

4/06/2006 MEASURE Survey Release:

The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy

The Middle East Academic Survey Research Exposition project polled 71 Middle East academics about the Walt and Mearsheimer report titled "The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy". (<http://johnmearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/A0040.pdf>) The survey was fielded between March 31 and April 5, 2006. IRmep compiled and presents survey responses drawn from a pool of 2,300 academics with advanced degrees in Middle East area studies. This poll should not be interpreted as a statistically significant reflection on the views of all US Middle East academic specialists.

Key Findings:

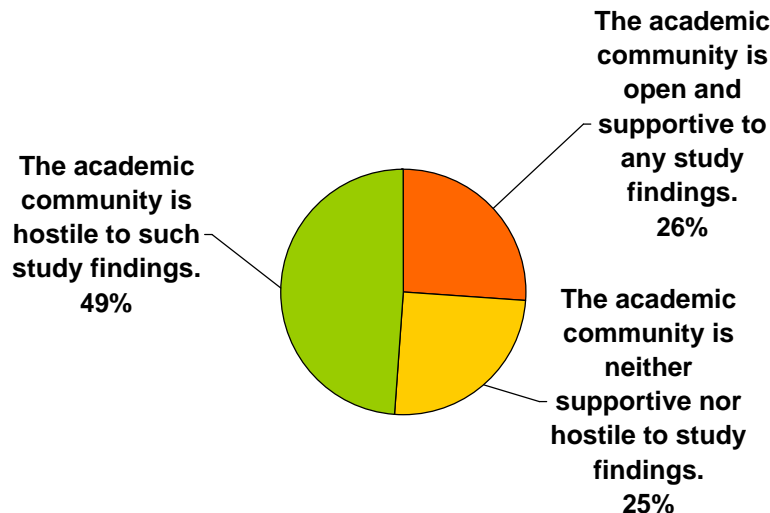
- 1. 49% of Middle East academics polled believe that the academic community is "hostile" to studies that are critical of the Israel Lobby and US policies toward Israel. 26% believe academia is "open" to such findings.**
- 2. 85% of Middle East academics polled believe that an Israel Lobby as described by Mearsheimer and Walt is "negative" to "extremely negative" to US interests.**
- 3. 65% of Middle East academics polled believe that the most powerful intimidation tactic of the Israel Lobby is charging detractors as "anti-Semites", followed by attacks from the mainstream media by Israel Lobby sympathizers (59%).**
- 4. 91% of Middle East academics polled believe it is "extremely accurate" to "accurate" that the Israel Lobby's tactics expose the United States to avoidable hostility in the Middle East.**
- 5. 86% of Middle East academics polled believe that the lobby places what it considers to be Israel's interests above the national interests of the United States.**

See the following charts and comments for elaboration on each survey question.

Document URL: <http://www.IRmep.org/measure5.htm>

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Question #1 How open and supportive is the academic community to studies that are critical of the "Israel lobby" and US policies toward Israel?



Comments:

That is, hostile in open, even though many I am sure would support the results of the study in private.

Many academics will support this report, and many will critique it. Academics who criticize the US's policy on Israel generally make their views known, and those who support Israel also do. The two sides rarely seem to talk to each other, and the establishment of Israel studies programs SEPARATE from Middle East studies programs is rather indicative. Most scholars, like many members of the political public, seem to spend most of their time interacting with those whose points of view support their own, and deal with challenges only to try to dispose of them.

The question is phrased in such a way that it implies that there is bias in academe, even though science should be objective and not depending on emotions

The academy is virtually the only place in the US where one finds criticism of Israel, but that criticism doesn't have much effect (and there are plenty of staunch supporters of Israel in the academy as well)

The two authors were very courageous to have written and published this article.

They are generally afraid to go on record.

With self proclaimed watch dog organizations (Campus Watch) and pressure it is increasingly hard to find courageous voices to tell the truth. But they are out there. I think the Mearsheimer-Walt piece is credible.

Academic community would like to be supportive but instead is nervous of charges of anti-Semitism

Depends which academic community; but overall, among all academics, hostility.

Of course those who carry the torch in behalf of the Israeli lobby within academia perceive critical assessments of US/Israeli policies in the Middle East as tantamount to anti-Semitism

It is gradually more responsive to anti-Israeli studies

There are factions in the academic community, some of which are open to whatever findings are produced by carefully designed research and some of which are deeply ideological and open only to findings that confirm their opinions.

Among the public, academicians tend to be the most receptive to new research findings

Obviously, it varies in different fields within academia, but in general, any such criticism raises a hue and cry of disproportionate intensity to the criticism. The use of the "anti-Semitism" card is the key ploy used to discredit all such criticism, however balanced or fair it attempts to be.

The academic community is open to any study findings on any topic so long as the findings are well reasoned and backed up with evidence.

Uncritically pro-Israeli academics and others systematically attack any info published that is critical of the Israel government's behavior.

In general, the academic community is open to any studies that show careful research.

