Israel in the Eyes of Americans: A Call for Action

Jehuda Reinharz

Brandeis University
Israel in the Eyes of Americans: A Call for Action

Israel's security and well-being are on all of our minds. The threat to Israel is great, perhaps unprecedented. While American support for Israel is currently strong, there are some worrisome clouds on the horizon. Most Americans think they are informed about Israel and the Middle East, generally from what they read in newspapers and on the Internet, see on television and learn in classes. My observation, however, is that they know very little. And what they do know lacks context. It is as if everything is a snapshot, rather than part of a long film depicting a history going back at least 200 years, let alone 2,000.

It is ironic that we are in information-overload, yet so little is understood. We need to do a better job of informing American Jews and others about Israel and why American support for Israel is in the best interests of the United States. Over the last 50 years, the American Jewish community has been the object of repeated scrutiny by pollsters and opinion researchers. From counting how many of us there are, to how we view Jewish traditions, to our attitudes and beliefs about Israel, polls and surveys have become ubiquitous and reveal our relationship to Israel over time. These surveys have tracked a growing problem in Jewish and non-Jewish attitudes towards Israel.

Assessing the Problem
The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University recently reviewed the data on American Jewish attitudes toward Israel, analyzing more than 25 years of surveys. 1 They then compared some of the AJC survey data to those collected by Gallup, Roper and other prominent opinion researchers about all Americans.

First, the “good news”: most of the evidence points to strong American Jewish support for Israel. American Jews do, in fact, overwhelmingly feel close to Israel and such feelings have remained largely stable for more than two decades. 2 Furthermore, most Jews (70-80 percent) see Israel as important to their identity. 3 Overall, they also hold favorable, supportive views of Israel. 4

But there is “bad news” as well. Strong emotional attachment to Israel is less common among younger Jews and Israel is less important to American Jews than many other aspects of Jewish identity. 5 Moreover, when behavioral—rather than attitudinal—measures of closeness to Israel—knowledge and travel—are assessed, Israel does not appear to be particularly important to American Jews. The 1990 National Jewish Population Study reported that only 30% of American Jews had visited Israel. 6 In a 1989 AJC study, many American Jews knew little about the history of Zionism or Israel; we do not have more recent studies concerning these issues. 7

Perhaps the most distressing finding of the Cohen Center review was that the more specific the questions about Israel, the less positive and supportive were the responses of American Jews. On the positive side, a solid majority of American Jews do not see Israel as responsible for the violence in the Middle East or engaging in killing innocent people. 8 Israel is seen, primarily, as being morally right and wanting peace. 9 At the same time, American Jews are nearly evenly split as to whether Israel or both sides are victims in the conflict. 10 Some of the same American Jews who see Israelis as “peaceloving” (nearly 90 percent) also perceive Israelis as militaristic and excessively nationalistic. 11 Large numbers of American Jews, but not a majority, see Israelis as racist and many think Israelis are religious extremists. In sum, the Jewish community as a whole has wide, but shallow, sympathy for Israel.

The depth of American Jewish views of Israel might not matter as much if America could be counted on to be a staunch supporter. But surveys conducted by Gallup since 1967 warrant concern. Non-Jewish Americans’ support for Israel is high and—on average—has remained so for more than 30 years. 12 Sympathy for Israel and for Palestinians, however, varies greatly, depending on current events. Its post-1967 low was in 1982, immediately after the Sabra and Shatila massacres, when only 32 percent of respondents said they were sympathetic toward Israel. In contrast, American public support for Israel was at its highest point (64 percent) in 1991, during the Gulf War, when Israel was bombarded by Iraqi missiles. In general, slightly under half of all Americans express sympathy with Israel. By contrast, sympathy for the Palestinians has averaged only 10 percent. But average support, like average health, masks the potential for changes that might have far-reaching impact. A survey prepared by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations showing ratings by Americans of some thirty countries from 1978 to 2002 is quite worrisome. 13 Israel is rated below France, Brazil, Mexico and Japan, and barely above Russia and Poland, in terms of favorable feelings by Americans. And of even greater concern, Israel’s

---

1 • Israel in the Eyes of Americans

2 • Israel in the Eyes of Americans
ranking has been steadily slipping over the life span of the survey. These are troublesome findings.

Social scientific surveys describe—though not always accurately—problems the Jewish community faces. These surveys do not, as some people claim, contribute to the problems. On the contrary, when survey data are released, there seems to be momentary shock and disbelief. And then the community mobilizes to address the problem.¹⁴

Perhaps the best example of this phenomenon is the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey that reported a 52 percent rate of intermarriage and sounded the alarm about the impending demise of the American Jewish community.¹⁵ As a result, just about every Jewish community created commissions on Jewish renewal and continuity. These efforts seem to have had remarkable, though limited, impact. Boston, for example, has experienced a major renaissance in Jewish education in the last 10 years—from pre-schools, to supplemental schools, to day schools, to adult education.¹⁶

During the past several years, historical events have been equally alarming. Six major shocks relating to Israel and Zionism and the status of American Jewry have rocked the American Jewish community:

1. Intifada
2. Shrinking minority within the United States
3. The events of 9/11
4. Conspiracy theories about Jews and Israel
5. Anti-Israel sentiment which is vocal and voluminous and which more and more frequently crosses over to antisemitism
6. The peace movement is largely anti-Israeli and in some segments antisemitic

The first shock was the breakdown of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and the outbreak of the Intifada in September 2000. On the eve of Rosh Hashana 5761 (2000) peace seemed within reach; yet, three weeks later, Israel was engaged in a conflict for which most American and Israeli Jews were emotionally and psychologically unprepared. The situation has become ever more violent in the two and a half years since.

American Jews are a shrinking minority, while other groups, particularly the Moslem population in America, are growing.¹⁷ This issue looms large in light of the conflict in the Middle East and the response to it in the United States.

Then came September 11. Not only was the epicenter of the terror attack in the heart of the city with the largest Jewish population outside of Israel, but what added to the horror was the claim by some outside the U.S. that the terror was perpetrated because of the U.S.’s alliance with Israel. This charge was soon followed by the irrational and nefarious charge that the Mossad and the CIA had collaborated to carry out this act in order to turn Americans against Moslems. It is, of course, an absurd claim, but unfortunately it resonates among many.

