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On January 3, 2011, within hours of his government's latest announcement that, despite American and Palestinian objections, it would move ahead with the construction of more Jewish housing in East Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave a stirring speech at the Jewish Federations of North America's General Assembly in New Orleans.¹ Speaking to a cavernous room filled with Jewish communal leaders, professionals, and grassroots activists—the core membership of the organized American Jewish community—Netanyahu solemnly warned of the many dangers facing the Jewish state. One of these dangers, he claimed, was “the assault on Israel's legitimacy.” Linking this to previous threats against the Jewish people, Netanyahu declared in his American-accented English: “We know from our history that attacks on the Jews were often preceded by attempts to delegitimize the Jewish people; to paint them as vile criminals, as the scourge of humanity. And this is why the attempts by our enemies, and their misguided fellow travelers, to delegitimize the Jewish state must be countered.”²

While his adoring audience clapped in approval, a young woman suddenly stood up and shouted amid the din of applause: “Young Jews say the Loyalty Oath delegitimizes Israel! The Loyalty Oath delegitimizes Israel!” She continued shouting this as police officers quickly surrounded her, grabbed her, and dragged her out of the room, while the crowd started hissing and booing. Unruffled, Netanyahu told the crowd, “I'm going to talk about delegitimizing Israel, but they really have the wrong address.” His off-the-cuff remark was greeted with loud cheers and a standing ovation.

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“For too many, Israel is guilty until proven guilty,” Netanyahu continued, “and the greatest success of our detractors is when Jews start believing that themselves. We are seeing that today.” As the audience enthusiastically applauded again, a young man got up on a chair and repeatedly yelled out: “The Occupation delegitimizes Israel!” He was quickly pulled down from the chair and bundled away by police officers as the crowd became irritated and people shouted obscenities at him.

Netanyahu resumed his speech, until a few minutes later he was interrupted yet again by another heckler, a young woman shouting, “The settlements delegitimize Israel!” By now, the audience was really irate, and they immediately began to drown out her protest with loud, angry jeers. Before the police could get to her to usher her away, she was physically assaulted by some of the people around her. “I was instantly attacked from all sides,” the young woman later recounted. “A man in the row in front of me pulled the El Al seat cover off his chair and tried to gag me with it. Another man came up from the side and grabbed me by the throat. I fell into a pile of chairs until two female sheriffs buoyed me up and hustled me out of the room. The police later confided that they were trying to protect me from the angry mob and get me out of there in one piece.”³

This protest by some young American Jews, who were members of a left-wing group called Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), and the angry, aggressive reaction of other American Jews to it, is not a one-off, isolated incident. It is just the most dramatic manifestation of a wider conflict over Israel that is now raging within the American Jewish community.⁴ It is a conflict that has become increasingly bitter and polarizing. It is also very public, much to the consternation of American Jewish communal leaders who have long sought to keep intra-Jewish conflicts behind closed doors. In its intensity and visibility, it is a conflict unlike any other the American Jewish community has ever had. And it is a conflict with profound consequences not only for American Jews, but also potentially for Israel and the United States. It threatens to divide the American Jewish community, weaken American Jewish political support for Israel, and impact U.S. government policy toward Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For all these reasons, the current American Jewish conflict over Israel matters not

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only to American Jews, but also to Americans in general, Israelis, Palestinians, and indeed anyone concerned about the future of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This book offers an in-depth look at the internecine battle over Israel among American Jews, a battle that is growing ever more intense as Israel faces mounting international condemnation, its domestic politics shifts further to the right, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process remains in deep freeze, and the two-state solution appears increasingly remote, if not altogether unlikely. The book's central thesis is that a historic change has been taking place in the American Jewish relationship with Israel. The age of unquestioning and unstinting support for Israel is over. The pro-Israel consensus that once united American Jews is eroding, and Israel is fast becoming a source of division rather than unity for American Jewry. As the consensus concerning Israel within the American Jewish community is slowly coming apart, a new era of American Jewish conflict over Israel is replacing the old era of solidarity. In short, Israel used to bring American Jews together. Now it is driving them apart.

