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Charles Freeman's Victory

Forced to withdraw, he took the Israel lobby down with him

by Justin Raimondo

The nixing of Charles "Chas" Freeman from a post as head of the National Intelligence Council is not, as is commonly averred, a victory for the Israel lobby. It is, instead, a *Pyrrhic victory* – that is, a victory so costly that it really amounts to a defeat for them. Sure, they managed to keep out a trenchant critic of their *Israel-centric* and grossly distorted view of a proper American foreign policy, and, yes, they managed to *smear* him and put others on notice that someone with his views is radioactive, as far as a high-level job in the foreign policy establishment is concerned. And yet – and yet

They – *the Lobby* – have now been forced out in the open. "A lobby," says Steve Rosen, the *ringleader* of the "get Freeman" lynch mob, "is like a night flower: it thrives in the dark and dies in the sun." If so, then the Israel lobby is slated for oblivion, because as frenetically – and *pathetically* – as they tried to mask the centrality of their involvement, and as much as they tried to make this about other issues (his alleged ties to Saudi Arabia, his supposed views on China), everybody knows it was really all about Israel and Freeman's contemptuous view of the "special relationship" which requires us giving Tel Aviv a blank check, *moral* as well as *monetary*. As a foreign policy *realist*, he thinks we ought to put our own interests first, in the Middle East and elsewhere, not those of a foreign country, no matter how much *political clout* – and *campaign cash* – its American fifth column can muster.

This, in the current atmosphere in Washington, is "*extremism*," a charge that hung over Freeman's appointment from the get-go. Jonathan Chait, *writing* in the

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Washington Post, went so far as to call Freeman a "fanatic." A charge which seems counterintuitive, considering that we're talking about an adherent of a foreign policy perspective that coldly calculates American interests in what [the righteous](#) would disdain as shockingly amoral terms. Oh, says Chait, he's not like those neocons, with their "simplistic" division of the world into "good guys" and "bad guys." No, instead, Freeman doesn't recognize any "good guys" he's the sort who opposed our [bombing](#) of the former Yugoslavia and our support to the narco-Mafioso "[Kosovo Liberation Army](#)," the precursor to Ahmed Chalabi's [Iraqi National Congress](#), which, likewise, lured us into a foreign war under [false pretenses](#). But the Kosovo war "halted mass slaughter," says Chait: apparently the death of [hundreds](#) of Serbians at American hands is a slaughter not considered "mass" enough to merit mention. Yet the alleged "genocide" the Serbs were supposedly committing [turned out](#), in the end, to inhabit the same nonexistent country as Saddam's "[weapons of mass destruction](#)." It was, in short, war propaganda, of the sort we have become all too familiar with of late.

To be sure, Chait says: "Realism has some useful insights. For instance, realists accurately predicted that Iraqis would respond to a U.S. invasion with less than unadulterated joy."

This is a lot more than Chait managed to do: [to this day](#), he defends his forceful support for the biggest strategic blunder in American military history. "I don't think you can argue that a regime change in Iraq won't demonstrably and almost immediately improve the living conditions of the Iraqi people," Chait said on television as our troops massed for the attack. No one would think of uttering such nonsense [today](#) – at least with a straight face. Oh, but don't forget, it's those nasty realist ideologues – not [the neocons](#) or their [liberal interventionist allies](#) – who are the real danger.

As the Iraq disaster unfolded, the [magazine](#) of which Chait is employed as a senior editor [declared](#) "the central assumption underlying this magazine's strategic rationale for war now appears to have been wrong," and yet "if our strategic rationale for war has collapsed, our moral one has not." Two years later, however, Chait and his fellow editors issued a shamefaced apology: "The New Republic deeply regrets its early support for this war."