That these ridiculous charges were repeated over and over, not only on the Internet, but in the non-mainstream international press and even in the U.S., made us realize that we live in an environment where taboos against talking openly of Jewish conspiracies are falling away, reminiscent of the 1920s, when Henry Ford circulated the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. We have entered the age of twisted fantasy. These ideas, fueled by our new world of near-instantaneous communication, have revealed antisemitism throughout the world, latent and manifest. Either we were unaware or we chose to ignore earlier signs.

A concomitant problem has been the rise of anti-Zionist and anti-Israel sentiment on some university campuses in the United States, including some of our leading universities, and in Europe. The most visible symptoms of this problem have been demands for divestment of university funds from companies doing business with Israel and a boycott of Israeli scholars. These activities intentionally mirror efforts to isolate apartheid-era South Africa. Free speech has also been invoked as a cover for the expression of the hatred of Jews and Israel. Part of the shock has been that many Jews have participated in and even led some of these activities.

It is almost impossible in today’s politically correct atmosphere to be simultaneously anti-war in Iraq and pro-Israel. And many Jews can be found in this camp. Clearly, each of these shocks is deeply troubling to American Jewry and their organizations and leaders. Their impact is enhanced, moreover, by developments in American society in general. Events of September 11, and its human tragedy, as well as its economic and political impact on the nation as a whole, occurred against a backdrop of deepening economic woes, stock market decline, corporate scandals, and rising unemployment.

Israel in the Eyes of Americans 3
On the international front, for most Americans, the main issue seems to be how to make the conflict in the Middle East go away, so that the serious problems in Iraq and elsewhere can be dealt with. For most American Jews, the main issue concerning the Middle East is how to bring about a just peace and ensure Israel's survival.

Conflicting agendas notwithstanding, Americans in general and American Jews in particular are learning that the world now attributes the same negative characteristics to America as it does to Israel. In the eyes of many around the world, America and Israel have become inextricably intertwined.

Moreover, Americans, in general, are growing aware of the depth of dislike—and even hatred—of America in many parts of the world. The question before many Americans is how to deal with these new realities. It seems that there are three possible responses:

1. Americans can say that, indeed, America and Israel stand together because it is in the U.S. interest to do so. Both countries value democracy and free markets, and share strategic and military objectives. We have in common the Western Judaeo-Christian heritage.

2. Alternately Americans might argue the U.S.’s relationship with Israel is causing us “nothing but trouble” and that we are on the wrong side of the conflict in the Middle East. The Arabs have the oil; they wield considerable clout worldwide; they represent almost two dozen Moslem nations, not to speak of hundreds of millions of Moslems world-wide. And, of course, an increasing number of our own American citizens are Moslem. Some may even say that an American-Israeli alliance is the source of our problem in Iraq. Moreover, our alliance with Israel complicates our relationship with Europe.

3. The third possible response is more fickle. For the time being, Americans might concede, the U.S. alliance with Israel is important. Conditions may change in the future and in the meanwhile let’s see how world affairs turn out.

These last two options place Israel in a vulnerable position, and by definition, pose a danger for Jews everywhere. At the moment, the United States is the only steadfast and strong supporter of Israel. Germany, which for the first 50 years of Israel’s existence could be counted as its other great ally, is no longer a staunch supporter. Israel has had other “fair weather friends” in Europe and Africa, who cannot be relied upon.

Israel needs the United States’ continued support in the U.N. Israel also needs ongoing access to advanced military hardware and continued American financial support to maintain its security. At the same time, Israel must be independent and not completely subject to the whim of U.S. pressure.

Jews are in one of the more precarious phases of Americans’ perception of and long-term commitment to Israel. The current crisis is unprecedented: previous Middle Eastern conflicts were more or less isolated wars between Arabs and Israelis. Now we are facing a global crisis that involves Moslems fighting Jews, not only Arabs fighting Israelis. Yes, the Intifada concerns boundaries, rights, nationhood, as most wars do, but it also involves religion or religious claims and identification throughout the world. And most Americans gain their knowledge of these complex issues through overly simplified television and radio sound bites or the print media, which are not always well informed and often derivative.

A contributing factor to the present dilemma is the propaganda strategy that is being employed against Israel and Jews generally by a variety of Moslem and other groups. College campuses serve as an excellent example: What happens on college campuses often foreshadows reactions in the general population, not only in this country, but around the world. Sea changes in public views often begin on college campuses; perhaps the most dramatic example for many is the anti-war movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The same is true in Europe (France and Germany in the 1960s and 1970s) and, more recently, China, Korea and Iran. College students are like the proverbial “canary in the mine”—a harbinger of the future—and what happens at our colleges and universities warrants special attention.

American campuses, in general, are unusual places and unrepresentative of how people actually live in the United States. With few exceptions, Americans reside in neighborhoods that are stratified by race, class, and ethnic group. Americans praise the idea of diversity, but most don’t live that way. On campuses, by contrast, people of very different backgrounds—religious, ethnic and class—are brought together with little preparation for such encounters. Jewish students at universities may find themselves...
in environments with few other Jews and few outspoken Zionists. Even though Jewish students tend to cluster at a small number of universities, they are also a minority on their campuses. In some cases, they may find themselves thrown together with students who actually hate them, or have no understanding of their heritage, their commitments, and their political views. Such students may be lost in this kind of environment. Many have never had to defend themselves before and they may feel that they now have to defend themselves about something they, in some cases, know almost nothing about—Judaism, Israel, Zionism. In the face of this anomalous situation, they become subdued or even intimidated. In some cases, they actually join forces with anti-Israel groups. “Political correctness” and sentiment for the Palestinian cause (the “underdog”) may overcome their ties to the Jewish community.

Given that Israel is relatively low among the actual priorities of all American Jews, we should not be surprised when pro-Israel activity is low among young adults. A 1989 American Jewish Committee survey found that only 52 percent of American Jews thought that “caring for Israel” was an important or extremely important ideal for their children. This was far below the 81 percent Judaism, Israel, Zionism. In the Jews and few outspoken Zionists. Given that Israel is relatively low activity is low among young adults. A 1989 American Jewish Committee survey found that only 52 percent of American Jews thought that “caring for Israel” was an important or extremely important ideal for their children. This was far below the 81 percent Nonetheless, they may feel that they now have to defend themselves about something they, in some cases, know almost nothing about—Judaism, Israel, Zionism. In the face of this anomalous situation, they become subdued or even intimidated. In some cases, they actually join forces with anti-Israel groups. “Political correctness” and sentiment for the Palestinian cause (the “underdog”) may overcome their ties to the Jewish community.

