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From New York to the World:

The American Jewish Committee and the Meaning of India, 1945-1956

by

Ryan Charles McEvoy

Honors Thesis

Submitted to

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University of Richmond
Richmond, VA

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Advisor: Dr. Nicole Sackley

**From New York to the World:
The American Jewish Committee and the Meaning of India, 1945-1956**

Ryan McEvoy
Advisor: Dr. Nicole Sackley

In the 1940s and early 1950s, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) sought to develop an international vision in response to a world in flux. This project represents the first attempt to triangulate the relationship between India, Israel, and Jewish-American civil society, employing the case of India as a means for understanding the way in which the AJC shaped its worldview in the decade after World War II. Although Americans had been in contact with India well before the war, the AJC brought with it a unique lens for constructing meaning out of a new postcolonial space. A variety of factors informed this viewpoint. Radical Jewish thinkers in New York represented an intellectual vanguard that inspired Jewish-American leadership during the early twentieth century. The legacy of the Holocaust and the rise of cosmopolitanism in its wake concentrated the AJC's attention on the challenges of decolonization in the Global South. The foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 raised questions in regard to Jewish identity, but also opened up new opportunities for acting as a power broker in international affairs. And the emergence of the Cold War and the Red Scare placed new constraints on the nature of Jewish-American advocacy in all areas. A combination of geopolitical developments and domestic politics, at different times, expanded and contracted the domain of the AJC's advocacy on the issue of India.

Chapter one explores the institutional history of the AJC, an elite organization that has demonstrated an interest in the wider world since its inception. As anti-Semitism rose domestically and abroad in the decades leading up to the Holocaust, the AJC became increasingly active in its interventions to protect Jews, making use of ideologies developed by radical Leftist thinkers in New York City. Chapter two examines the AJC's responses to the dual births of India and Israel in 1947 and 1948. In the case of India, the AJC adopted a language of humanitarianism in order to discuss violence on the subcontinent. At the same time, the AJC envisioned itself as an important broker in the nascent Indo-Israeli relationship. Chapter three considers how the escalation of the Cold War after the summer of 1949 narrowed the capacity for the AJC to conceive of India in the same terms that it previously had. The need to maintain institutional viability would force the AJC to abandon its robust thinking on India.

This project draws on extensive primary sources collected from the AJC files housed in the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research at the Center for Jewish History in New York City, in addition to several years of issues of *Commentary* magazine and the writings of influential actors such as Jawaharlal Nehru. Through close, contextual readings of these works, the project uncovers extensive interest on the part of the AJC in relation to India. The AJC sought to increase its political capital by framing itself as a leader in the nascent Indo-Israeli relationship. In this vein, this work is one of the first to explain the AJC's international vision beyond the question of Zionism in the 1940s and 1950s. The results of this investigation demonstrate how domestic political issues threatened institutional viability, in what would prove to be the decisive factor in determining the capacity of the organization to act, especially after 1949. Finally, this paper seeks to contribute to the existing historiography by suggesting the need for the consideration of more complex relationships between state and non-state actors.

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When I look back on this project several years from now, my first memories will likely consist of the inside of an archive or library, the covers of some of the books that will only now be able to escape my backpack, or one of the large iced coffees that have powered many late nights. But when I reflect on my experience more closely, all of these material things will surely fade away and I will instead recall the people who have helped to transform this thesis into the single most rewarding educational experience of my time at the University of Richmond.

I am deeply grateful to those people and institutions which have supported me in the acquisition of the primary and secondary sources that form the backbone of this entire project, especially the staff at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research at the Center for Jewish History in New York City and at the Boatwright Memorial Library at the University of Richmond. I am particularly thankful for the help of Ms. Lynda Kachurek, who provided me with feedback in regard to research strategies during the earliest stages of this project, and the Boatwright Memorial Library Interlibrary Loan staff members, who have frequently helped me to speedily locate rare resources.

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This work is dedicated to my Uncle Frank, who first gave me the courage to explore.