While individual faculty members are open to such findings, the larger academy and elite within it are not.

Question is phrased in a silly fashion. Some quarters of the academic community are very hostile, others not.

European academics are generally more "open" than their US counterparts

Those who agree with the study's findings are afraid to say so, and the media is afraid to even discuss it. I'd say that's pretty good evidence.

The fact that any study critical of Israel is attacked ferociously is so obvious that none except the fanatics would deny it.

The academic community is neither here nor there on the question. The broader political community is hostile.

The majority of scholars in the academic community are either supportive of Israel, or exercise self censorship which stems largely out of fear.

Any mention of an Israeli lobby is immediately regarded as "anti-Semitic".

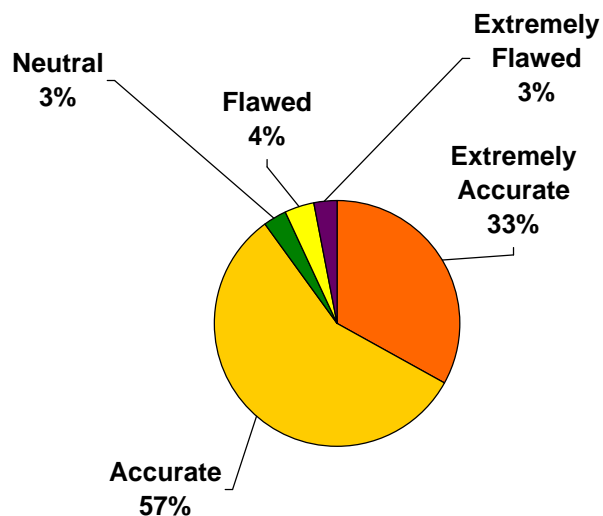
Critics of the Israeli lobby are immediately branded as "anti-Semitic", holocaust deniers, pro-Nazi or even pro-terrorist.

I believe the academic community is too diverse to characterize as one or the other.

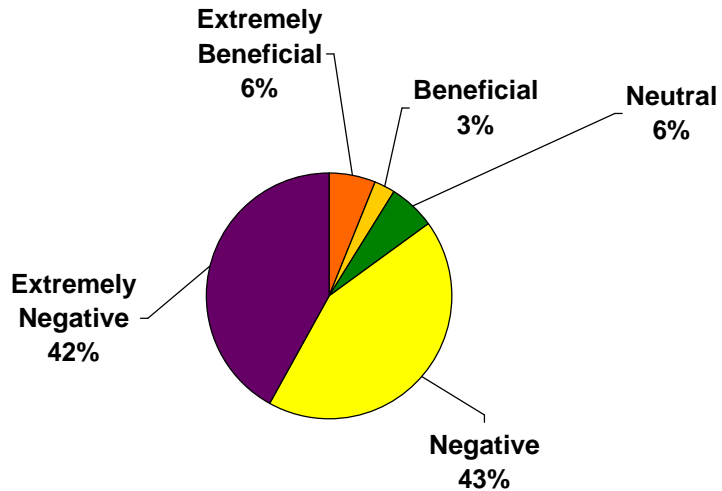
Question #2 Mearsheimer and Walt's research finds that:

"The core of the Lobby is comprised of American Jews who make a significant effort in their daily lives to bend U.S. foreign policy so that it advances Israel's interests. Their activities go beyond merely voting for candidates who are pro-Israel to include letter writing, financial contributions, and supporting pro-Israel organizations. But not all Jewish-Americans are part of the Lobby, because Israel is not a salient issue for many of them. In a 2004 survey, for example, roughly 36 percent of Jewish Americans said they were either "not very" or "not at all" emotionally attached to Israel."

a. How accurate is this finding?

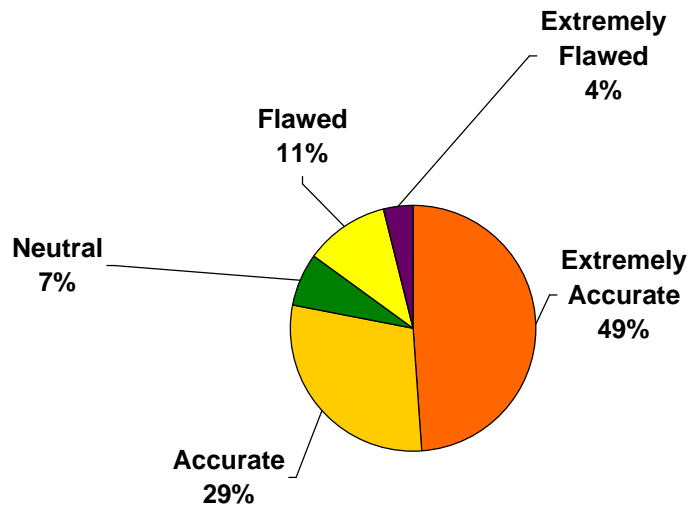


b. If accurate, how beneficial is a lobby of this nature to US interests?



