' skepticism about its chances for success.

Another key problem for supporters of Israel is that the issue may be starting to lose its bipartisan characteristics. Democrats remain very supportive of Israel, but Republicans are clearly more supportive these days. In Israel's early years, Democrats were more supportive. Now, young Democrats—and, probably, left-wing Democrats and those educated at elite institutions—are the least supportive. Some of these groups may even be more sympathetic to the Palestinians than to the Israelis—although conclusive quantitative evidence on this point is lacking. Among Republicans, the Christian right may be the most supportive group of all. It will not be a good thing for Israel's friends if support for Israel becomes a feature of Republican but not Democratic platforms. The danger of this happening will be increased if the left-wing of the Democratic Party is ascendant; it will be reduced to the extent that centrist Democrats remain powerful. It is hard to predict the impact of any Jewish abandonment of the Democratic Party, of which they have been a key part for decades. So far, however, despite many predictions to the contrary, Jews have remained firmly Democratic and—nonetheless—Republicans have grown increasingly pro-Israel.

Back in 1978, Harvard professor Nadav Safran wrote that the evolution of American relations with Israel "... took place within the framework of a "special" American connection with Israel based on an interplay between a general American moral interest in and sympathy for that democratic Jewish state and

the particular attachment to it and concern for its welfare on the part of the near totality of America's 6 million Jews. This "special connection" has secured for Israel a modicum of American support even when that seemed to be a burden on the perceived American political-strategic interests, and has encouraged a higher level of support when Israel seemed to be playing a useful role in the context of the perceived American 'real' interest."⁶⁶ This is a fairly accurate description of the situation in 1978, emphasizing the general American sympathy for Israel and the role played by the American Jewish community while—at the same time—showing the ultimate dominance of realpolitik. Nowadays, general American sympathy for Israel is—if anything—stronger than when Safran wrote, and while the American Jewish community no longer uniformly supportive of Israel, it is still far more supportive than not. The real questions are: 1) Will the radical left in parts of academia and the media succeed in changing the moral calculus of the American people regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict? 2) Will the American Jewish community remain sufficiently committed to Israel to play the role ascribed to it by Safran? 3) To what extent will Americans correctly or incorrectly continue to calculate their interests as aligned with those of the Jewish state?

Many Americans currently show signs of an isolationist tendency, or at least a latent one. Whatever their sympathies, Americans apparently desire more than anything else to avoid messy overseas entanglements, of which the Middle East has recently provided many. Also, one needs to ask whether the "modicum" of support for Israel, even when it appears to be a burden (which was described by Safran) would be enough to sustain the state in a crisis.

We hear often that the Jewish community exaggerates antisemitism, and—I think—this is true for some American Jews who speak about imminent dangers coming from the American people. What should be more important for those concerned with eliminating or weakening prejudice around the world are the propagandistic and ideological reasons for downplaying global antisemitism and, more particularly, its extreme manifestations in the Islamic world. Those who argue that we need not worry about attitudes in America misunderstand or reject the critical role played by America in delegitimizing antisemitism and extreme anti-Israeli sentiment worldwide. Given how sympathetically most Americans feel toward the Jews, it is perhaps not surprising that so many find it difficult to grasp the extent of the irrational hatred for Jews and for the Jewish state in some other parts of the world. As I have argued, antisemitism is usually by its nature a different kind of bigotry, stubbornly resistant to measurement, assessment, containment, and eradication. Yet, the greatest failure

66 Nadav Safran, *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1978), 571.

of the well-intentioned American public may be its failure to grasp the extent to which Jew-hatred in many parts of the world retains its traditional nature as a dangerous “specific phenomenon” and a resilient “lethal obsession.” And the greatest physical threat to Jewish safety in the United States is undoubtedly the anti-Jewish terrorist risk posed by the radicalization of very small numbers of antisemitic operatives who fall beneath the radar of public opinion polls.