*May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
the rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.*

-- Traditional Irish Blessing

Introduction: “Deep and Natural Affinities”

In August 1956, Eugene Hevesi, Foreign Affairs Secretary of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), declared in an internal memorandum: “India is the greatest, Israel the smallest democracy of the Orient. Even so, they are united in their destiny as peacemakers of the cause of human and national freedom in that huge and vital area of the world. In both of them, national freedom and the freedom of the individual are co-equal and inseparably inter-dependent.”¹ Hevesi’s dramatic language matched the excitement that filled the corridors of the AJC’s New York headquarters in the years following two seismic events in world history. In 1947 and 1948, respectively, two ancient nations – India and Israel – became modern states. The countries’ parallel birth narratives were of special interest to Hevesi, who believed that these foundational stories bred “deep and natural affinities” between the two.² Beyond sharing common values and democratic ideals, these countries, Hevesi understood, were born in the tumultuous post-World War II period in which decolonization, nationalism, and the geopolitical dynamics of the Cold War often resulted in bloodshed. Indeed, one need look no further than the 1947 Partition of India or the 1948 Arab-Israeli War in order to gain a sense of how violence and fear of instability molded the mentalities of these infant countries’ first leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru and David Ben-Gurion.

Each government’s leaders also understood that its fate would be tied, in part, to its place in world affairs and its relationships with other new countries. Nor were these governments the only agents interested in an Indo-Israeli relationship. As the very existence of the Hevesi memorandum demonstrates, Indo-Israeli relations had appeared fairly quickly on the radar of the AJC, an American lobbying group. This was no passing interest or pet project, for Hevesi’s detailed exploration of the key issues and challenges in the India-Israel dynamic came at the end of nearly a decade of AJC interest in this topic. The Hevesi memo and, more generally, the AJC’s work on this issue, raise several intriguing questions. Why and how was the AJC involved with understanding, interpreting, and responding to Indian affairs? Were the AJC’s contributions to this debate unique, or did they parallel wider policy debates within the

¹ Eugene Hevesi, “Israel and India” Memorandum, 2, August 6, 1956, Records of the American Jewish Committee [hereafter RAJC]; RG 347.7.1; folder 8; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research [hereafter YIVO].

² Hevesi, “Israel and India” Memorandum, 2.

United States about the early Cold War? What can the case of the AJC's concern for India tell us about the wider "global imagination" of American Jewish organizations and American Jews in the first decades after World War II and the Holocaust? All of these questions lead one in the direction of the most fundamental issue of why the AJC, with its headquarters thousands of miles away from Asia and nearly overwhelmed by a bold domestic agenda, sought to engage, almost immediately, with the seemingly obscure topic of India, and later, its relationship to Israel, after World War II.

A New Approach: India, Israel, and Jewish Americans

This thesis answers a call, made by Naomi W. Cohen and other historians, for a more international approach to modern Jewish Studies. Cohen rightfully posits that national borders have too often served as a constraint on scholars. Specifically, Cohen urges a change in vision that takes more seriously the role of Jewish institutions that "consciously looked to foreign sources for guidance and aid, as well as the role of impersonal social and intellectual forces, such as anti-Semitism or biblical criticism, that transcend national boundaries."³ In this vein, a reconstruction of the AJC's vision of the outside world can contribute to a deeper understanding of not only an understudied transnational story, but also of the young Committee's internal concerns and institutional priorities at a moment of geopolitical flux. Adopting a broader view of a self-proclaimed Jewish-American organization helps to reveal the multiple, and occasionally competing, pressures and influences that have guided the AJC into the present day.

Given their significance as influential actors on the regional and global stages, it is unsurprising that scholars have devoted a significant amount of attention to India and Israel, both individually and, to a lesser degree, in relation to one another. As with any bilateral relationship, the connection between India and Israel has several unique features, including evidence of contact between populations in ancient

³ Naomi W. Cohen, "The Transatlantic Connection: The American Jewish Committee and the Joint Foreign Committee in Defense of German Jews, 1933-1937," *American Jewish History* 90 (2002): 353, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/53702>.