Given that Israel is relatively low among the actual priorities of all American Jews, we should not be surprised when pro-Israel activity is low among young adults. A 1989 American Jewish Committee survey found that only 52 percent of American Jews thought that “caring for Israel” was an important or extremely important ideal for their children. This was far below the 81 percent of all adult American Jews are concerned that their children care about Israel, should the apathy of Jewish college students be any surprise?

There is, perhaps, another reason why some Jewish students take up the Palestinian cause. American campuses are places where people are expected to learn, have fun, determine a career path and maybe even find a partner. But they are also places where people are almost expected to experiment—with drugs, alcohol, sexual and political orientation and with one’s very sense of self. Under these circumstances, there may be stigma in expressing and fighting for ideas nurtured at home or in Hebrew school. These ideas may be stigmatized as “old fashioned,” “out of date” and not “cool.” Past commitment to Jewish education and involvement in synagogue life are not necessarily predictors of Jewish involvement in college.

Jewish college students often discover that Jewish faculty on their campuses are not always supportive of Israel and may sometimes even lead the campus on behalf of the Palestinian cause or divestment. Or, if they are supportive, faculty find that on some campuses it is wiser not to express their views openly. If they are untenured, they tend to be doubly careful, on this, as well as other issues.

Jewish college students are woefully unprepared to deal with the current crisis. Although we have been very effective since the late 1960s in creating programs and chairs in Judaic studies in over 400 colleges and universities in North America, we have paid almost no attention to the creation of programs dealing with Israel and the Middle East. One of the most frequently taught subjects in Jewish studies programs in the United States is the Holocaust. Substantial research has shown that remembering the Holocaust is an essential part of Jewish identity, but it does not necessarily prepare students to deal with contemporary anti-Jewishness. The Holocaust is understood by Jewish students to represent the vilest form of antisemitism. This antisemitism is so strange and awful that it is often circumscribed for them. Subliminally, studying the Holocaust gives students the impression that antisemitism happened “over there” and also, that “the good forces won out over antisemitism and therefore it is over.” These unstated feelings contribute to Jewish students being completely unprepared, even baffled, by the systematic, persistent, well-orchestrated and dangerous anti-Zionism and increasing antisemitism on campuses. And it is doubly baffling to Jewish students, their parents and even some Jewish organizations, given that Jews play so large a role in the academic establishment as faculty, administrators, board members and major—even mega—contributors.

Then, there is the problem of the underdog. For more than a hundred years, Zionism—as an ideology and as a movement—and the Israeli government—as a set of institutions—have promoted a new image of the Jew/Israeli. This image of a strong, unbending Jew is presented in contrast to the image of the Jew as a victim. Transmission of this image has been so successful that it is very difficult for anyone to think of Israelis, or perhaps even Jews,
as victims. Even when Jewish civilians are murdered by human and man-made bombs, the world does not see them as victims. They are strong Israelis, confident Israelis, domineering Israelis. By contrast the Palestinians are currently seen as the underdogs; helpless and defenseless. And this translates easily into black and white moral definitions on the campuses, where Jews and non-Jews alike are often “clueless” when it comes to history or geography, or even current events.

The problem relates to Jewish liberal political philosophy. Although there is a strong and increasing centrist and even right-wing segment of Jews in the United States (to a smaller degree on college campuses)—recent data suggest that there is a Jewish swing to more conservative views—most American Jews still tend to be liberal in their outlook.\(^2\) This is certainly the case on campuses. Jewish college students, like other American students, tend to vote for the Democratic Party, to oppose the death penalty, to favor reproductive choice, and to support affirmative action. Students, it seems, adopt nearly every cause that emerges if it can be identified as “the underdog.” Perhaps because Israel appears not to be the underdog, Jews may not know how to defend it philosophically, even if it happens to be the right thing to do politically and morally.

Finally, Americans, and Jews in particular, believe in evenhandedness and fairness. They have a difficult time saying that one side is completely right and the other is completely wrong. Therefore, even when they organize themselves on campus to demonstrate in support of Israel, they believe that they must “tip their hat” to the Palestinian cause. Thus, every pro-Israel demonstration is likely to have Jewish pro-Palestinian voices as well. The peace movement in Israel, although now weaker numerically, is still strong ideologically.

There are even Israelis in the United States and in Israel who have signed the divestment petition. On this drive to delegitimize Israel, there is little comfort to be derived from the fact that overwhelming numbers signed counter-petitions. The original divestment effort was a public relations stunt that generated doubt in the minds of those who are unfamiliar with the facts. The damage has been done and counter-petitions do not alter the situation, nor do they receive as much publicity as the anti-Israel petitions.

If my analysis is correct, then the critical problem we face as Americans—Jews and non-Jews alike—is the general lack of knowledge and our inability to effectively disseminate knowledge. The lack of knowledge about Israel among American Jews in particular renders them susceptible to anti-Israel propaganda. College campuses, where Middle East/Israel studies are neglected or biased, are particularly vulnerable. A very effective propaganda campaign in the United States led by the anti-Israel camp, including “moderate” Saudi Arabia, has obfuscated the real issues and motivations of parties to the conflict in the Middle East. By contrast, existing mechanisms, organizations, and institutions to educate Jews and others about the realities of the Middle East and the nature of the present conflict are sorely inadequate.

Assessing Our Strengths

Clearly, the Jewish community needs to assess its strengths and resources and decide upon a course of action. I believe we have major assets that we can use to address our problems. Jews in America have great organizations, organizational know-how and considerable experience responding quickly to crisis. A Jewish renaissance has emerged and we are making great strides in addressing gaps in Jewish education. Many more women have assumed leadership positions, thus increasing our potential effectiveness. We are highly educated and articulate. We possess great financial resources, some of which have been committed, but we have only tapped a small part of what is potentially available. We have political clout and experience and effective political advocacy groups.