Question #3 Mearsheimer and Walt find that the US has "been willing to set aside its own security in order to advance the interests of Israel."

How accurate is their finding?



Comments

Although all of the statements M & W make about "the Lobby" are accurate enough to give serious insight to the US policy process on Israel, M & W are not very good at asking what would happen if the US changed policy. They assume that if the US suddenly became evenhanded toward the Palestinians, for example, then the global threat of terrorism would be reduced. I think that is a huge leap in logic, and probably not true. Islamist terrorist organizations, like other groups that bolster their believers' devotion through propaganda, would find other issues to dwell on instead; I doubt that even a real two-state resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict would significantly reduce international terrorism sponsored by radical Islamist organizations. Let's suppose the US changes course in the Middle East--that in and of itself is inherently destabilizing (witness Iraq). To some extent, US actions are predictable, and Israel's actions are predictable by Israel's neighbors. When the US changes course, that too, opens the door to all sorts of possibilities, many of which would not really result in any improvement in security to the US. While I would agree with M & W that US assumptions about the Middle East are quite thoroughly guided by what Israel thinks is good for itself, I'm not sure that the US's security dilemmas are an either-or proposition, where if we don't do this, but do its opposite, we'll suddenly have much better security.

We are seen as hypocrites by third parties.

Besides the Iraq invasion, the main thorn in the US-ME relationship is the Palestinian issue, which goes unresolved, and misrepresented to hide Israeli abuses and make it look like it is the victim.

It is to some extent in the interest of the U.S. ruling class to have a dependent ally in the Middle East that can use its military might to help the U.S. out. For example, when Israel bombed Iraq's nuclear facilities in 1986 (not sure of date) and in occupying southern Lebanon so that progressive forces in that country that might have been able to overcome the sectarian divisions would not be able to come to power. Issue of Israel/Palestine also keeps the Arab world divided and busy, and helps ruling regimes avoid domestic reform.

Astonishing how effective the lobby has been given how divergent Israeli and US interests often are.

Is the tail wagging the dog or does the US dictate Israeli policy? Likely a strong mix of both. But the statement certainly is true.

The study makes fair points; however, to back up its findings it makes many mistakes due to ignorance and failing to pay attention to detail and nuance.

This is clear in the current war in Iraq but also earlier, when Ronald Reagan allowed AIPAC representatives to sit in policy councils and contribute their views. This is like letting oil companies sit in on energy policy formulation (and is interesting in that context since, theoretically, the views of these two privileged groups are antithetical).

Israeli interests are promoted even though they are injurious to considerations of security.

This is probably somewhat of an exaggeration as a general conclusion, but it is accurate with regard for at least some events and on some occasions, such as, for example, in the case of the infamous but little publicized deliberate Israeli air attack on the USS liberty in the 6-day War, and the lack of any appropriate US diplomatic or public response.

This differs from administration to administration. It is not a conscious setting aside of US interests but rather an assumed coincidence of interests.

It is very clear that the anti-Americanism in the Arab and Muslim worlds is very much linked to the U.S support of Israel and its policies. The US position has proved time and time again that it is not flexible enough when it comes to matters related to Israel.

The conflict is detrimental to the security of us all, including to Israeli citizens.

Israel is a consistent case where America has gone against accepted international law in support of Israel, even though it may be against its own interest in the long term. I agree that America, and the world at large, has become the victim of terrorism because of this misguided policy.

However, the US has used Israel for its own interests to divide the Middle East countries.

As someone who worked in the government, these authors have no idea how policy is made much less ME policy.

Their conclusions are so obvious as to be banal.

Perhaps they overstate their case a little bit, but most observers underestimate the lobby's role - and often not out of scholarly considerations.

Not just the interests of Israel, but of a particular right-wing Israeli mindset. Most Israelis want peace, but the US, despite its rhetoric, refuses to push for it. Now we're no longer a credible mediator.

The US fought the Iraq War for lots of reasons; the Israel part is just a piece. But on policy on Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab issues, it is an accurate finding.

Supporters of Israel have tried to define US interests in terms identical to the needs of the Israeli state. Makers of US policy have often, wittingly and unwittingly put Israel's interest ahead of the US

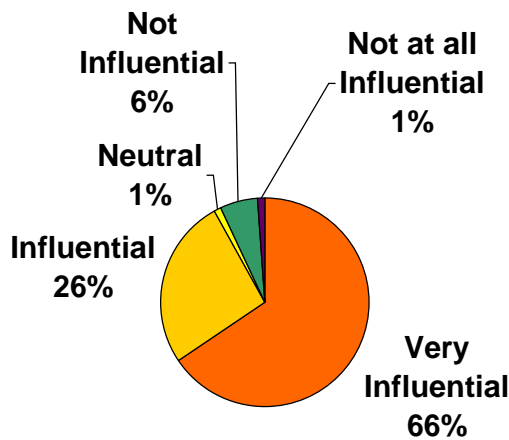
The blind support of Israeli policies, and disregard for the Palestinians is, to a large extent, responsible for the terrorist problems we are facing now.