Palestine and India.⁴ Indeed, narratives about ancient roots continue to shape how the two sides imagine one another at the official level.⁵ But in all the research in this area, one factor is conspicuously absent: the role of the United States. This hole in the scholarship is notable, since the United States has always been active in the affairs of Israel, especially in relation to the early power politics of the Cold War. After a group of Zionists declared Israeli independence on May 14, 1948, it took President Truman just a few hours to recognize the authority of the Provisional Government in Israel; the Soviet Union followed suit shortly thereafter May 17.⁶ President Truman's nearly immediate recognition of the Jewish state was in part a product of pressure on the domestic front. In the wake of the Nazi Germany's annihilation of Europe's Jews, the United States now stood, in the words of historians Jonathan D. Sarna and Jonathan Golden, "unrivaled as the largest, richest, and politically most important Jewish community in the world."⁷ Most American Jews strongly supported the establishment of a Jewish state, and as a small but important constituency within Truman's Democratic Party, played a key role in advocating for recognition before the Truman administration.⁸

Given this posture, it makes a good deal of sense that Nehru would have considered how his own orientation toward Israel would potentially alter the relationship between his newly independent country and the United States. By tracking Indian observations of U.S.-Israeli relations, political scientist P.R.

⁴ In his overview of the historiography, Nicolas Blarel states that some historians date the first contact between the ancient civilizations at around 2500 BCE. These historians rely on archaeological evidence of, for example, trans-Asian trade routes. Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 38-39.

⁵ Some Indian officials, for example, refer to these ancient links as "background evidence indicative of the potential of an important relationship between the two regions in the future." Blarel is actually quite suspicious of these attempts to use ancient connections as an explanation for the inevitability of cooperation, writing: "Given the political and cultural fragmentation of both regions over time, it is complicated to study these interactions as taking form in a continuous way between two stable and consistent geopolitical identities." Despite this, the very perception of a connection, evidenced by the active incorporation of such rhetoric into contemporary policy debates, is noteworthy, since it serves as a justification for the presupposition of cooperation and peace between the two powers. As one will discover, this raises challenges for government leaders on both sides, since the contingent realities of foreign policy are significantly more complex than this pseudo-primordial line of thinking would suggest. Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy*, 41.

⁶ Philip Marshall Brown, "The Recognition of Israel," *The American Journal of International Law* 42, no. 3 (1948): 620. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2193961>.

⁷ Jonathan D. Sarna and Jonathan Golden, "The American Jewish Experience in the Twentieth Century: Antisemitism and Assimilation," *National Humanities Center*, last modified October 2000, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/twenty/tkeyinfo/jewishexpb.htm>.

⁸ Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict Over Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 33-34.

Kumaraswamy has demonstrated that the U.S. government was, minimally, perceived of as a stakeholder in the Indo-Israeli relationship since its first days. Leading Indian figures were necessarily interested in U.S.-Israeli relations in the late 1940s. This interest emerged from multidirectional and transnational channels of advocacy. While never overly concerned with an apparently underdeveloped British colony, some Zionists had nevertheless sought to cultivate relationships with Indians, including Nehru himself, as early as the 1920s. As the United States became an increasingly prominent ground for “Zionist diplomacy,” especially during the interwar period, Indian leaders could not ignore the American views on the Zionist cause.⁹ The direct and indirect roles of the United States became particularly clear to Nehru after the establishment of the two states, as U.S. officials and Israeli diplomats in Washington, D.C. pressed for Indian recognition for Israel in late 1949 and 1950.¹⁰ If India desired to participate in the diplomatic big leagues, Nehru could no longer skirt the Israel question; India, meanwhile, became a vector of U.S.-Israeli relations.