In this book, I examine the causes and consequences of the American Jewish conflict over Israel. I explore the sources of this conflict, emphasizing that it is driven not only by changes in Israel and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (as media reports often suggest), but also by changes within the American Jewish community itself. In doing so, I highlight the deeper, structural reasons for the growing tension among American Jews over Israel, and between American Jews and Israel. I also explore the impact that the growing conflict over Israel is having on local Jewish communities, on the pro-Israel lobby in Washington, DC, and on the American Jewish communal establishment.

For decades, especially after the Six-Day War in 1967, the American Jewish relationship with Israel was largely characterized by unwavering support for Israel by most American Jews. Supporting Israel was an important part of American Jewish life and a central element in the "civil religion" of American Jewry. It was also a central component in American Jewish identity, especially among secular Jews for whom supporting Israel effectively became a kind of substitute religion and a new way of being Jewish. Although relatively few American Jews

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chose to live in Israel, many saw the Jewish state as a potential place of refuge, and a powerful symbol of Jewish rebirth after the Holocaust.

The mythic Israel that many American Jews idealized was a source of pride and unity. At a time when the religious and cultural ties that once united them were steadily diminishing, support for Israel became the glue that held the American Jewish community together.⁵ Although there were always small pockets of critics, for the most part there was an overwhelming consensus within the American Jewish community in support of Israel. As two experts on the American Jewish community wrote in 1990: “Support for Israel dominates [American Jewish] public life, is part and parcel of the American Jewish consensus on what it means to be a Jew, and is voiced by a large majority of American Jews.”⁶ This support for Israel was expressed politically through advocacy for Israel, and financially through charitable donations to Israel. Politically, American Jews became vocal and highly effective proponents for U.S. economic, military, and diplomatic support for Israel. The pro-Israel lobby in Washington, DC, especially the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), emerged as an influential actor in U.S.-Israeli relations. Financially, as annual campaigns to raise money for Israel and fundraising dinners for Israeli causes became staples of American Jewish life, American Jews donated huge sums of money to Israel and played a crucial role in the country’s economic development.

However, the era of uncritical American Jewish support for Israel—of “Israel, right or wrong”—is now long past. For the past two decades, a fundamental shift has occurred in the American Jewish relationship with Israel, as growing numbers of American Jews have become less willing to unquestioningly support Israel and more willing to publicly criticize its governments. Today, amid a widespread sense of disillusionment with Israel, many American Jews have a more critical and contentious relationship with the country. Although the vast majority of them still care about Israel, there is now much more ambivalence toward it and much less agreement about its policies. Many American Jews, especially younger ones, are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with Israel’s policies in its conflict with the Palestinians and skeptical of its governments’ proclaimed desire for peace. As

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the political consensus about Israel within the American Jewish community has steadily eroded, divisions over Israel are growing among American Jews, and discussions about Israel have become increasingly antagonistic. American Jewish discourse about Israel now regularly degenerates into vitriol, hostile accusations, and ad hominem attacks. Indeed, the subject of Israel has become so highly charged and controversial among American Jews that some now completely avoid talking about it lest the discussion degenerate into an angry argument, as it often will.

While there have always been some disagreements about Israel among American Jews—and well before the state was even established there were intense debates about Zionism among American Jews—these disagreements have become more frequent, more ferocious, and more open than ever before. Whereas American Jews once generally presented a united front in public in support of Israel, there is now much more public criticism of Israeli government policies and actions, especially with regard to the Palestinians. More than ever before, American Jews are publicly arguing about Israeli policies and what it means to be pro-Israel—whether one can be a supporter of Israel and publicly criticize its governments. Growing numbers of American Jews who are critical of Israeli government policies are now speaking up and mobilizing politically.

The changing attitude toward Israel among American Jews is leading to significant changes in American Jewish politics. Major American Jewish organizations—the so-called Jewish establishment—are now accused of trying to stifle the growing debate about Israel among Jews and attacked for being unrepresentative and out of touch. The pro-Israel lobby—long regarded by admirers and critics alike as a model of an effective political pressure group—is splintering as new advocacy groups (such as J Street) have emerged to challenge AIPAC's influence. American Jewish philanthropy toward Israel is also changing as more money goes to support specific political causes and agendas in Israel (such as Israeli human rights organizations or settlement groups).

These developments have far-reaching repercussions. To dismiss the American Jewish conflict over Israel as merely an intra-Jewish

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affair is to ignore the importance of the American Jewish community, both domestically within the United States, and internationally, especially for Israel. Put simply, American Jewish politics directly affects American politics in general, particularly when it comes to Israel. For Israel itself, American Jewish politics is of even greater significance. Indeed, it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that Israel's very future depends in part on whether, and how, American Jews support it.