This is quite a broad statement that is arguable at best.

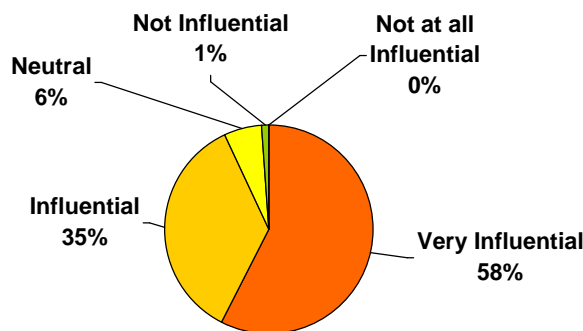
Question #4 Mearsheimer and Walt find the following intimidation tactics are utilized by elements of the "Israel Lobby" to stifle debate or criticism about lobby driven regional policy.

How influential are each of the following tactics on individuals considering criticizing the lobby or its policies?

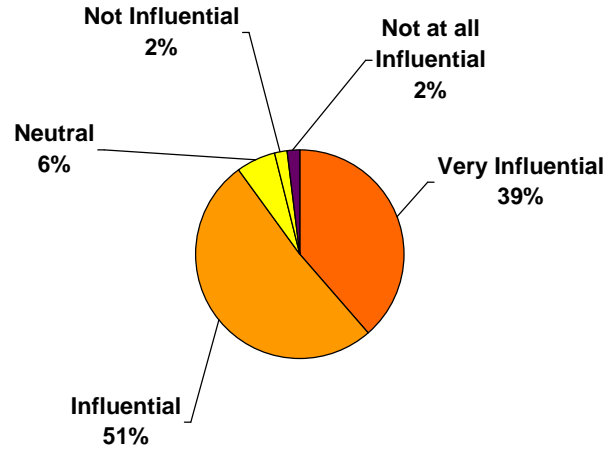
A. Charges that critics are "anti-Semites"



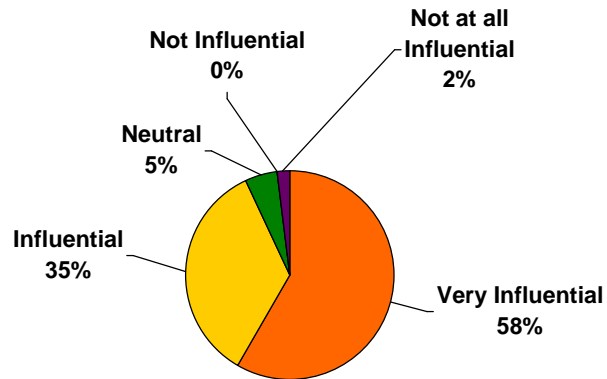
B. Organizing defeat of "unsupportive" members of Congress.



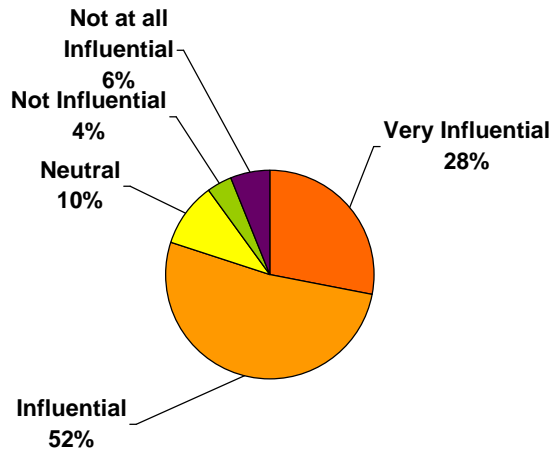
c. Targeting potentially unsupportive foreign policy appointees or career foreign service members.



d. Organized attacks on critics from "Israel lobby" sympathizers in the mainstream print and broadcast media.

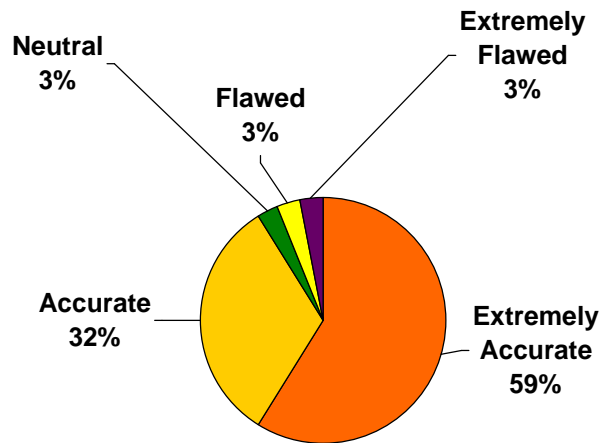


e. Blacklisting and intimidating professors critical of Israel.