Some of these assets are being used. For example: Summer camps educate teenagers and camp counselors; textbooks are being developed to teach Israel and Zionism; the arts—Israeli dancing and singing, the theater, including street theater, etc.—are beginning to see a comeback; the creation of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East on campuses; coordination of pro-Israel efforts on campuses; Project Communicate—mobilizing Hollywood on behalf of Israel; and programs such as Birthright Israel which brings young people into direct contact with Israel and Israelis.\(^2\)

But the efforts to date are woefully inadequate and at times timid. We need to think strategically, systematically and boldly. Rather than of focusing on what has already been done, I want to
suggest an ambitious agenda that would enable the American Jewish community to counter the intentional misinformation and demonization of Israel and Zionist history.

My strategic formula is the essence of simplicity: to combat the lack of knowledge, we need to create and disseminate understanding—rich in historical context, reflective of the best social scientific information we can marshal, and delivered widely and with passion. As a university president, it is obviously my job to lobby for “education.” But I am not simply advocating more resources for education. Instead, I am suggesting a revolutionary paradigm. This paradigm places the development of impeccable scholarship about the Middle East and Israel at the forefront and ensures its utility by promoting applied research and disseminating it to scholars, to students, to the public and to policy makers. The following recommendations combine some new and old ideas and harness our resources to achieve this goal.

1. First, I propose the creation of first-rate, scholarly Middle East centers around the country. There is a pressing need to bring balance to the study of the Middle East on college campuses and to create a cadre of scholars who can produce unbiased historical, political, economic, and socio-psychological studies. As Martin Kramer in *Ivory Towers on Sand* has documented, many of the dozens of centers for Middle East studies in America are in sorry shape, and over the past 25 years these centers have been controlled by ideologically motivated forces or individuals, and very often produce biased and shoddy scholarship. These centers are located in dozens of institutions including many of the great universities in this county. Criteria of excellence must be applied to Middle East studies, as they are applied to other areas of study.

I am proud to report that we have just raised most of the funds to create the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University that eschews political taint and will be unrelenting in its mission to support high quality scholarship. The first three chairs have already been created in Israel Studies, Islamic Studies and Arab Politics. The Center will include Israel and the history of Zionism as a legitimate part of the Middle East, something that is not the case at other centers. It will also include neglected areas such as Turkish studies, Iranian studies, political and economic studies, and the study of minorities in the Middle East. We plan to train the next generation of highly competent and responsible scholars and practitioners, and provide a model for other universities dedicated to excellence.

2. My second suggestion is closely related to the first. We need a source of funding for research and policy analysis on issues related to the Middle East, including Israel. We need funding for centers that translate basic research into policy recommendations and we need to be able to collect new data on contemporary issues, from the economic status of groups in the Middle East, to the attitudes of Americans toward Middle Eastern countries and cultures. We need to develop research which can replace the uninformed rhetoric that too often shapes policy. There is a dearth of funding for rigorous studies that can provide policy and planning advice. To be sure, the American Jewish Committee has a distinguished record and other groups, including federations, have supported important work. But we need a source of funding for applied research that parallels the National Science Foundation and we need to create an institution modeled after the Brookings Institute.

We need to address coordination—in research, as in everything else. Different organizations frequently sponsor similar, if not identical studies. Not enough thought is given to sustained analysis. Often, funds are only available for a “snapshot” survey, rather than a moving picture, the better to see changes over time. And, frequently, funds are only available to examine very specific problems, rather than engaging in the equivalent of basic medical research.

3. All the good scholarship and policy analysis in the world will be in vain if it is not disseminated. Along with academic centers that focus on the Middle East, and funds for policy analysis centers and organizations, we need to support the dissemination of ideas, analyses, and facts about the Middle East. A major focus of dissemination has to be on the next generation of leaders. From high school to college, we need to ensure that good materials are available to educate students about the modern Middle East. In particular, we need to make sure that the history of Zionism and Israel is taught from an early age, all the way through to the Judaic Studies centers in colleges and universities. We also need competent and well-trained individuals to capture the imagination of young people, as well as more adult courses on these subjects.
4. As part of these dissemination efforts, we also need to consider how to improve the dismal coverage of Israel by the media. In a world where people’s attention span seems to last one to three minutes, we need to find ways to better educate the journalists and managers of our media. A summer program launched at Brandeis University five years ago, with funds provided by Milton Gralla of New Jersey, educates journalists working in the Jewish and non-Jewish press about issues relating to Judaism and Israel. Over one hundred journalists have participated in this program. Middle Eastern coverage would be much improved if this model were replicated elsewhere.

But we need to think of dissemination even more broadly. One of the most effective tools the Arabs have created is the television power-house, Al Jazeera. Perhaps because it is the only readily available source, many people worldwide see Al Jazeera as relatively reliable and independent. Whether this is true or not, in the context of the Middle East and beyond, the Arabs have a powerful mouthpiece—we have none. They are, of course, not the impartial voice of the Middle East; they are the voice of the Arab perspective on the Middle East. Israelis and pro-Israel Jews have nothing comparable. I suggest that we create a television channel that broadcasts round the clock and is seen as completely reliable in its news coverage. It would feature news, news magazines, documentaries, artistic productions, interviews—all on the highest possible level. It ought to compete effectively with all the other news organizations and should not be defined as ANTI anything or PRO anything, but dedicated to maintaining the highest level of journalistic integrity. This is, no doubt, an expensive proposition, but we do have the resources. There is no more effective tool right now to capture the interest of people world-wide than television.28

5. Finally, in this dissemination campaign, we need to think about human capital. One specific suggestion is to tap a sizeable resource that has been ignored: Israeli Americans.29 Israeli Americans have enormous potential to contribute to a better understanding of Israel and Zionism. For many reasons, they are generally not well integrated into the Jewish community, and some effort is needed to identify and mobilize them. Israeli Americans are highly talented and very successful, and I believe that many of them would respond positively, if approached appropriately.

Jews are, indeed, the people of the book. The knowledge of our history and our willingness to learn about the present has been our hallmark throughout history. As a knowledge-valuing community, we need to place knowledge-generation and its use and dissemination at the top of our communal agenda. The future of our American Jewish community, indeed that of world Jewry, hangs in the balance.