In a classic text on the American Jewish community first published in 1976, the late Daniel Elazar described American Jews as “the world's most powerful Jewry in the world's most powerful nation.”⁷ This remains true today, although the United States may not be quite as powerful as it was back then. Numbering roughly six to seven million,⁸ American Jews constitute about 40 percent of world Jewry and almost 70 percent of Diaspora Jewry.⁹ While they are just 2 percent of the U.S. population and about 4 percent of the voting population, American Jews undoubtedly exercise a disproportionate influence in American politics—a fact that is both widely admired and resented. Although it is often overstated, sometimes ludicrously and sometimes maliciously, American Jewish political power cannot be denied.¹⁰ The so-called Jewish vote is prized in presidential elections because of the concentration of Jews in states with a lot of electoral college votes (California, Florida, New York, and Pennsylvania), and particularly in key battleground states (such as Florida and Pennsylvania). Jews are also disproportionately represented among major campaign donors and fundraisers for politicians and for both political parties.¹¹ American Jews are also very well represented in the U.S. government and in think tanks, journalism, and academia.

As a result of this access and influence (the extent of which is perhaps unprecedented in Jewish history), “Jewish issues have become interwoven into America's routine political agenda. Jewish concerns have become Americanized. They are adopted, promoted, shaped and responded to by leading American political figures, including the president, cabinet members, key administration officials and congressional leaders, and not just by Jews.”¹² Of all the Jewish issues and concerns on the American political agenda, none has received nearly as much attention as Israel has. Although it is by no means the only

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issue that American Jews care about, for decades American Jewish political power has been directed largely on behalf of Israel. Consequently, support for Israel has become part and parcel of American domestic politics—so much so, in fact, that both political parties routinely compete over which one is more pro-Israel, and politicians proudly tout their support for Israel whenever they can.

Nor is it only American politicians and policymakers who pay attention to the American Jewish community. Governments across the world do too, as the journalist J. J. Goldberg writes in his book *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment*: “From the Vatican to the Kremlin, from the White House to Capitol Hill, the world’s movers and shakers view American Jewry as a force to be reckoned with.”¹³ The belief in many capitals around the world (perhaps fueled by latent or overt anti-Semitism or even philo-Semitism) that American Jews exercise a powerful sway over the American government has led some foreign governments to court the American Jewish community, sometimes by adopting foreign policies supportive of Israel, or merely by establishing diplomatic relations with Israel.¹⁴ American Jewish leaders travel the world like ambassadors, often meeting with foreign presidents and prime ministers, and foreign diplomats in the United States regularly consult with American Jewish groups.

No foreign government pays such close attention to the American Jewish community as the Israeli government—which is not to say that they listen carefully to, let alone heed, American Jewish concerns and wishes. Although American Jews often complain of being ignored by Israeli governments, in reality Israeli officials, especially diplomats, give a lot of attention to the American Jewish community, certainly vastly more attention than they give to any other Diaspora Jewish community. The reason for this is simple—American Jewry is a “strategic asset” for Israel.¹⁵ Whether they like it or not, Israeli policymakers recognize that Israel depends upon American Jewish support. While Israel is probably less dependent upon this support today than it once was when its economy was much smaller and more reliant upon American Jewish largesse, the American Jewish community is still a crucial, perhaps indispensable, source of economic, political, and psychological support to Israel.

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Since Israel's establishment in 1948, and even before then, American Jews have made an incalculable contribution to the country's development, if not its very survival. Indeed, one scholar writes that "no citizens of one country have ever been so committed to the success of another as American Jews have been to Israel."¹⁶ Over the years, they have donated vast sums of money to Israeli governments,¹⁷ and to a multitude of Israeli charities, hospitals, universities, schools, and other Israeli institutions. Although American Jews give to a host of causes, to this day more money from American Jewish donors goes to Israel than to any other cause.¹⁸ Indeed, it is estimated that American Jews give more than a billion dollars every year to organizations and charities in Israel.¹⁹ For many years, American Jews have also channeled large sums of money to their own elected officials in order to encourage them to support Israel, and they have energetically lobbied American policymakers on Israel's behalf. In the public arena, American Jews have vigorously defended and justified Israel's policies and actions to the American public at large. They have also done this in the international community, as major American Jewish organizations frequently act as unofficial emissaries and interlocutors for Israel to foreign governments and groups.