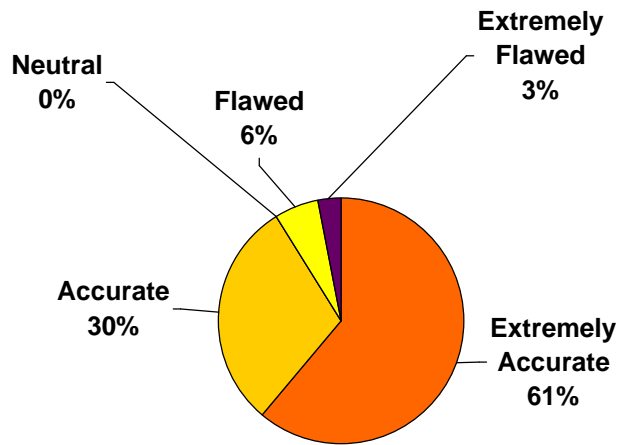
Question #5 Mearsheimer and Walt charge that the power of the Israel Lobby negatively affects US policy in the following ways. How accurate is each charge?

a. The lobby's power allows it to thwart positive pressures toward a peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

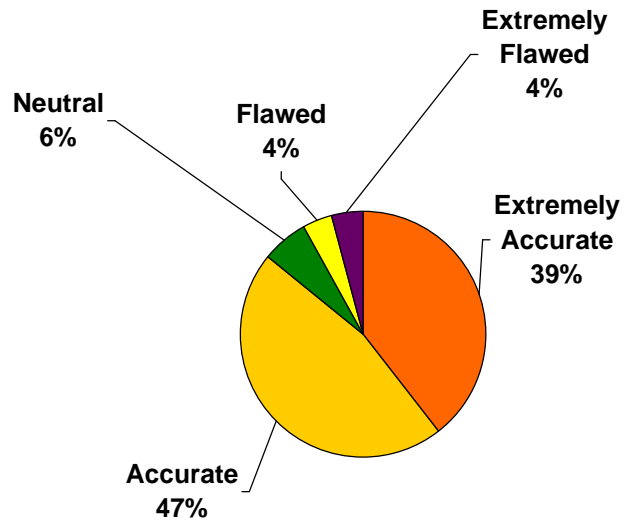


f.

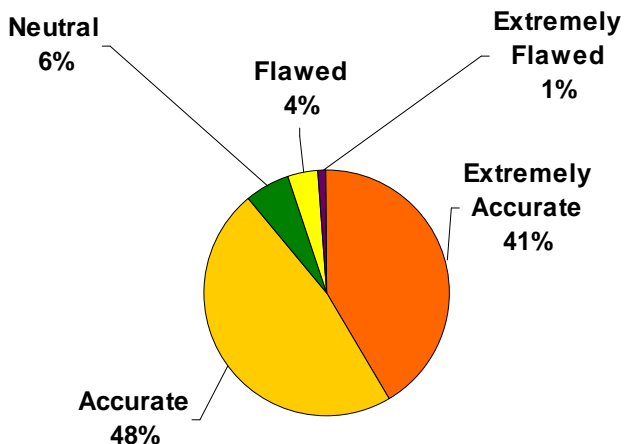
b. The lobby's policies expose the US to avoidable hostility in the Middle East.



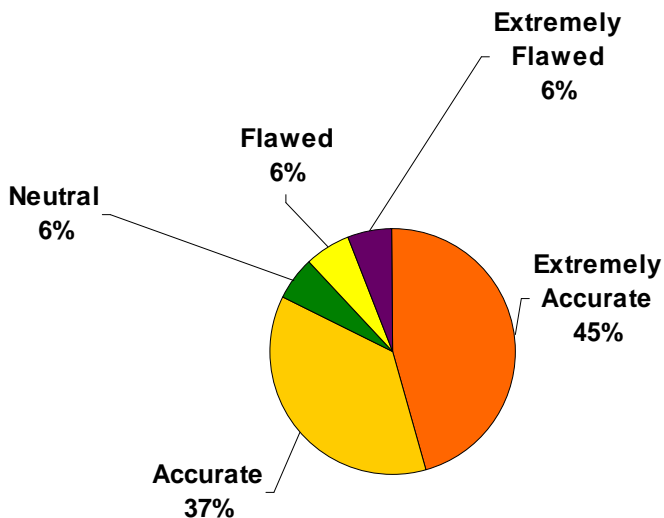
c. The lobby places what it considers to be Israel's interests above the national interests of the United States.



d. The Israel lobby has convinced Americans that Israeli and US interests are identical, which is untrue.

