

department over the standoff between the U.S. and its NATO allies: “A paper distributed to the army’s upper echelons even spoke of an opportunity to ‘remove the pro-Palestinian Europeans from the Middle East.’” Israeli officials concluded, according to Benn, that the U.S. would “punish the Europeans for their back-stabbing on the road to Baghdad, and will no longer ask them for input regarding Israeli concessions.”

Benn quotes Maj. Gen. Amos Gilad, Coordinator of Government Activities in the West Bank and Gaza, voicing the Israeli army’s belief that a U.S.-led war for regime change in Iraq would establish a precedent for, in Gilad’s words, “the removal of other dictators closer to us who use violence and terror.” Reflecting official and public Israeli attitudes at that time, polls indicated that a large majority of Israelis cheered the removal of Saddam Hussein by the Americans.

But after American critics of the planned war against Iraq raised these same points, suggesting that neocons were pressing for Saddam’s ouster because they were hoping that it would help secure Israeli interests—much along the lines drawn by outspoken Israeli government and military officials—mainstream American media types seemed to insist that their countrymen must not speak as frankly as the Israelis. When then-*New York Times* columnist (and now editor) Bill Keller wrote about the possible effects of the invasion of Iraq on Israeli interests, he made it clear that he wasn’t trying to advance “one of the more enduring conspiracy theories of the moment, the notion that we are about to send a quarter of a million American soldiers to war for the sake of Israel” and he even chose an ironic title for his piece, “Is It Good for the Jews?” But an alternative title, “Is It Good for Israel?” would certainly have captured the gist of his column—that the war was in Israel’s interest.

**An Iraqi intelligence fabricator seeking a cash reward from the U.S. authorities in Baghdad invented the information regarding a planned attack on the New York City subway system.**

The false intelligence resulted in a state of high alert in New York City from Oct. 6–9. The complexity of the alleged plan was taken by New York City authorities as an indicator of credibility, but nearly every element was totally invented by the source, including the baby carriage and briefcase bomb-concealment devices and the details of how a group of 19 bombers was converging on New York City from around the Middle East and South Asia. Analysts in Iraq and also at Homeland Security in Washington realized immediately that the information was bogus as none of it could be confirmed, but New York City ignored that judgment and chose to respond to the possible threat. Homeland Security was subsequently miffed about the failure to co-ordinate a response and there are concerns that some local and state jurisdictions will now choose to ignore Washington in their responses to possible terrorist attacks.



**Objections from the intelligence community to the reliability of information that Damascus is supporting the Iraqi insurgency has derailed likely White House approval to bomb Syria.**

The usual cast of characters in the Pentagon wants limited air strikes based on a series of questionable reports from even more dubious agents that Syria is supporting the insurgency and is even encouraging cross-border operations. While it is undoubtedly true that small groups of insurgents receive safe haven in some Syrian villages, CIA and DIA, both of which are having periodic integrity attacks in the wake of 9/11 and Iraqi WMD failures, have insisted that there is no definitive evidence of Syrian government involvement. The tribesmen in most of the Syrian villages have family on both sides of the border. Some of them, like the recently targeted, Turkoman-inhabited Tal Afar, are not even Arab and are unlikely allies for the Sunni rebels. The resistance from the intelligence community has forced the issue into the open. Several contentious National Security Council meetings exploring the bombing option have made the White House nervous, resulting in an interim decision that escalating diplomatic and economic pressure on Syria should be allowed to play out first. The Pentagon bombing proposals reflect U.S. military frustration at the inability to contain the strengthening Iraqi insurgency. Syria continues to be a convenient scapegoat for failure in Baghdad. On Oct. 6, Bush described Syria as an “ally of convenience” for Iraqi terrorists and repeated his view that facilitators of terror will be judged by the same standards as the terrorists themselves. The White House seems unaware that the “Iraqization” of Syria by bringing about the overthrow of the secular Baath government of Bashir Assad would be a catastrophe for the entire region, leading almost certainly to a hostile and empowered fundamentalist regime. Even the Israelis have privately suggested that pressuring Syria is fine but beyond that it is best to leave Damascus alone.

*Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates.*

But was it? That is certainly not the conclusion that you would draw after skimming through analyses issued by Israeli experts since the collapse of Saddam's statue in downtown Baghdad and which suggest that America has been fighting the right war (against terrorism) in the wrong place (Iraq). "The war in Iraq did not damage international terror groups but instead distracted the United States from confronting other hotbeds of Islamic militancy and actually 'created momentum' for many terrorists," the Associated Press recently reported of a study conducted by "a top Israeli security think tank." The Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University said that far from undermining Islamic militants, the Iraq War "has created momentum for many terrorist elements, but chiefly al-Qaida and its affiliates."

The center's director, Shai Feldman, suggested in the report that the vast amount of money and effort the United States has poured into Iraq has deflected attention from other centers of terrorism, such as Afghanistan. The focus of U.S. intelligence upon Iraq "has to be at the expense of being able to follow strategic dangers in other parts of the world," he wrote. The bottom line of this and other similar Israeli studies is that Iran, and not the United States, has emerged from the war in Iraq as the major winner.

Even more intriguing has been the way Israeli officials and pundits have scoffed at the Wilsonian fantasies of the neocons—fantasies of using the invasion of Iraq as the first stage of "democratizing" the Middle East. Not only have most Israeli experts suggested that such a scheme is impractical, they have also argued that the collapse of authoritarian regimes in places like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan is bound to bring to power anti-Israeli and anti-American forces. As Israeli leaders see it, the Jewish state would have a hard time

adjusting to a democratic Arab world in which public opinion, rather than centralized rulers, determined policy.

Yehezkel Dror, a political science professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, recently related the Israeli establishment's view: "We're all for democracy, but let us imagine democracy in Egypt or Jordan. Will it strengthen their peace with Israel?" Dror and his colleagues have concluded that the answer to this question is a clear "No!" That explains why *Newsweek* characterized the reputation of Natan Sharansky—George W. Bush's favorite author and the prophet of Middle Eastern democracy—in Israel as that of a "scorned idealist."

"I'm very frustrated," Sharansky told the international edition of *Newsweek*. "My ideas are not taken seriously at all [in Israel]." Why? Because they are perceived as "too disconnected from the harsh Middle East reality," Sharansky explained, noting that most Israelis believe that democracy in the Arab world could easily translate into even greater hostility toward Israel.

In short, there is a growing recognition in Israel that the Iraq War was not so good for the Jews. It has diverted attention and resources from the War on Terror and threatened to unleash anti-Israeli and anti-American forces in the Middle East—such as a Shi'ite clerical government in Iraq that could become an ally of a radical Shi'ite, nuclear-armed Iran, which would pose more of a long-term threat to the strategic interests of the Jewish state than the militarily weak Saddam ever did.

Israel's enthusiastic support for American intervention in Iraq was easy to understand: an opportunistic response by a client state that had hoped to get a free ride on a successful military operation against an anti-Israeli Arab state. "Unlike during the Roman Empire, this time the current reigning empire is with us," explained Likud politician Benjamin Netanyahu in the immediate after-

math of the successful U.S. military operation in Iraq. But what many Israelis failed to take into consideration was that the American Empire could fail. "What is interesting is that among the many scholars preoccupied with the war in Iraq, not a single one has discussed the possible outcome of an American withdrawal, in the wake of faulty handling of the war," Ze'ev Schiff, *Ha'aretz's* military analyst, wrote recently. If that happens, Israelis' "relatively optimistic intelligence assessment regarding strategic threats to the country would be eroded," he concluded.

The neoconservative strategic vision assumes that what is good for America is good for Israel, that a global and democratic American empire in control of the Middle East will help preserve Israel's interests while a strong and democratic Israel will help secure American concerns in the region. Neocons consider this an axiom and are amazed that most American Jews, most of whom did not vote for Bush in the last election, don't share their perspective. "The surprising thing is not that there are so many Jews who are neocons but that there are so many who are not," complained leading neocon and former Pentagon official Douglas Feith in an interview with *The New Yorker* early this year.