When one looks beyond the State Department or White House, it becomes clear that there is another dimension to this relationship that remains unexplored in the historiography. During the 1930s and 1940s, American Jewry became increasingly supportive of the creation of a Jewish state. But reading too much into this fact can obscure the diversity of views within the Jewish-American community at this time, especially at its highest institutional echelons. As political scientist Michael N. Barnett notes, after the Holocaust, “American Jews...had struck upon a new balance between the national and the cosmopolitan,” and rallied behind, for instance, both the establishment of Israel and the United Nations’ adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, also in 1948.¹¹ This was also a time in which more Americans came to advocate tolerance as a cornerstone of a pluralistic society. This large-scale

⁹ P.R. Kumaraswamy, *India’s Israel Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 56-57, 61-67.

¹⁰ The pro-Indian U.S. Congressman Emanuel Celler, for example, was present at a meeting between Nehru and the first Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Eliahu Eilat. According to Eilat, Nehru conceded during the meeting that India would soon need to recognize the Jewish state, while noting that it could not be done during Nehru’s visit to the United States because he feared that such a decision would appear too colored by American influence. Kumaraswamy, *India’s Israel Policy*, 119.

¹¹ Michael N. Barnett, *The Star and the Stripes: A History of the Foreign Policies of American Jews* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 127.

cultural shift, when coupled with the Allied victory over Nazi Germany, produced a decline in anti-Semitism and the corresponding reduction of certain barriers in education and employment for middle-class Jews. Most importantly for this study, American Jews began to come together under different organizational banners, both religious and secular, devoted to a range of political and social causes.¹² Within this burgeoning political culture – one that was both wholly American and distinctly Jewish – the question of Israel was one of many on the AJC’s agenda.

This project seeks to, for the first time, connect these two threads – the emergent Indo-Israeli relationship and Jewish-American civil society – at a transformational moment in history. Given the breadth of the latter category, I use the AJC, one of the “Big Three” Jewish-American lobbying groups of the early twentieth century (along with the American Jewish Congress and Anti-Defamation League) as a window into the world of elite Jewish American opinion and advocacy, or what I mean by civil society activity, in the 1940s and 1950s.¹³ The AJC’s distinctive position and objectives within the vibrant New York intellectual community at this time prove especially useful for the historian in terms of identifying the group’s domestic and foreign policy priorities. In seeking to triangulate the relationship between the AJC, India, and Israel, this project is both necessarily transnational in orientation and simultaneously firmly situated within U.S. history. While the Indo-Israeli bilateral relationship is historically significant in its own right, I use that relationship as a particularly rich and dynamic vehicle for better understanding the AJC, its international vision, and in turn, Jewish-American civil society. But at the same time, it is impossible to treat the Indo-Israeli relationship purely as a means to an end, since the very act of identifying the AJC’s involvement with India and Israel also deepens the state of knowledge on this understudied bilateral relationship.

Borrowing from a framework introduced by Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, my methodology decenters the U.S. government as the primary channel through which one is to define how the “United

¹² Barnett, *The Star and the Stripes*, 127-33.

¹³ Steven Windmueller, ““Defenders”: National Jewish Community Relations Agencies,” in *Jewish Polity and American Civil Society: Communal Agencies and Religious Movements in the American Public Square*, eds. Alan Mittleman, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Robert Licht (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 23.

States” interacts with the world.¹⁴ This project does not displace the United States as a central actor, especially since AJC representatives actually desired a working relationship with their government. On the other hand, AJC staff members acted not as disconnected individuals, but rather as a political body with pressing institutional concerns. Insofar as this project seeks to develop an insight about foreign policy without prioritizing “track one” diplomacy on the part of the U.S. government, this project fits into a more progressive model for understanding state/non-state interaction.¹⁵ In this vein, the project also, following the suggestion of Maina Chawla Singh, deepens the state of knowledge on Indo-Israeli relations by exploring non-state-centric aspects of a topic so often overwhelmed by studies in conventional state-based diplomacy.¹⁶

“From New York to the World” focuses first and foremost on the question of representation. I am interested in the way in which the AJC talked about and represented itself and its political objectives vis-à-vis India and Israel. In order to develop the most complete portrait of the AJC in this domain, I consider both public and private forms of communication. In seeking to understand how the AJC and more generally, the Jewish-American community, represented itself during this time, I examine *Commentary* magazine from 1948 to 1956. A monthly magazine, the AJC published its first issue of *Commentary* in November 1945. While itself instructive as a form of self-representation, the organization’s self-stated goals are especially significant since the current historical consensus is that the group was successful in achieving them, as Nathan Abrams convincingly shows in his groundbreaking study of the magazine.¹⁷ “No other journal over the past half-century was,” Abram notes, “so consistently influential and important

¹⁴ Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, “What Bandwagon? Diplomatic History Today,” *The Journal of American History* 95, no. 4 (2009): 1083, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27694563>.