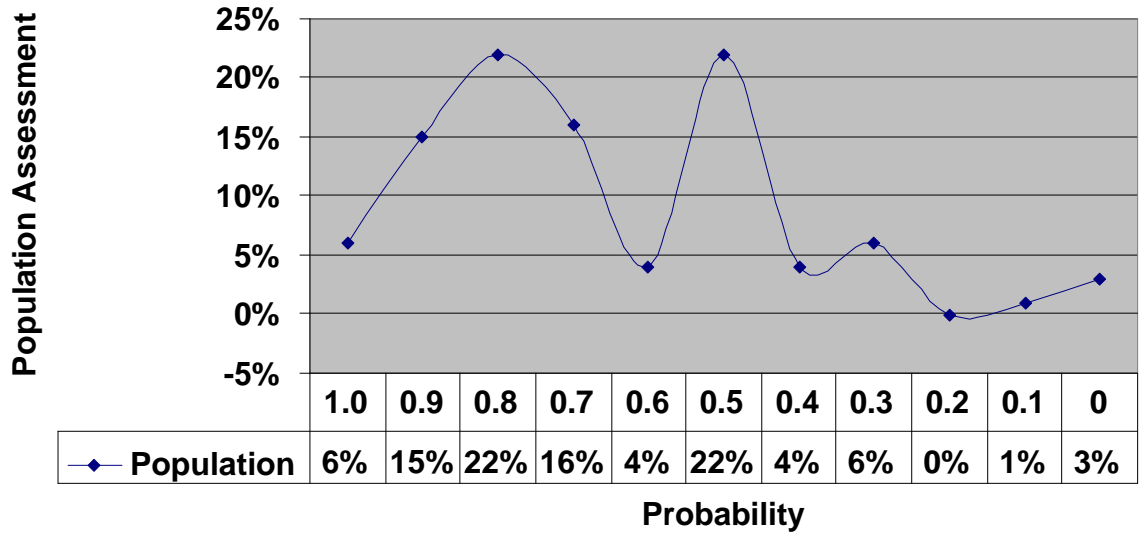


e. Interested members of the Israel lobby have reshaped and nullified broader policy debate in influential mainstream "think tanks" and other centers of thought.

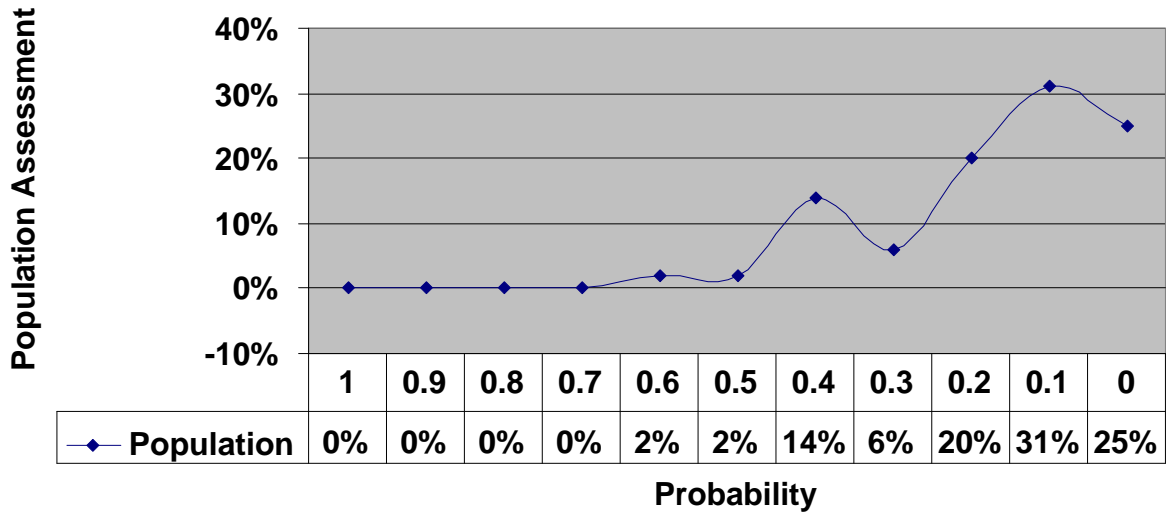


Question #6 What is the likely long-term impact of the Mearsheimer-Walt report?

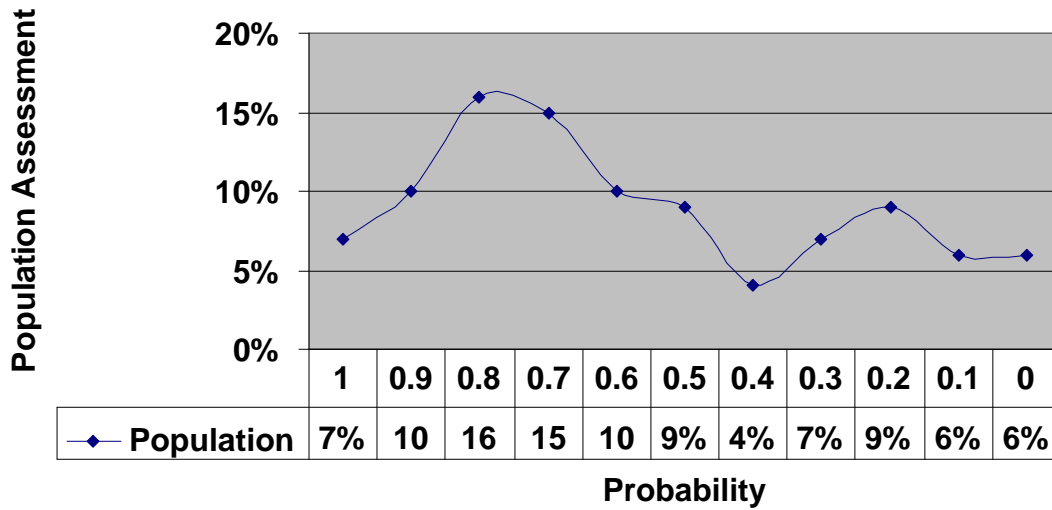
a. This report will fade away and be forgotten.