'Thanks are due to Professor Leonard Saxe and Benjamin Phillips of the Cohen Center at Brandeis University for their invaluable help with statistical data and other materials. I would also like to thank Shulamit Reinharz for patiently listening to many of my ideas. A somewhat different version of this talk was given as the UJA-Federation of New York’s 2002-03 Sanford Solender Lecture on March 10, 2003.

Notes
1 See “Israel in the Eyes of Americans: A Contemporary Assessment—Executive Summary.”
2 See Figure 1.
3 Thus, for example, in the American Jewish Committee’s 2003 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, 73 percent of respondents agreed with the statement “Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew.” These responses vary little over time (Figure 2).
4 In the American Jewish Committee’s 2000 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, 85 percent of American Jews had favorable views of Israel (Figure 3). An identical percentage of American Jews claim to support Israel in the 2002 American Jewish Committee Survey of American Jews (Figure 4). These are not the only indicators of American Jewish support for Israel. A majority of American Jews have supported the Israeli government’s handling of peace negotiations, regardless of which party was in office at the time. See American Jewish Committee surveys of 1993, 1997, 1998 and 2000 (Figure 5).
5 Age and “feeling close” to Israel are related, according to the 2000 Annual Survey of American Jews (Figure 6). In terms of the relative importance of Israel, there is clear evidence that Israel is far from the most important dimension of Jewish identity for Jewish-Americans. When asked what was the single most important part of their Jewish identity, five percent of respondents chose “support for Israel” in the 2001 American Jewish Committee survey (Figure 7). Such a low percentage is to be expected, as
Israel is a subset of broader Jewish commitments. However, a question in the 1989 American Jewish Committee survey asked respondents to rate the importance of a list of ideals for their children. Caring about Israel was only selected by half of the parents as being extremely or very important (Figure 8). Travel to Israel also appears as low on the hierarchy of Jewish commitments of American Jews, with only 27 percent selecting it as extremely or very important in the 2000 American Jewish Committee survey (Figure 9).


In the 1989 American Jewish Committee survey, while 64 percent of respondents were able to pick the year Israel declared independence, only 39 percent knew when Israel took control of the West Bank. Many respondents also knew little of Israeli society, with 38 percent believing that Reform and Conservative rabbis could officially marry couples in Israel and 23 percent thinking that Jewish and Arab children generally attended the same schools.

The American Religious Identification Survey estimates that there are 1,104,000 adult American Muslims, 0.5% of the total population, compared with 527,000 in 1990 (see Kosmin, B. A., Mayer, E., and Keysar, A. 2001. American Religious Identification Survey. New York: Graduate Center, City University of New York.) The General Social Survey gives similar results, estimating that the Muslim population has grown from 0.2% in the 1970s to 0.3% in the 1980s to 0.45% in the 1990s (see Smith, T. W. 2002. Religious Diversity in America: The Emergence of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Others. New York: American Jewish Committee.)

Of course, much depends on how a question is asked and when. A Fox News poll conducted by Opinion Dynamics in February 2003 finds that an overwhelming majority (90 percent) of Americans think Great Britain is a friend, followed by Israel (70 percent) and Turkey (52 percent)—the only countries to receive positive majorities. Less than half of Americans think Germany (46 percent), Egypt (41 percent), France (38 percent), and Saudi Arabia (30 percent) are friends of the U.S. Furthermore, about equal numbers says Saudi Arabia (49 percent), France (47 percent), and Syria (46 percent) are not friends. See Council of Jewish Federations 1991.


The American Religious Identification Survey asks a question is asked and when. A Fox News poll conducted by Opinion Dynamics in February 2003 finds that an overwhelming majority (90 percent) of Americans think Great Britain is a friend, followed by Israel (70 percent) and Turkey (52 percent)—the only countries to receive positive majorities. Less than half of Americans think Germany (46 percent), Egypt (41 percent), France (38 percent), and Saudi Arabia (30 percent) are friends of the U.S. Furthermore, about equal numbers says Saudi Arabia (49 percent), France (47 percent), and Syria (46 percent) are not friends. See Council of Jewish Federations 1991.


The American Religious Identification Survey estimates that there are 1,104,000 adult American Muslims, 0.5% of the total population, compared with 527,000 in 1990 (see Kosmin, B. A., Mayer, E., and Keysar, A. 2001. American Religious Identification Survey. New York: Graduate Center, City University of New York.) The General Social Survey gives similar results, estimating that the Muslim population has grown from 0.2% in the 1970s to 0.3% in the 1980s to 0.45% in the 1990s (see Smith, T. W. 2002. Religious Diversity in America: The Emergence of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Others. New York: American Jewish Committee.)


There have been attempts to create such a network on the West Coast: the Jewish Television Network. Due to lack of sufficient funds, this goal has not yet been achieved.

According to Gold, S.J. and Phillips, B. 1996. “Israelis in the United States.” American Jewish Yearbook 96: 51-101, between 90,000 and 190,000 Israelis reside in the United States. This estimate, however, has been criticized and many believe that the numbers are higher.
Attitudes toward Israel: A Contemporary Assessment

By Benjamin Phillips, Eszter Lengyel and Leonard Saxe
Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University

The past year has seen an increased number of antisemitic and anti-Israel acts across the United States and media coverage that often portrays negative images of Israel. It is important to assess the impact of these events on American perceptions of Israel. Doing so will help us understand whether, and under what conditions, Americans continue to support Israel. This review examines public opinion survey data on American attitudes to Israel, among both Jews and non-Jews. This is the first extensive study of general American attitudes toward Israel since Eytan Gilboa’s 1987 American Public Opinion Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict. The primary data on Jewish attitudes used in this report come from the American Jewish Committee’s ongoing series of polls of American Jews. The polls, used to study general American attitudes, come from well-known opinion polling organizations like Gallup and Harris Poll, research centers and think tanks such as the University of Maryland’s Program on International Policy Attitudes and the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. Polls commissioned by various interest groups, including the Israeli and Saudi Arabian governments, are also reviewed.