The "liberal" interventionism that Chait [invoked](#) in support of

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the war actually flew the flag of "humanitarianism." [One million Iraqi deaths](#) later, such a claim has a rather sinister ring to it. He also invoked the principle of "international law" – this, in support of a lawless occupation and an unprovoked attack on a people who had no ability to strike back. "[Multilateralism](#)" was another "principle" invoked by Chait, the great liberal – and yet who else but a genuine fanatic would make such an argument about a war that had little to no support from our allies?

Chait is unconcerned about the [actual fanatics](#) who have done so much damage – with his help – to the country and its interests abroad. Forget the neocons, his erstwhile allies, and let's concentrate on the real danger, the enemies of the Israel lobby:

"Taken to extremes, realism's blindness to morality can lead it wildly astray. Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, both staunch realists, wrote 'The Israel Lobby,' a hyperbolic attack on Zionist political influence. The central error of their thesis was that, since America's alliance with Israel does not advance American interests, it could be explained only by sinister lobbying influence. They seemed unable to grasp even the possibility that Americans, rightly or wrongly, have an affinity for a fellow democracy surrounded by hostile dictatorships. Consider, perhaps, if eunuchs tried to explain the way teenage boys act around girls."

Putting Israel first is as natural as heterosexuality – but only if you work for [Marty Peretz](#).

Why Chait and his confreres continue their denialism when it comes to the demonstrable power of the Israel lobby – which, after all, has succeeded in blocking Freeman, and [many others](#) from positions of influence – is beyond me. AIPAC went out of its way to deny any hand in the lynch mob that went after Freeman, and yet, as [Glenn Greenwald](#) and [Andrew Sullivan](#) point out, this is just a subterfuge: their [top media relations guy](#) has his fingerprints all over this hit job, and a very effective job it was.

Effective, yet oddly forced and unconvincing: for example, it seems curious to argue that Freeman is afflicted by a "blindness to morality" when it is precisely a sense of justice that gives rise to Freeman's apparent [sympathy](#) [.pdf] for the [plight](#) of Palestinians who chafe under the constraints of life in the occupied territories. It is precisely a sense of offended

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morality that drives the vast Arab anger at Israel, and causes realists like Freeman to question our unbending fealty to the inhumane and unsustainable policies of the Israeli government toward their Palestinian helots. If anyone is afflicted with moral blindness, when it comes to this question, it is Chait and the editors of the magazine for which he works.

Chait then cites Freeman's by now infamous remarks on the Tiananmen Square incident, and yet this China trope was never really all that convincing. To begin with, even in the truncated quote served up as evidence of his supposed pro-crackdown views, it is clear that Freeman was not expressing his personal view, but rather that of the average Chinese, as perceived through his own eyes:

"[T]he truly unforgivable mistake of the Chinese authorities was the failure to intervene on a timely basis to nip the demonstrations in the bud, rather than – as would have been both wise and efficacious – to intervene with force when all other measures had failed to restore domestic tranquility to Beijing and other major urban centers in China. In this optic, the Politburo's response to the mob scene at 'Tian'anmen' stands as a monument to overly cautious behavior on the part of the leadership, not as an example of rash action."

The phrase "in this optic" indicates – to any literate person – that the author is not speaking in his own voice, but in what he imagines to be the voice of the Chinese people. Does Chait imagine we're too stupid to see this? I'm afraid he and the Washington crowd he epitomizes believe precisely that. But they'd better watch it: if they get too careless, someone may call them out on it – and then they'd have to admit that Freeman's alleged "links" to China had nothing to do with the real objections of his detractors. So, he served on the advisory board of a Chinese company – so what? If everyone with a commercial connection to China had to drop out of consideration for government work, a large proportion of those currently working in Washington would be missing.