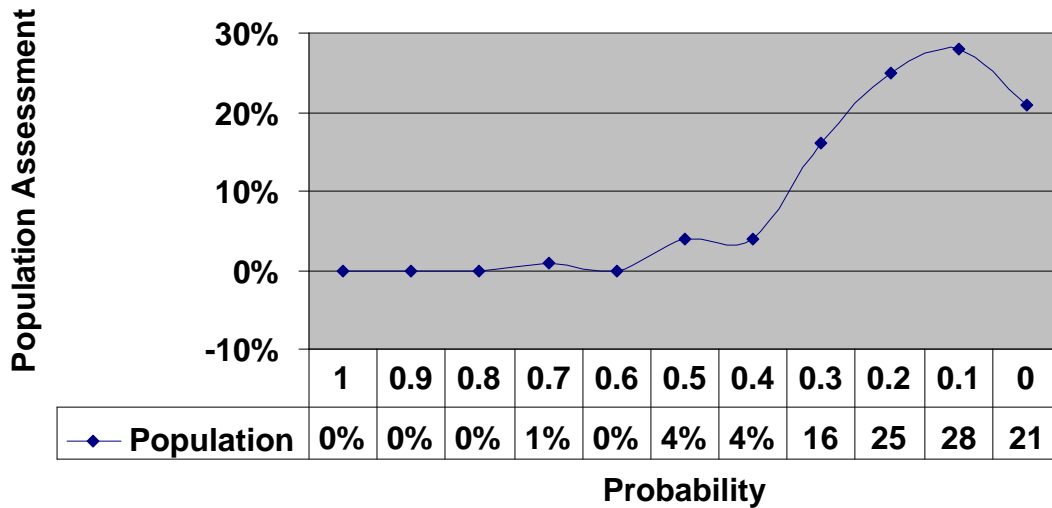
b. This report will be widely read by voters and shape their behavior.



c. The report authors will be effectively branded as pariahs and serve as examples that stifle future critics in academia.



d. The paper will ignite a movement to reform policy-making in the United States.



Comments:

While M & W do address the point that I will make in their report, I do not think they give it enough play. The strength of the pro-Israel lobby in the US (meaning here, the lobby that seeks to support Israel's more outrageous and anti-peace-seeking actions) comes MAINLY from pro-Israel American Christians. I used to be one, easily adopting the widespread American Christian attitudes, until I actually began to study both sides of the conflict, and to meet sane and intelligent people whose assumptions were NOT that of course Israel is right. The attitudes of support for Israel among American (especially) evangelicals, who comprise a very active sector of the voting public, are not based on considered knowledge of Israel's current politics, or on big picture analyses of US actions in the world and their implications, but on religious assumptions that are bolstered by the preaching that happens in their churches and on their televisions. And of course the Israel lobby is perfectly aware of this, and is partially made up from among these people, and works closely with evangelical political entrepreneurs to activate the faith-based support of these voters, both in electing candidates to national office and in lobbying politicians. And I would not say that the tail is wagging the dog here: the American Christians who support Israel are hardly doing so out of altruism, and I don't think that Dick Armev and his like are manipulated more than they manipulate. But I think this leads us to a discussion not of a "core lobby made up of American Jews"--a comment in this paper that does tend toward anti-Semitism--but of a broader phenomenon in American politics, having to do with religion (specifically Christianity) and its political uses. However, that takes us away from the point of the discussion, which seems to me to be a reconsideration of US policy on Israel, and US-Israel links in actions in the Middle East. An open, contentious political discussion of this would be a good thing, but I would agree with M & W that it is unlikely to happen, precisely because of the political forces that they point out, and the fact that while academics can get away with criticizing Israel, hardly any US politicians would be willing to open their mouths on that topic.

None of the above.

Iraq is the dominant foreign policy issue at the moment, and Israel's connection to this is very indirect. Also Bush II has generally disengaged from the issue (compared to Clinton and Bush I), so it isn't really salient. If Mearsheimer and Walt had written this fifteen years ago, it would have been more important.

A way must be found to publicize this article and get it read generally. Now less than 5% (?) of the public knows about it.

As a tenured professor with an extremely outstanding publication record, a unanimous favorable vote in my academic department, a unanimous favorable vote in the university-

wide human resources committee, a glowing letter from the dean; the provost vetoed my application for promotion simply based on politics--I, a Jew, was too "pro-Palestinian" and "anti-Israel.