¹⁵ “Track One” refers to official diplomacy on the part of the government. In the U.S., this is primarily executed by the Department of State.

¹⁶ Interestingly, while some scholars write exclusively in the security domain (primarily focused on arms sales between the countries), P.R. Kumaraswamy, the leading researcher on the diplomatic history between India and Israel, has actually written in both areas. Maina Chawla Singh, “Indians and Israelis: Beyond Strategic Partnerships,” *Israel Studies* 17, no. 3 (2012): 22-23, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/israelstudies.17.3.22>. See also Stephen Blank, “Arms Sales and Technology Transfer in Indo-Israeli Relations,” *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 19, no. 1 (2005): 200-241 and P.R. Kumaraswamy, “Are Indo-Israeli Deals Doomed?,” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* 60, no. 6 (2004): 12-13.

¹⁷ AJC “Statement of Aims,” in Nathan Abrams, *Commentary Magazine, 1945-59: “A Journal of Significant Thought and Opinion”* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), 44.

in shaping the core issues of the day, sharpening the national debate and causing those who disagreed with it to respond with the same quality of thought.”¹⁸ My other primary source base is a set of internal documents, some of which have never been previously included in the scholarship, from the AJC Foreign Affairs Department Archives at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City. This paper’s core is structured by the extensive secondary scholarship in the field, which allows me to trace change over time at the institutional level after World War II and into the mid-1950s.

This study reaches four main conclusions. First, despite its reputation as an organization focused largely on Jewish life in the United States, the AJC was very much concerned with India and its relationship to Israel. Second, the AJC’s treatment of India is consistent with its positioning toward other issues at the time. That is to say, the AJC, at least initially, sought to research the India question extensively in order to understand its position toward Israel from all sides. This observation makes particular sense in the local context of the New York intellectual scene, on which social science inquiry frequently cross-pollinated with political advocacy. While the AJC’s increased interest in the Indo-Israeli relationship showed an increased openness to Zionism, I argue that the AJC’s increased concern for Israel was also a self-serving act. On one level, the AJC needed to “keep up” with American Jews’ increased support for Israel during this time. But in a way that is only partially related, the AJC was seriously concerned about expanding its own influence on the American domestic political scene, especially when considered alongside the rival American Jewish Congress and Anti-Defamation League. Facilitating and participating in Indo-Israeli dialogue and negotiations were a means to achieve that goal. As this thesis will show, the complex thinking of a group known as the New York Intellectuals, who were working during this time, shaped the dimensions of the channels within which the AJC developed and framed its positions.

Third, domestic political priorities threatened institutional viability, in what would prove to be the

¹⁸ Abrams also provides a brief overview for the historiographical significance of *Commentary*, further demonstrating its applicability here: “It has had a profound impact on American history, helping to shape its writing. Historians, sociologists, political scientists and others have used it (and still continue to do so) as a research tool, as a barometer of post-war society, for reading both wider American and Jewish currents, and for measuring the state of both.” Abrams, *Commentary Magazine, 1945-59*, xiv.

decisive factor in determining the capacity of the organization to act. While the AJC demonstrated robust thinking on popular issues like humanitarianism and postcolonialism vis-à-vis India in the immediate postwar period, external events, also primarily located in the developing world, would trigger the rise of fierce anticommunism (and its anti-Semitic offshoots) in the United States. At the institutional level, the rise of anticommunism would shrink the space in U.S. civil society for the type of aggressive internationalist thinking seen earlier, delaying the production of creative thought on India and Israel for several years in a space that previously seemed particularly ripe for this kind of work.