Israel in the Eyes of American Jews
How important is Israel to American Jews?
The overwhelming majority of American Jews feel close to Israel, and these feelings have remained stable since the American Jewish Committee (AJC) began studying this issue 16 years ago. It is possible, however, that feelings of closeness are in decline, as younger Jews are more likely to say they feel fairly close or not close at all to Israel. Another way of looking at the importance of Israel for American Jews is to examine its place in the hierarchy of Jewish commitments. When compared to other elements of Jewish identity, Israel occupies only a middling place for American Jews. The importance of Israel to American Jews can also be examined by looking at their behavior, not just their opinions. Unfortunately, few questions have been asked that probe behavior related to Israel. Those that have been asked focus on travel to Israel and knowledge of Israel, which is an indicator that a person has made the effort to acquire this knowledge. On these behavioral measures of importance, Israel does not appear to be particularly important to American Jews. Overall, while Israel is important to American Jews, it occupies a lesser position than many other elements of Jewishness and does not elicit strong engagement.

• American Jews have felt close to Israel since the first AJC surveys and continue to do so today. About 30 percent say they feel close to Israel at any one time, with 45 percent feeling fairly close and 20 percent feeling fairly distant (see Appendix, Figure 1). These percentages have remained quite stable over time. The dramatic and unprecedented increase in pro-Israel sentiment seen in the July 2002 AJC Survey of American Jews appears to be the product of new pollsters with a different and smaller sample of the Jewish population, rather than an actual shift in American Jewish attitudes. The December 2002-January 2003 AJC Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion went back to the researcher and sample used in the 2001 survey. It found American Jewish opinion substantially unchanged from 2001.

• Although Jewish feelings of closeness to Israel have been stable for nearly two decades, a long term decline may be occurring. Younger American Jews are less likely than their elders to report feeling very close to Israel, although this effect is not particularly strong. If closeness to Israel among younger Jews does not increase with age, American Jewish feelings of closeness to Israel will decrease moderately as time passes.

• In the abstract, American Jews think Israel is an important part of being a Jew. When asked if “Caring about Israel is an important part of my being a Jew,” about 75 percent of respondents agreed (see Appendix, Figure 2). These feelings have been quite consistent over time.

• While American Jews feel that Israel is an important part of their Jewish identity, these feelings are qualified when Israel is compared to other aspects of Jewishness. Israel only occupies a middle-of-the-road position among the various elements of Jewish identity.

• When asked to choose the most important element of Jewish identity, five percent of Jews chose support for Israel. This compares with the 47 percent who thought being part of the Jewish people was the most important part of their Jewish identity, the 18 percent who favored commitment to social justice and the 16 percent...
who believed religious observance was most important. However, this question imposes a very strict test as it asks respondents to choose only one aspect of being Jewish as most important. Israel may not be the most important aspect, but it is still a central part of Jewish identity.

A. Another question that better tests of the importance of Israel to American Jews gives respondents a wide range of values and behaviors to rate based on how important they thought each were for their children to care about. Israel occupied a clearly subsidiary position: 52 percent of respondents thought it was extremely or very important that their children care about Israel. This compared unfavorably with 81 percent who wanted their children to feel good about being Jewish, 78 percent who wanted their children to understand what it means to be a Jew and 60 percent who wanted their children to celebrate Jewish holidays, among others.

B. Another question that tested the importance of Israel to American Jews asked about the importance of a variety of activities to respondents’ Jewish identities. Twenty-seven percent of respondents said that travel to Israel was an important part of their Jewish identity, about on par with Jewish organizational activity, but below attending synagogue services, Jewish study, celebrating Jewish holidays and remembrance of the Holocaust. While Israel can be important in a person’s life without wanting to travel there, it is reasonable to expect that a person who was highly attached to Israel would see travel there as important. This lends further support to the belief that Israel is not a central element in the lives of most American Jews.

• The behavior of American Jews vis à vis Israel also shows the limits of the role Israel plays in Jewish life in the United States. While American Jews may say that Israel is extremely important to them, if it actually is that important, their actions should bear this out. As it happens, the few questions that ask about behavior and knowledge relating to Israel show relatively little involvement with or knowledge of Israel among American Jews.

A. Visiting Israel is the exception rather than the rule among American Jews. In the National Jewish Population Survey of 1990, the best source of data on American Jews, only 30 percent of respondents had ever visited Israel.

B. Jewish-Americans also have rather limited knowledge of Israeli history, politics and society. For example, only 39 percent of American Jews knew the year that Israel took control of the West Bank.

American Jewish Views of Israel
Although Israel is important to American Jews, this does not show the type of images they have of Israel. On the whole, American Jews express very favorable, supportive views when asked in general terms what they think about Israel. However, when asked specific questions, considerable numbers of American Jews express negative views about Israel.

• Overall, American Jews have extremely favorable views of Israel. In the 2000 AJC survey, 85 percent of respondents had favorable views of Israel, while only three percent were unfavorable.

• Support for Israel is also strong among American Jews, with 85 percent of respondents in the July 2002 AJC Survey of American Jews saying they were supporters or strong supporters of Israel. However, as this poll showed considerably higher levels of pro-Israel sentiment than other surveys, it may be that the real level of support for Israel among American Jews is somewhat lower.

• When asked about specific issues, American Jews hold contradictory views of Israel, with positive images coexisting with negative ones (see Appendix, Figure 11). For example, while 89 percent of American Jews see Israelis as “peaceloving,” 80 percent agree that Israelis were “militaristic” and 77 percent thought that Israelis were “excessively nationalistic.” Some respondents apparently believe that Israel is both peaceloving and militaristic. How these diametrically opposed views can coexist in some people’s minds is unclear. Other negative views held by significant numbers of American Jews include the 41 percent who saw Israelis as “racist” and the 50 percent who thought Israelis were “religiously extremist.”

American Jewish Attitudes Toward Peace
American Jews have become increasingly pessimistic about the possibilities of peace with the Arab world and Palestinians, in particular. These views, however, do not seem to have translated into a more hawkish posture on the peace process. Instead, American Jews appear to be moving toward endorsing
American Jews have become increasingly pessimistic about the peace process since the Oslo accords of 1993, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of American Jews who believe that “the goal of the Arabs is not the return of the occupied territories but rather destruction of Israel,” with 82 percent agreeing in 2002-3. Few American Jews (four percent) feel that the Palestinian Authority has done enough to combat terrorist activity against Israel.

Views of the Palestinians notwithstanding, support for the Israeli government’s handling of the peace process has fallen markedly since 1993, going from an 84 percent approval rate to 59 percent by 2000.