Arguably no less important for Israel is the psychological reassurance that American Jewish support provides. The belief among Israeli Jews that American Jews are backing them, thereby helping to ensure the support of the most powerful country in the world, is a source of great comfort and assurance. The Israeli-Jewish sense of isolation in the world is eased, but not alleviated entirely, by the feeling that American Jews are deeply committed to their security and well-being. If, as David Ben-Gurion, Israel's founder and first prime minister once said, "Israel's only absolutely reliable ally is world Jewry," then American Jewry—by far, the largest, richest, and most powerful Diaspora Jewish community in the world—is surely Israel's most important ally.²⁰ Indeed, Ben-Gurion himself once described American Jewry as "a link and a bridge between Israel and America."²¹ As such, Israel cannot afford to ignore the views of American Jews, even if Israeli leaders might wish they could. Israelis themselves are well aware of this. In a 2013 survey, for example, two-thirds of them said that

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the American Jewish community had a positive influence on Israel's national security, and two-thirds also thought that the Israeli government should take into account the views of American Jews about the peace process with the Palestinians.²²

There is also another reason why Israeli policymakers must pay attention to American Jews—they are increasingly involved in Israeli domestic politics. No longer content to simply support Israel from afar, American Jews now directly lobby Israeli governments, fund the primary election campaigns of Israeli politicians, and give money to Israeli pressure groups. American Jews are no longer just passive outside spectators to Israeli politics; they have become active participants in it.²³

In addition to their involvement in Israeli politics, American Jews are also participants in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some have volunteered to join the Israeli army and have fought in the conflict, some have moved to Jewish settlements in the West Bank,²⁴ and many more have lobbied their senators and representatives to vote in favor of American arms sales and military aid to Israel. The formidable pro-Israel lobby that American Jews have established has undoubtedly helped secure vital U.S. government support for Israel in its long-running conflict with the Palestinians and Arab states.

American Jews have also been heavily involved in efforts to make peace between Israel and the Palestinians, both actively supporting and opposing these efforts. During the Oslo peace process, for instance, American Jewish groups lined up for and against it. Some pushed for U.S. aid to the fledgling Palestinian Authority; others tried to block it. In the mid-1990s, American Jewish opponents of the Oslo Accords even financed a campaign in Israel against them.²⁵ And for many years, right-wing American Jews have funneled hundreds of millions of dollars to Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem (and benefited from U.S. tax breaks in the process).²⁶ Indeed, Israel's controversial settlement enterprise—one of the biggest obstacles in the way of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement—has been partially subsidized (as well as populated) by American Jews. But it is not only right-wing American Jews who are players in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so too are left-wing and liberal American Jews. They

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have persistently prodded U.S. administrations to get involved and stay involved in making peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and they have enthusiastically supported diplomatic initiatives by American presidents, such as those by Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama. In fact, some prominent American Jews, both inside and outside the U.S. government, have been closely involved in these peace initiatives.

American Jewish politics, therefore, has an impact well beyond the American Jewish community. But, despite its wide significance, it remains remarkably poorly understood. In particular, when it comes to the much discussed issue of Israel and its conflict with the Palestinians, there is still a common tendency to regard almost all American Jews simply as steadfast supporters of Israel, and to ignore their internal political divisions and debates. All too often, American Jews are depicted in newspaper articles and popular books as a monolithic lobby or voting bloc passionately committed to promoting Israel's cause. While this is certainly true of some American Jews, for others Israel may be a distant concern, or an object of sharp criticism. The consensus about Israel that prevailed within the American Jewish community in the 1960s and 1970s has long since disappeared. Instead, there is now a rancorous and divisive debate pitting left against right, critics against defenders of Israeli government policies, Jews against Jews.

At the center of this debate are burning questions about Israel's future as a Jewish state, and about whether and how it can make peace with the Palestinians and become secure in a region now racked with violent turmoil and upheaval. But underlying this debate is an even deeper, more fundamental set of questions: What kind of relationship should American Jews have with Israel? Must they support it? Should American Jews support Israel unconditionally, even when it acts in ways that they believe are self-defeating or morally problematic? What kinds of opinions and attitudes toward Israel are acceptable, and what should be permitted within the American Jewish community? Can Jews publicly criticize Israel? Can they support boycotts against Israel? Can they even oppose the existence of the Jewish state itself? In short, what loyalty, if any, do Jews owe the Jewish state?