Finally, this paper suggests the need for the consideration of more complex relationships between state and non-state actors in order to discover their influential, mutually constitutive nature. This work also seeks to complicate a central question of contemporary Jewish Studies in the United States by showing that the AJC and other American Jewish groups were not necessarily the first actors to think about, or intervene in, the politics of the Global South. Nevertheless, they brought a unique perspective – deeply informed by the legacy of the Holocaust and rise of the Jewish state – that allowed them to address these emerging questions in ways different from the State Department, White House, or other civil society groups. The India case shows that when forced to reckon with the question of what it meant to be American and Jewish, that the AJC consciously attempted to position itself as a point of overlap on even apparently minor issues in the international relations of the early Cold War.

Chapter one explains the institutional history of the AJC, exploring the roots of its international orientation and earliest interventions into the global arena before the emergence of India or Israel. This chapter also identifies some of the key intellectual forces that would feed the development of the AJC's political positions during the first decade after World War II. Chapter two examines the way in which AJC staff and those in the Committee's orbits understood and framed the dual births of India and Israel in 1947 and 1948. I identify humanitarian rhetoric as characteristic of early AJC advocacy on both ends, creating a unified postcolonial frame within which the AJC would attempt to act as an early power broker. Chapter three considers how the escalation of the Cold War (and the rise of domestic anticommunism) by 1950 severely limited the scope of the AJC's international agenda, forcing a shift toward the prioritization

of domestic politics that would eventually spell the end of AJC involvement on India in the mid-1950s. Finally, developments in 1956 – including the Bandung Conference and Suez crisis – would spell the temporary end of AJC intervention into India.

Chapter I: Both Jewish and American

“The promotion of the cause of Judaism, is an aspiration looking to the ennoblement of the human race...”

-- Louis Marshall, Second President of the AJC, addressing the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, January 20, 1909¹⁹

As young Jewish men arrived at army bases around the United States during World War II – for many, far from their homes in urban Jewish enclaves – it did not take long for them to notice that they were different from many of their peers. Regardless of their degree of religious fervor, “eating ham for Uncle Sam” was a jarring experience for at least some of these GIs, and their Ashkenazi last names served as one of several markers of difference within the ranks.²⁰ The image of the Jewish-American soldier standing at the gates of a liberated concentration camp is a striking one, reminding him – especially if he had extended family members still living in Europe – of the dual nature of this fight.²¹ Indeed, the stories of camp liberation and the entire narrative of Jewish-American participation in World War II can be interpreted as evidence of what the historian of Jewish culture David Biale dubs the “double consciousness” of American Jews, in which, during the early twentieth century, “Jews almost universally constructed a narrative of liberation to describe their immigration to America...while retaining a strong memory and consciousness of themselves as a minority.”²² But the story of actual participation in the war is just one feature of how World War II and the legacy of the Holocaust would transform the way American Jews conceived of themselves and their role in the world, as well as how Jewish Americans would be received by the wider American populace. The war also triggered substantial changes in the global geopolitical order, some of which raised new questions about what it meant to be simultaneously American and Jewish.

¹⁹ Louis Marshall, “The American Jewish Committee” (speech, January 20, 1909), American Jewish Committee Archives, accessed March 28, 2017, <http://ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/DigitalArchive.aspx>, 13.

²⁰ Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 54-57.

²¹ Moore, *GI Jews*, 93.

²² David Biale, “The Melting Pot and Beyond: Jews and the Politics of American Identity,” in *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, ed. David Biale, Michael Galchinsky, and Susannah Heschel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 18.