Many Americans concluded long ago that Israeli and American strategic interests are not always compatible and that the strong ties with the Jewish state are hurting the U.S. position in the Middle East. Some Israelis are now asking themselves whether they can count on the long-term support of an American Empire that, not unlike the Roman one, is bound to decline and shed its commitments in the Middle East. ■

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*Leon Hadar is a Cato Institute research fellow in foreign-policy studies and author, most recently, of Sandstorm: Policy Failure in the Middle East.*

# Border Bait and Switch

Promising immigration enforcement but delivering amnesty

By W. James Antle III

MARICOPA COUNTY may not be closest to Arizona's border with Mexico but it is nevertheless at the center of the state's growing problem with illegal immigration. County Attorney Andrew Thomas hopes to be part of the solution. His office is sponsoring the Southwest Conference on Illegal Immigration, Border Security and Crime in Phoenix, reaching out to nationally known commentators and experts on the issue.

The roster of invited speakers includes many noted allies of immigration restrictionists, including Congressman Tom Tancredo (R-Colo.), representatives of the Federation of American Immigration Reform and the Center for Immigration Studies, and *U.S. News and World Report* columnist John Leo. But also on the agenda are two names more familiar to restrictionists for their opposition—Stephen Moore and John Fund of the *Wall Street Journal*.

It might be asked what two pundits from the biggest editorial booster for open borders might contribute to a dialogue on solving the border-state illegal alien crisis. But these days, supporters of mass immigration don't often decree "there shall be open borders." Instead they are talking about the need to get tough on border security—just as soon as we make our legal-immigration policy loose enough to accommodate the crackdown. They insist they are not opponents of immigration reform; they are just more realistic reformers.

If this is a strategic shift, it has resounded at the highest levels of American politics. Arizona Gov. Janet Napoli-

tano and her New Mexico colleague Bill Richardson were widely praised when they declared a state of emergency on their states' southern borders. Both are Democrats and neither has been particularly friendly to immigration reformers. Napolitano, for instance, opposed Arizona's successful Proposition 200 ballot initiative to prevent illegal aliens from receiving taxpayer monies.

President Bush also seems to have gotten the memo. In late August appearances in California and Arizona, he stressed the need to guard the border. Bush acknowledged that illegal immigration was "putting a strain on your resources" and pledged "that the federal government will work closely with the state government and local government to provide assets, manpower [and] detention space ... to make sure this border of ours is secure."

The Bush administration has backed a self-styled Coalition for Border and Economic Security to marshal the resources of industry groups behind a guest-workers program. Former Republican National Committee Chairman Ed Gillespie is a principal organizer. The co-chairs are former Congressman Cal Dooley (D-Calif.), whose district included many immigrant workers, and former House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Texas), a favorite of economic and social conservatives. Membership may have its privileges, but they do not come free: the *Los Angeles Times* reported that admission into the coalition costs between \$50,000 and \$250,000 to fund the upcoming amnesty campaign blitz.

The idea is to marginalize conservatives who favor reduced immigration by triangulating the issue. The group also seeks to recreate the left-right coalition that torpedoed serious immigration reforms at least nominally supported by the Clinton White House back in 1996.

But they are running into problems. Business groups are reportedly reluctant to sign up because they fear conservatives will push the coalition in a more restrictionist direction. And in contrast with the alliance that upended the 1996 immigration-reform effort, ethnic lobbies do not seem to be playing a prominent role. Whatever interest the National Council of La Raza has in stopping a more stringent immigration policy, it cares more about its constituents' political clout than agribusiness's labor needs.

If the politics of the situation are difficult, it might be a reflection on the counterintuitive argument immigration triangulators are trying to make. That argument is perhaps best summarized by *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, speaking to an apocryphal "working-class guy from the south end of San Antonio": "The system is out of control. But we can't just act like hunkheads and think we can solve this problem with brute force. Tough enforcement laws make us feel good but they don't do the job ... we've tripled the number of Border Patrol agents and increased the enforcement budget 10 times over, but we haven't made a dent in the number of illegals ..."

In other words, the cause of illegal immigration is not that our borders are