The last is more of a hope. As American casualties pile up in Iraq, someone should, get over their fear lo losing their job and do some serious questioning. The people who led us here (whether ideological supporters, or policy executors) are all ardent supporters of Israel.

While there are a number of structural and academic flaws in this report, it is nonetheless a valiant effort to address the "third rail" of American foreign policy. I salute the authors for their courage; they will need every bit of it in the coming months.

One single report is not going to change the trend of almost 50 years...the report was very well done. The language of this survey was not very good and often too vague.

Few Americans care about research results in any field and most are satisfied with whatever is reported in the media or by their pastors, friends or other influentials in their lives. I don't think there is much interest in this report outside the academy and, even there, most of the interested are social scientists. Given the hobbling of the AAUP, which was forced to withdraw support for a conference that would have aired many sides in the academic boycott movement, it's hard to envision an organization, academic or otherwise, that would spearhead an open examination of these contentious issues.

Well, just take a look at what happened to the latest report written by two professors at Harvard and Chicago and was initially published by Kennedy School at Harvard last month!

A single academic paper does not by itself "ignite a movement to reform policy." However, that does not mean it is insignificant. Furthermore, Mearsheimer and Walt are not the first people to say these things. As Mearsheimer and Walt's footnotes attest, these conclusions (and the evidence supporting them) are voiced every day in a variety of contexts -- not only academic, but also in the global media, human rights organizations, and public debate. Nor are all these voices "anti-Israel." As Mearsheimer and Walt demonstrate, Israeli media and human rights organizations have played a leading role in exposing some of the problems highlighted in the report. The report adds its voice to this chorus, and its lone impact is thus difficult to quantify. It may spur a few people to think differently, look for independent confirmation of its conclusions, or question what they have always believed. These individuals may then pass along their altered perspectives on the issues in new forms, both academic and popular. Entrenched power relations and popular opinions nurtured by generations of

propaganda do not change overnight -- either in the Middle East or the U.S. Even if the report itself fades away and is forgotten, the issues it raises will certainly not be.

Between A & B: It's making a splash among readers, both academic and lay, who are interested in I/P issues, but unfortunately it probably won't be widely read by voters. Both C & D are underway to some extent, though the movement to stop funding Israel is still small.

I would like to hope that it will affect members of Congress in thinking more seriously about the repercussions on America for its unquestioning support of Israel, particularly where it involves going against accepted international law.

I find the study to be offensive; it does not put the pro Israeli lobby in perspective with other ethnic based lobbies such as Greek, Armenians, Poles and Indian-Americans. To say that the lobby is a danger to the US and the world reveals how un-academic the work is. That lobbies have influence in the US is true. It is also true that other countries do not have the same system we do. This said does one criticize them for having foreign policies completely divorced from their publics? I would go a step further and suggest that the questions formulated by this survey are also designed to elicit the kind of response that would support the so called findings of this report.

I support Prof. Mearsheimer and Prof. Walt who have impeccable academic credentials and have courageously taken on a critical issue in US foreign policy. They should be applauded.

The fact that the report has not received the national public airing it deserves illustrates the truth of its claims.

Policy making is not going to change given the power of the Israeli lobby, and the support of the Christian fundamentalist movement in the USA.

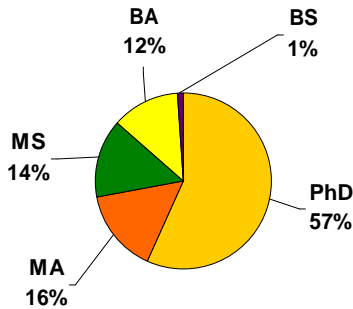
The national interests of one country never coincide continuously with those of another country. In international politics there are no eternal friends or eternal enemies, there are national interests, which change with time.

The paper merely reiterates arguments others have made for many years. It is not going to make a difference.

About MEASURE

Measure is the acronym of Middle East Academic Survey Research and Exposition. MEASURE is a grant funded research tool that advises policy makers and the American public on highly relevant topics. MEASURE surveys are fielded by the Washington DC based Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy, (IRmep) a non-profit, non-partisan, non- ideological public policy institute.

MEASURE surveys academics via a series of multiple choice and open questions to compile and aggregate of informed opinion on timely policy issues.



62 MEASURE survey candidates were drawn from a pool of 2,300 academics with advanced degrees in Middle East area studies. Not all MEASURE candidates teach or write about contemporary Middle East issues, but are generally more informed and involved in regional issues than their counterparts in academia, and reside within Middle East university departments. The terminal degree profile of this pool reveals a majority at the PhD and Master level.

MEASURE survey results are presented in aggregate form only. Individual responses are anonymous. MEASURE

survey results are presented to the public in a timely fashion and also made available to policy makers and the press. MEASURE avoids uninvited or multiple survey responses by soliciting response by invitees only and discarding repeat responses.

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