It is not only American Jews who have been publicly wrestling with these difficult questions in recent years. So too, have Jews else-

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where, particularly in other liberal democracies in Western Europe, Canada, and Australia. While Jews in these places tend to be even more attached to Israel (unlike most American Jews, the vast majority of British, French, Canadian, and Australian Jews, for instance, have visited Israel at least once), there has also been growing Jewish criticism of Israeli policies and an increasing number of Jewish groups publicly opposing many of these policies.²⁷ Within the Jewish communities in all of these countries, Israel is becoming a major source of tension and controversy (linked in some cases to rising concerns over a resurgent anti-Semitism).²⁸ All across the Jewish world, Jews are increasingly divided in their attitudes to Israel as the once automatic support for Israel is declining. What is happening within the American Jewish community, therefore, is not entirely unique, although I believe its consequences are more far-reaching.

Nor is the contemporary debate about Israel among American Jews entirely without precedent. Although it has some significant novel features, it echoes earlier debates about Zionism that occurred before 1948. Then, as now, there were fierce disagreements among American Jews, and the American Jewish establishment was frequently criticized, especially by younger generations. It was only after Israel's founding that the communal consensus in support of Israel emerged, and it was only after 1967 that this consensus came to dominate American Jewish politics. Thus, from a historical perspective, the pro-Israel consensus that once reigned within the American Jewish community is the aberration, rather than the rule. Jewish debate and division on Israel is historically the norm.

It is also not at all surprising that Israel and its policies have become a topic of such vituperative debate among American Jews, as well as Diaspora Jews in general. After all, the existence of a Jewish state compels Jews everywhere to confront the question of what Israel means to them and what responsibility, if any, they have toward it. Since Israel claims to speak and act in their name, not only on behalf of its own citizens, it is almost impossible for Diaspora Jews to ignore Israel, even if they wanted to. Very few can remain apathetic about what is happening there, and they are almost obligated to have an opinion about Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially now that

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it has become such a big, almost obsessive, issue for Western public opinion. For better or worse, many Diaspora Jews often feel somehow implicated in Israel's actions. What Israel does, what happens to Israel, and what happens in Israel, therefore, affects Jews worldwide. That is why the subject of Israel is at the center of Jewish political debate. Indeed, it has become the new "Jewish question." Whereas the old Jewish question that dominated Jewish politics in the nineteenth century fundamentally revolved around the issue of Jewish statelessness, the new Jewish question that has dominated Jewish politics in the twentieth and twenty-first century revolves around the issue of Jewish statehood. For the first time in two thousand years, Jews have a state of their own. This inevitably raises tough questions and poses new challenges for a people unaccustomed to statehood. And since this state has also been locked in a protracted violent conflict, the questions and challenges it presents to Jews are even more difficult and unavoidable.

In the chapters that follow, I show how American Jewish attitudes and behavior toward Israel have changed over time, and I explore some of the major consequences of these changes. Chapter 1 gives a broad overview of the evolving American Jewish relationship with Israel and the factors that shape this relationship. I begin by challenging the idea that Jewish support for Israel is natural and inevitable, and explain what really motivates this support, identifying what I term the "five pillars of pro-Israelism." I then provide some historical perspective, charting a gradual shift that has taken place in attitudes toward Israel among American Jews—from initial indifference and even hostility to Zionism in the pre-World War II period, to acceptance of Zionism and lukewarm support for Israel after the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel, to passionate devotion after the 1967 war, to today's growing disillusionment and ambivalence as American Jews have a less idealized image of Israel and become more aware of its problems and flaws. I argue that while most American Jews remain strongly attached to Israel, what is changing is the way in which this attachment is expressed—American Jews are becoming more critical of Israeli government policies and more willing to express this criticism.