The complete disingenuousness with which Chait made his argument is so transparent that it makes me wonder if, perhaps, the Israel lobby has abandoned all attempts at subtlety, and is now working on the assumption that it doesn't matter any more if they come out in the open. The nightflower has been exposed to the light of day, and, rather than wilt, perhaps its nurturers have decided that it's better

<p>y In... Peace with Israel possible, says Syria's Assad The Upcoming Political Crisis in Washington What Israeli Peace Process?</p>	<p>to brave the sun. That's why the Mearsheimer-Walt book has become such a target, to the point that anyone who praises it, as Freeman has done, is deemed unfit for office in Washington. This explains why former AIPAC top lobbyist Steve Rosen, the indicted spy who stole classified information on behalf of Israel, openly led the anti-Freeman movement (see this timeline) and didn't even try to hide his key role in the affair.</p>
<p>Israeli Settlers Terrorize Palestinian Villagers Canada Follows America's Slide Canadian Military Units To Undertake "Domestic Sec..."</p>	<p>The Lobby was desperate to keep Freeman out of the NIC because it's an agency that provides key intelligence for the President and Congress. If you'll recall, that's how the War Party lured us into fighting an unnecessary war against Iraq – by manipulating the intelligence, and even resorting to forgery to achieve their ends. With Freeman at the helm of the intelligence-gathering machinery, they'd never be able to pull it off again. In his absence – well, they just might. That's just what they're getting ready to do in the case of Iran, which, we are told, is gathering "weapons of mass destruction." Part of the NIC's job is to prepare the daily presidential briefings, and with such access to the President, Freeman would have been in a good position to block the War Party's machinations. Which is why Chait's parting salvo is such an outrage:</p>
<p>Rep. Conyers wants science to be secret... or you will... Israel to demolish a mosque, six homes near Nablus...</p>	<p><i>"This is the portrait of a mind so deep in the grip of realist ideology that it follows the premises straight through to their reductio ad absurdum. Maybe you suppose the National Intelligence Council job is so technocratic that Freeman's rigid ideology won't have any serious consequences. But think back to the neocon ideologues whom Bush appointed to such positions. That didn't work out very well, did it?"</i></p>
<p>Madoff and the Sorkin Affair IOF imposes closure on West Bank ahead of Purim</p>	<p>The neocons uphold a set of beliefs, they have an ideology: so too do the realists believe in a comprehensive worldview. However, the question is: what do they believe? Chait only mentions two realist principles: the pursuit of American interests abroad, and hostility to those who would put the interests of "a fellow imperfect democracy" above the realists' "cold analysis." Yet rational analysis, however "cold" its temperature may be, seems a necessary antidote to the hysteria that followed in the wake of 9/11. And as for that "imperfect democracy" of Israel – what will Chait and his fellow "liberals" do when Avigdor Lieberman becomes its public as well as its private face?</p>

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Freeman himself said it best in his statement explaining his withdrawal:

"The libels on me and their easily traceable email trails show conclusively that there is a powerful lobby determined to prevent any view other than its own from being aired, still less to factor in American understanding of trends and events in the Middle East. The tactics of the Israel Lobby plumb the depths of dishonor and indecency and include character assassination, selective misquotation, the willful distortion of the record, the fabrication of falsehoods, and an utter disregard for the truth. The aim of this Lobby is control of the policy process through the exercise of a veto over the appointment of people who dispute the wisdom of its views, the substitution of political correctness for analysis, and the exclusion of any and all options for decision by Americans and our government other than those that it favors."

The real fanatics are the Israel-firsters, who have used every subterfuge, no matter how low, to maintain their parasitic grip on the American policymaking process. The really dangerous ideologues are the Likudniks and their American amen corner who willfully distort and deform American policy into a means to empower and succor a militaristic settler colony that is increasingly anti-democratic and aggressive. The Freeman affair has exposed the Israel lobby for precisely what they are: it has flushed them out of the woodwork, and brought them in from the shadows. That in itself is a great victory, one that means much more in the longterm than anyone presently imagines.

Source

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Charles Freeman fails the loyalty test

By Glenn Greenwald

March 10, 2009

AT 8:30 AM 
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14 COMMENTS:

FatNSassy said...

Interesting way to look at it! Nice perspective. If only people