The Origins of Jewish-American Advocacy

But World War II was not the first time in which American Jews were thinking about their role in the world. From the time Jewish immigrants arrived in the United States, the community was highly pluralistic and diverse, enabled by a lack of state interference in inter-congregational affairs and a well-developed sense of national belonging relative to, for example, various European contexts.²³ By the mid-nineteenth century, American Jews were making their earliest efforts to create two different types of communal institutions: philanthropic federations and representative organizations. While the federations were able to achieve a high degree of unity early on, it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that some of today's best-known and most successful representative bodies were formed. A group of elite Jews with German and Central European backgrounds founded the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in 1906, which was soon followed by the creation of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in 1912 as a direct response to the pervasive anti-Semitism in the United States. The last of the "Big Three" Jewish community relations agencies, the American Jewish Congress (AJCong), came into being in 1917 with the goal of representing the American Jews of Eastern European origin, a mission which quickly brought it into rivalry with the older Committee.²⁴

As the first major national Jewish political organization, the AJC has always been an elite institution. In early 1906, Jacob H. Schiff, a German Jew who became a millionaire investment banker after moving to the United States, formed a committee with four of his friends of similar social standing, and Louis Marshall, a prominent attorney, took the helm. The new organization immediately brought together 57 prominent Jews, including rabbis, businessmen, and scholars, from around the country to discuss how American Jewry might or should respond to the latest wave of pogroms, beginning in Kishinev in April 1903, taking place in the Russian Empire. The United States was already feeling the effects of these massacres directly as Jews fled the violence in Eastern Europe, and during a period of

²³ Daniel J. Elazar, "The Jewish Political Tradition in the English-Speaking World," in *Jewish Polity and American Civil Society: Communal Agencies and Religious Movements in the American Public Sphere*, ed. Alan Mittleman, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Robert Licht (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 2-4.

²⁴ Steven Windmueller uses the term "Big Three" to describe the AJC, ADL, and AJCong. See Windmueller, "'Defenders': National Jewish Relations Agencies," 23; Elazar, "The Jewish Political Tradition," 6-7.

liberal American immigration policy, over 80,000 Jewish refugees arrived in 1904 alone.²⁵ Despite concerns about provoking anti-Semites who spoke of a supposed worldwide Jewish conspiracy and after several more meetings, the men officially founded the American Jewish Committee in New York on November 11, 1906 with the mission of “[preventing] the infringement of the civil and religious rights of Jews in any part of the world.”²⁶ Mayer Sulzberger, a Philadelphia judge and scholar of Hebrew, would serve as the AJC’s president for its first six years.

For its first thirty years, the AJC operated as a small organization that performed a limited range of activities. The AJC remained largely insular from the Christian-majority United States, and Louis Marshall, who took over the presidency in 1912, directed its efforts toward Jewish communities in need. These included lobbying the American government to continue to take in Eastern European refugees (although the number would be severely restricted with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924), providing food aid to Jews in Palestine, and pressing foreign governments to adopt legal protections for Jews in the wake of World War I.²⁷ As this short list makes clear, the AJC was, virtually from its inception, deeply international in its vision. The rise of fascism in Europe, World War II, and the Holocaust would force an even more robust embrace of this position as it became increasingly clear that the rights and lives of millions of fellow Jews were under intense attack.

By the 1930s, the challenges facing the AJC were mounting. Anti-Semitism was on the rise in the United States, partially a result of Nazi support for U.S. anti-Semitic and even explicitly pro-Nazi groups, the most famous of which, the German-American Bund, originated as the “Friends of Hitler Movement.”²⁸ Although it remained institutionally weak, the group loudly and publicly promoted its racist message through mailings, violent engagement with Jews on the streets, and the organization of

²⁵ Marianne R. Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong: The American Jewish Committee, 1945-2006* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 3-5.

²⁶ The American Jewish Committee, *Proceedings*, vol. 7 (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1914), quoted in Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 6.

²⁷ European states would largely walk back on the treaties designed to protect minority communities, including Jewish ones, after WWI, while the U.S.’ 1924 revamp of its immigration laws would end the influx of Jewish immigration. Sanua argues that the law “deliberately discriminated against newcomers from eastern and southern Europe.” Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 9-12.