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Chapter 2 focuses on the shift that is currently occurring in the American Jewish relationship with Israel from unconditional support to critical engagement. I argue that the traditional norm against Jews publicly criticizing Israel has gradually eroded, and that it is now becoming increasingly acceptable, if still controversial, for Jews to openly question, debate, and challenge Israeli government policies and practices. While some American Jews welcome this development, others vociferously oppose it and even try to suppress it. In the chapter, I discuss the growth of Jewish dissent about Israel and the underlying reasons for it. I then describe the right-wing backlash against dissent and the growing debate among American Jews about the legitimacy of dissent. Finally, I look at how various dissident Jewish groups from the 1970s to the present day have been treated by the organized American Jewish community in order to answer the question of whether it is becoming more open and tolerant toward dissent about Israel. I contend that, contrary to the common claim that the American Jewish community is intolerant of dissent and tries to silence all criticism of Israel, there is, in fact, increasing acceptance of the legitimacy of public criticism of Israel, although this acceptance goes only so far: there are still communal “red lines” and dissident Jewish groups still get blacklisted.

Chapter 3 surveys the fractious debate—more accurately, the argument—about Israel that is now raging within the American Jewish community. I begin by mapping out the different American Jewish camps in the debate over Israel, and particularly over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—the heart of the debate. I then emphasize what is significantly different about the debate today from the way American Jews discussed and debated Israel in the past. In doing so, I explain why the American Jewish debate has become so acrimonious in recent years. The chapter ends by discussing the impact this vitriol is having upon many Jewish communities throughout the United States, describing how Israel has become a fraught topic of discussion in local Jewish communities, leading Jewish communal organizations to introduce “civility” initiatives in an effort to encourage more productive conversations about Israel. These initiatives are a

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clear acknowledgment that the growing conflict over Israel is threatening to tear Jewish communities apart.

Chapter 4 analyzes American Jewish public opinion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Drawing upon numerous opinion polls conducted over the past three decades, I dissect the views of American Jews about the conflict and outline the major trends in American Jewish opinion, asking whether American Jews are becoming more “dovish” or “hawkish” in their views and whether they are becoming more polarized. I argue that the broad political consensus that once existed is slowly eroding, although it has not entirely disappeared. After summarizing the views of most American Jews—whom I characterize as “ambivalent centrists”—I discuss the impact that religiosity, general political orientation, and age have upon shaping American Jewish attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, underlining the fact that more secular, more liberal, and younger American Jews are much more likely to hold “dovish” views about the conflict than more religious, more conservative, and older Jews.

Chapter 5 examines the American Jewish pro-Israel lobby, widely considered to be one of the most effective lobbies in Washington, DC. After describing its historical development, focusing on the rise of AIPAC and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (the two preeminent groups in the pro-Israel lobby), I discuss the big changes that have taken place in pro-Israel advocacy in recent years, particularly the growth of left-wing and right-wing pro-Israel groups. This has resulted in the splintering of the pro-Israel lobby. It has also challenged the ability of centrist groups to speak authoritatively on behalf of American Jews. I argue that pro-Israel lobbying in the United States is becoming increasingly partisan and contentious as there is no longer a single, widely accepted meaning of the term “pro-Israel.” This development may weaken the political influence of the pro-Israel lobby in the future.

Chapter 6 discusses the current critique of the American Jewish establishment and the challenges that it faces today. Critics accuse it of being unrepresentative and out of touch with the views of American Jews, especially on the issue of Israel. I evaluate this critique and argue that the real problem with the American Jewish establishment

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is not that it is entirely unrepresentative, but that it only represents a small and shrinking segment of American Jewry. Most American Jews simply have little, if anything, do with it. This is not, however, primarily due to the Jewish establishment's politics concerning Israel. For a variety of reasons, long-established Jewish organizations are less attractive and less relevant to American Jews today, especially to younger Jews who prefer new types of Jewish organizations championing different issues (most notably, social justice and the environment). As a result, the old Jewish organizations that have long dominated American Jewish politics are steadily losing ground to newer, niche organizations.

Chapter 7 places the American Jewish conflict over Israel in the context of a broader process of polarization between non-Orthodox and Orthodox Jews. I argue that the divide between non-Orthodox and Orthodox Jews in their views concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is actually part of a wider political and cultural divide between the two groups. Moreover, current sociocultural and demographic trends within the American Jewish community suggest that this divide is likely to grow as non-Orthodox Jews become more secular, less "tribal," and less emotionally attached to Israel over time. While this might not lessen overall American Jewish support for Israel in the future—because Orthodox Jews, who remain staunchly attached to Israel, are growing in number and strength—it does threaten the future cohesion of the American Jewish community. Ultimately, however, the rapid demographic growth of Orthodox Jewry in the United States, and the decline of the non-Orthodox, points to a potential long-term future in which the American Jewish community is increasingly Orthodox, and more right-wing.

