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Our country is not the only thing to which we owe our allegiance. It is also owed to justice and to humanity.

– James Bl

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August 25, 2005

Dying for Israel

by Billmon

You find anti-Semitism in the strangest of places – the Democratic Leadership Council, for example. Perusing the online pages of *Blueprint*, the DLC house organ, I came upon this filthy piece of **anti-Semitic propaganda** from Will Marshall, the head of the Progressive Policy Institute and a well-known DLC fellow traveler:

*"As they catalogue the administration's many mistakes, Democrats should also attend to the other side of the balance sheet. That side shows that our forces and their allies have toppled one of the world's most odious tyrants; upheld the principle of collective security; liberated a nation of 24 million; made possible Iraq's hopeful experiment in representative self-government; and **changed the strategic equation in the Arab-Israeli conflict.**" (emphasis added)*

I have to say, I find this very disturbing. Marshall appears to be arguing that one

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Billmon writes from the
blog [The Whiskey Bar](#)

of the reasons for the invasion of Iraq (and the deaths of 1,871 U.S. soldiers and **counting**) was to further the military and strategic interests of the state of Israel. Our brave men and women in uniform, in other words, are dying for Israel – or so this purveyor of vicious anti-Semitic slurs would like us to believe.

Now as I'm sure you know, when Cindy Sheehan allegedly wrote a **letter** claiming her son Casey "was killed for lies and for a PNAC neocon agenda to benefit Israel," she was roundly condemned and vilified by every sentient conservative on the planet – and by **Christopher Hitchens**, too. And yet, here we have a leading member of the Dino Democrat establishment saying much the same thing, and the reaction on the right, is... dead silence.

Clearly, the anti-Semitic conspiracy has spread its foul tentacles far and wide.

Personally, after all that's come out over the past two and a half years, I no longer feel like I have any idea why the Cheney administration invaded Iraq – although the presence of guys like Doug Feith and Richard Perle in the decision-making loop suggests Israel's strategic interests, or at least their own *conception* of those interests, had something to do with it. But so did a lot of other things – oil, Saudi Arabia, post-9/11 hysteria, Bush's messiah complex.

It's also not clear how much the "PNAC neocon agenda" reflected the official wishes of the Israeli government, and how much of it was just a product of the neocons' seemingly **limitless gullibility**. Was the original objective really to "change the strategic equation" in the region? Or were the neocons just conned by Ahmed Chalabi's sugarplum promises of a peace treaty, an Iraqi embassy in Jerusalem, and a pipeline running from Kirkuk to Haifa? I tend to think it was the latter, which was more stupidity than treason.

So I guess you can color me agnostic on the "dying for Israel" question. But, that said, the only difference I can see between Sheehan's remarks and Marshall's is that she thinks using the U.S. military to promote Israel's strategic interests is a bad thing, while he's in favor of it. If Sheehan were a dues-paying member of the D.C. Dino Democrat establishment, maybe she'd feel differently. If Marshall had lost a son in Iraq, maybe he would too.

In any case, the irony (and the truth behind Marshall's idiotic blathering) is that the failure of the neocons' grand throw of the dice in Iraq *has* changed the balance of power in the Middle East – in favor of Iran. And while some Israeli military planners may have favored taking out Saddam (especially since it was clear the Americans were going to do it anyway) Iran has been

their big strategic obsession for going on two decades now.

I'd love to know what the guys on the IDF general staff think about the "strategic equation" now. Do they view the continuing presence of a large American army in Iraq as a vital shield against Iranian expansion – and thus in Israel's strategic interest? Or would they rather we withdrew the troops and restored our strategic freedom of action, so that the Cheney administration can more credibly threaten the Iranians with military action?

Beats me. If I were a paranoid anti-Semite, I might expect the president of the United States to go on Israeli television and make saber-rattling remarks about Iran – while carefully concealing any preparations for a military strike from the American people, who already have one war more than they particularly want or need. But of course, I know a thing like that could never **happen**, except in the lunatic conspiracy theories of guys like Will Marshall.

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