American Jews support territorial compromise, but with limits. A majority of American Jews (63 percent) support a Palestinian state, an increase from the low point of 1998, when 42 percent approved of establishing a Palestinian state.

Permissibility of Criticizing Israel
American Jews believe that although Jews should support the Israeli government and think that public criticism does not have positive results, dissenters should have the right to speak in communal settings.

Israel in the Eyes of Americans
American Support for Israel
Although many more Americans support Israel than support the Palestinians, support for Israel is hardly overwhelming, with slightly less than half of all Americans sympathizing with Israel at a given time. This varies considerably depending on the current situation. At times when Israel receives unfavorable press and appears to be an aggressor, its standing plummets. When Israel appears to be the victim, sympathy increases considerably. Among Americans, there is considerable variation in support for Israel, with certain groups far more likely to support Israel than others. Often the more supportive groups are very different from American Jews, particularly regarding their politics and religious beliefs.

• Just under half of all Americans presently express sympathy for Israel. Although sympathy toward Israel is not nearly as high as among American Jews, it is far greater than sympathy for the Palestinians.

• This pattern of positive attitudes toward Israel far exceeding positive attitudes toward Palestinians also applied to support for Israel. American support for Israel eclipsed support for Palestinians, with 47 percent of respondents expressing sympathy for Israel, far exceeding the 14 percent who sympathized with the Palestinians, the 19 percent who volunteered they supported neither and the six percent who volunteered they sympathized with both.

• Sympathy for Israel and the Palestinians varies greatly with current events (see Appendix, Figure 12). Its post-1967 low was in 1982, immediately after the Sabra and Shatila incident, when only 32 percent of respondents said they were sympathetic to Israel. In contrast, it was at its highest point (64 percent) in 1991, during the Gulf War when Israel was bombarded by Iraqi missiles. Despite these dramatic variations, sympathy returns to average levels very quickly and there is no evidence of an upward or downward trend in sympathy for Israel over time. In general, slightly under half of all Americans will express sympathy with Israel. By contrast, sympathy for the Palestinians has increased over time, reaching a peak in 1991 and declining slightly since then. It is also subject to intense variations depending on current issues.

• Sympathy with Israel differs among various groups of the population. Often, groups most resembling Jews socio-demographically were in fact the least supportive of Israel. The following factors had an impact on sympathy for Israel in an April 2002 ABC News/Washington Post poll:

A. Political party affiliation—Republicans were far more likely to sympathize with Israel than Democrats or independents. Independents were more likely than Democrats or Republicans to sympathize with neither side.

B. Political ideology—Liberals were less likely to sympathize with Israel than moderates or conservatives. Liberals had the highest level of sympathy for Palestinians with moderates in the middle.

C. Education—Sympathy with Israel was roughly equal among all groups, except people with less than a high school education, who were by far the most likely to sympathize with neither side. Sympathy for Palestinians was highest among Americans with college degrees, while people with college degrees were also appreciably more sympathetic to Palestinians than all other groups.
D. Age—The middle aged (45-60 year olds) were the most sympathetic to Israel and the least sympathetic to Palestinians. The most sympathetic group to Palestinians were people age 18-30, followed by people over the age of 60.

E. Religiosity—There is a clear connection between frequently attending religious services and sympathizing with Israel. The more often people attended religious services, the more likely they were to sympathize with Israel and the less likely to sympathize with Palestinians. Also, sympathy with neither side was highest among people who never attended services.

F. Christian denomination—Among Christians, members of conservative denominations are far more likely to sympathize with Israel than are members of liberal denominations. The most sympathetic group toward Israel were Pentecostals while least sympathetic were Episcopalians and Lutherans. The most sympathetic groups to the Palestinians were Episcopalians and agnostics/atheists.

When asked directly whether they support Israel or the Palestinians, American support for Israel is slightly below the level of sympathy. In June 2002, 43 percent of respondents said they supported Israel.

**American Attitudes to Foreign Policy**

Most Americans would prefer that the United States be neutral when it comes to the Middle East, yet also believe that the U.S.’s current level of support for Israel be maintained.

- Most Americans think that the U.S. should be neutral when it comes to the Middle East, with three-quarters thinking that the U.S. should not take either side. Among those who wanted the U.S. to support one side or the other, support for Israel far exceeded support for the Palestinians.

- When asked the reasons for the terrorist attacks of September 11, the terrorists’ opposition to U.S. ties to Israel and its policies regarding the Palestinian situation was one of the two most cited reasons, along with resentment of U.S. economic and military power in general, with more than 70 percent of Americans believing that U.S. policy was a contributory factor. A majority of Americans feel that Israeli actions hurt the war on terrorism.

- In spite of their belief that American ties to Israel contributed to September 11 and hurt the war on terrorism, Americans were much more likely to say that the U.S. should get closer to Israel than distance itself, with 29 percent favoring closer relations and 14 percent preferring more distance. Support for the proposition that “the U.S. should reduce its ties to Israel in order to lessen the acts of terrorism against us” actually dropped after September 11, though it returned to pre-attack levels of about a third of all Americans in the months afterwards. The belief that the U.S. should continue to support Israel was not entirely due to altruism; most Americans felt that a change of policy would not affect the likelihood of terrorism against Americans.

**American Views of Israel**

Americans’ views of Israel are considerably less favorable than their views of many other western countries, but remain far more positive than perceptions of the Palestinian Authority. Views of Israel also vary over time in response to current events. On specific issues, favorable views of Israel usually far outweigh favorable ones of Palestinians or the Palestinian Authority, even though Americans tend to hold quite negative views of both sides. The issues where this is not the case are notable: responsibility for the conflict as a whole and beliefs about the ultimate goals of either side. In addition, there are some other causes for concern: close to half of Americans admit being persuaded to some extent by Palestinian arguments in favor of attacks on Israeli civilians, many Americans believe Israel punishes Palestinian civilians and a majority do not believe that Israel has done all it could to avoid civilian casualties.

- Americans have a generally positive view of Israel. When asked whether they had favorable views of Israel in May 2002, 59 percent said they had a favorable image and 24 percent an unfavorable one. Favorable images are roughly equivalent to the percentage of people who sympathize with Israel plus those who sympathize with either side.