Finally, in the conclusion, I briefly summarize the book, and present its implications for American Jews, for Israeli governments, and for U.S. policymakers. I emphasize that American Jewish debate and division concerning Israel is unlikely to disappear, and that Israeli and American policymakers, American Jewish leaders, and American Jews themselves must come to terms with this.

As I write these words, in August 2015, this debate and division is strikingly apparent in the strong and opposing reactions among

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American Jews to the recently announced agreement by the United States and other world powers to lift international sanctions on Iran in exchange for restrictions on its nuclear program. The nuclear deal with Iran has become the centerpiece of President Barack Obama's foreign policy, and the target of a fierce, largely partisan, domestic battle in the United States as Congress is set to vote on whether to approve or reject the deal. The American Jewish community has become a prominent player in this major political drama, as competing pro-Israel lobby groups campaign furiously for and against the agreement (mostly the latter), and many American Jewish communal organizations—urged on by Prime Minister Netanyahu in Israel²⁹—desperately try to mobilize the masses of American Jews to oppose the nuclear accord,³⁰ although initial polling showed that most Jews actually supported it.³¹

Approaching what has been widely described as one of the most consequential and controversial American foreign policy decisions of our time, American Jews are being explicitly called upon by their communal leadership, by the Israeli government, and even by the president of the United States himself,³² to take a clear stand—a stand that will put them directly at odds with either President Obama or Prime Minister Netanyahu. Never before has American Jewry found itself in such an uncomfortable predicament, the object of an open tug-of-war between an American president and an Israeli prime minister, and never before have American Jews been as sharply, and as publicly, divided as they are now. “Nowhere has the nuclear accord been more divisive than among American Jews,” a reporter for the *New York Times* noted.³³ The disagreement among American Jews over the nuclear deal with Iran has provoked a vituperative debate within the American Jewish community. “Within families and across the American Jewish community, discussion of the Iran deal is fiery,” the *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen observed.³⁴ Another commentator writing for Israel's *Ha'aretz* newspaper went further, describing the debate among American Jews over the Iran nuclear deal as:

a battle royal that is taking place in the boardrooms of Jewish organizations from coast to coast, in synagogues, community

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centers and social gatherings, behind closed doors or out in the open, in polite debate or, increasingly, in heated emotional dispute. It pits Jews against Jews, conservatives vs. liberals, hawks and doves, Republicans and Democrats, donors against professionals, rabbis against their flock and, in recent days, against one another. . . . Whether the deal is as good as the Obama administration claims or as bad as Netanyahu says, it has already claimed its first victim: a fractured American Jewish community.³⁵

In fact, as I will argue in this book, the American Jewish community has been fracturing for some time over Israel. The divisions over the Iran nuclear deal are just the latest manifestation of this, but they have put the lack of American Jewish unity under the spotlight. As Gary Rosenblatt, the editor and publisher of the largest Jewish newspaper in the United States, wrote: “One of the lessons learned from the intense debate over the Iran nuclear deal is that there is a serious and growing divide within American Jewry.”³⁶ The lack of unity among American Jews on the nuclear deal was even the subject of a classified telegram sent to the Israeli government by its consul general in Philadelphia, Yaron Sideman, in which he warned: “At this crucial point of the Iranian issue—which for years has been at the core of Israeli foreign policy and was described countless times by the Israeli leadership as an existential threat—the Jewish community in the United States is not standing as a united front behind Israel and important parts of it are on the fence.”³⁷ This warning, however, did not stop the Israeli government from trying its hardest to persuade American Jews to help it torpedo the nuclear deal through a vote in the Republican-controlled Congress (a vote that President Obama promised to veto if it went against him). Whatever the outcome of the congressional vote (due to take place after the time of this writing), and whatever the fate of the Iran nuclear deal, it is already abundantly clear that the divisions among American Jews that this book describes and analyzes are of great importance not only for American Jews, but also for Israel, for the United States, and even for the future of the Middle East, if not the world.