- The percentage of Americans holding favorable views of Israel is roughly on par with nominally friendly countries like Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, the Philippines and Taiwan. It is, however, well below those of other allies, like France and Japan. Israel had disproportionately high unfavorable ratings, around those of Russia and South Africa. The Palestinian Authority is seen far less warmly, with only 22 percent of Americans seeing it in a favorable light.

- The images Americans have of Israel vary over time. As with sympathy, it rises and falls.
according to current events, between a high of 79 percent during the Gulf War to a low of 45 percent in August 1989, after Israel was blamed for Hezbollah’s execution of an American officer. Like sympathy, it returned to the average very quickly. At present, polarization appears to be occurring, with the percentage of Americans holding very positive and very negative images increasing at the expense of the middle.

• Most Americans see Israel as friendly, but not as an ally. About 60 to 65 percent of Americans see Israel as friendly, while 40 percent see Israel as an ally. Around 20 percent of Americans see Israel as unfriendly.

American Knowledge About the Middle East
• Americans’ knowledge of the Middle East is lacking. In a 2001 survey, when asked how much land Israel had given back, only 22 percent answered correctly. Answering a question about what other countries thought of American policies on the Middle East, slightly under half got it right, believing that more countries disapproved than approved. In terms of knowledge of either side’s casualties, only 32 percent answered correctly that more Palestinians had died than Israelis. (As this question lumps combatant and non-combatant deaths together, Palestinian casualties are higher. The situation is much closer when it comes to non-combatant deaths.) Only 41 percent of Americans knew when Israel was founded.

• A recent National Geographic Society poll of 18-24 year olds, testing broad knowledge of geography, found that Americans had the second worst geographic knowledge of any country surveyed and that Americans’ knowledge of the Middle East was particularly poor, with only 14 percent able to find Israel on a map.

American College Student Attitudes toward Israel
• College students are less likely to sympathize with Israel and more likely to sympathize with Palestinians than were Americans as a whole in a May 2002 poll, although more college students sympathize with Israel than the Palestinians. Forty-nine percent of the general public was sympathetic to Israel, compared to 35 percent of college students. In terms of sympathy with the Palestinians, 14 percent of the general public were sympathetic, against 22 percent of college students. Levels of sympathy for both sides or neither were quite close between college students and the general public.
Appendix
Israel in the Eyes of Americans:
Figures

Figure 1. **How close do you feel to Israel?**
Source: American Jewish Committee, 1986-2003

The extreme values for 2002 (a very high percentage of “very close” and a very low percentage of “not very close”) appear to be a survey artifact, as that survey was conducted with a small sample selected differently in previous years. The 2003 survey returned to the procedure of 2001 and previous years.

Note: Absent years indicate that the question was not asked. Datapoints are interpolated.

Figure 2. **Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew**
Source: American Jewish Committee, 1983-2003

Note: Absent years indicate that the question was not asked. Datapoints are interpolated.
Figure 3

Is your overall opinion of Israel very favorable, somewhat favorable, neutral, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Source: American Jewish Committee, 2000

![Bar chart showing distribution of opinions.]

Figure 4

Please tell me whether, in general, you consider yourself to be a strong supporter of Israel, a supporter of Israel, a supporter of the Palestinians or a strong supporter of the Palestinians?

Source: American Jewish Committee, 2002

![Bar chart showing distribution of support preferences.]

"Don't support either side" and "support both equally" were both volunteered responses. Were they offered to respondents, we would expect to see higher percentages select them. This survey appears to have an unrepresentatively large number of pro-Israel respondents, so caution should be exercised with these data (see Figure 1 and Phillips et. al., pp. 8-11, for more on the survey).
Figure 5
Do you support or oppose the Israeli government’s current handling of peace negotiations with the Arabs?
*Source: American Jewish Committee, 1993-2000*

![Chart showing percentages of support and opposition across years](chart)

**Note:** In 1997 and 1998 the question asked “Do you support or oppose the Netanyahu government’s current handling of peace negotiations with the Arabs?”

---

Figure 6
How close do you feel to Israel? Percentages of respondents answering very or fairly close by age group.
*Source: American Jewish Committee, 2000*

![Chart showing percentages of feeling close across age groups](chart)

---

18. Israel in the Eyes of Americans
Figure 7  Which of the following qualities do you consider most important to your Jewish identity?

Source: American Jewish Committee, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Affirming Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being part of the Jewish people</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious observance</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Israel</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to social justice</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8  Importance of various ideals for one's children in 1989 in percentages affirming ideal as extremely or very important

Source: American Jewish Committee, 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal</th>
<th>Affirming Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date only Jews</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Jewish ritual</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marry Jews</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care about Israel</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Jewish friends</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate Jewish holidays</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support social justice causes</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a strong faith in God</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have their sons ritually circumcised</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about their Jewish heritage</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand what it means to be a Jew</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel good about being Jewish</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel close to their family</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 9

Please rate the importance of each of the following to your Jewish identity, indicating whether it is extremely important, very important, somewhat important or not important; percentages affirming activity as extremely or very important

Source: American Jewish Committee, 2000

![Bar chart showing percentages of importance for various Jewish activities.](chart1.png)

Figure 10

Now I'd like to read you a list of words and phrases and ask you whether you associate the Israelis or the Palestinians more with the word or phrase...

Source: American Jewish Committee, 2002

![Bar chart showing associations with various words and phrases.](chart2.png)
Figure 11
To what extent do you think each of the following descriptions apply to Israelis? By total percentage agreeing to a great extent or some extent
Source: American Jewish Committee, 1991

![Bar chart showing percentages of agreement](chart11)

Figure 12
In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with Israel or the Arab nations?
Source: Gallup Polls, 1967-2002

![Line graph showing sympathy trends](chart12)
I'd like you to rate your feelings toward some countries, with 100 meaning a very warm, favorable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavorable feeling, and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to 100, the higher the number the more favorable your feelings to that country. If you have no opinion or have never heard of that country, please say so.

Source: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2002

Note: Scores refer to mean temperature of feeling, not percentages.
Jehuda Reinharz is the Richard Koret Professor of Modern Jewish History in the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and President of Brandeis University.

Leonard Saxe is professor at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management and director of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University.

Benjamin Phillips is a Ph.D. candidate in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and sociology at Brandeis University.

Eszter Lengyel is an undergraduate student at Brandeis University.

Research from the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies may be accessed at www.cmjs.org.