²⁸ Joachim Remak, ““Friends of the New Germany”: The Bund and German-American Relations,” *The Journal of Modern History* 29, no. 1 (1957): 38, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1872584>.

children's summer camps eerily reminiscent of those in the Nazi state. A 1939 Bund rally at Madison Square Garden, in the heart of New York City, drew 20,000 participants who roared out "Heil Hitler."²⁹ Amid the economic and social turmoil of the Great Depression, foreign direct intervention stoked the flames of anti-Semitism in a country with a long history of homegrown anti-Jewish sentiment dating back to the colonial period.³⁰ It was in this social environment and despite Marshall's initial underestimation of the scope of the Nazi threat that the AJC would be forced to engage.³¹ AJC members cooperated with law enforcement to identify Nazis in the United States, combated anti-Semitism in the media through an ambitious educational program, and partially financed the *Zentralverein* (the German-Jewish defense group).³² For the AJC, education was particularly important, as it represented the key strategy for drawing the public into the "liberal tradition" that had provided the elite Jewish families of the AJC leadership with opportunities to find success in the United States.³³

The Holocaust, Its Legacy, and the International Community

But even as it became more active in the defense of Jews on the international scene, the Committee's activism was limited in several ways. First, the charismatic and hugely influential Marshall died unexpectedly in 1929. This loss just barely preceded both the Great Depression and Hitler's seizure of power in Germany, which would apply harsh pressures on Jewish groups from both the domestic and international directions. Furthermore, the organization had to remain discreet in its activities, lest it lend support to any number of malicious rumors regarding a supposed Jewish conspiracy circulating in the country. Here, it is important to recall the ferocity with which anti-Semitism, often revolving around the theme of government conspiracy, reared its head at this time. For instance, the "Jew Deal" was a

²⁹ "German American Bund," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Holocaust Encyclopedia), accessed March 22, 2017, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005684>.

³⁰ Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3-12, 105-127.

³¹ Cohen argues that Marshall's failure to correctly size up the Nazi threat was indicative of the attitude of many European and American Jews in the years before the passage of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, as they "preferred to close their eyes to the long-term danger of Nazism." Cohen, "The Transatlantic Connection," 354-355.

³² Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 12-13; Cohen, "The Transatlantic Connection," 354.

³³ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 10; Cohen, "The Transatlantic Connection," 356.

commonly heard phrase for President Roosevelt's bold economic program. Likewise, top government officials remained "extremely sensitive" to charges that Jews were duping the country into marching into another war, echoing a rumor developed after the First World War.³⁴ And finally, this institutional realignment took place within a national political context within which the U.S. federal government did little to support Jewish refugees attempting to flee Europe. Jews were not barred from exiting the Reich until October 1941; before this time, the Nazi government pushed many to simply leave. But the United States, like other Western powers, refused to admit any large influx of immigrants and especially not Jewish refugees, who were regarded as highly suspect.³⁵ Holocaust scholar David S. Wyman offers copious and compelling evidence to suggest that despite the U.S. government's justifications for refusing to save Europe's Jews, such as supposed risks about spies posing as refugees or a rescue operation detracting from the war effort, "the real obstacle was the absence of a strong desire to rescue Jews."³⁶ The domestic political reality of the absence of extensive American support for a campaign to rescue Europe's Jews extinguished any desire on the part of elected officials, starting with President Roosevelt, to express even rhetorical support for a humanitarian intervention.³⁷

The Committee expressed a profound sense of urgency and dismay in the lead-up to and during the war in Europe. The organization's leaders hired many new staff members to support more aggressive educational efforts, which remained the AJC's primary channel of activism. 1938 witnessed the launch of the AJC's *Contemporary Jewish Record*, a journal designed to document and respond to important events of Jewish life around the world. While the AJC's research arm had already been in the business of collecting significant writings, the creation of the *Contemporary Jewish Record* represented the Committee's first attempt to provide information, primarily about developments in scholarly or mass culture, in a structured way, and its creation was largely a response to the explosion of new information

³⁴ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 11.

³⁵ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 10-11.

³⁶ David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 336-39.

³⁷ Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, 312.

emerging out of Europe during the previous decade.³⁸ A new sub-committee, the Survey Committee, was also founded during that year with the goal of coordinating and executing an educational program using different forms of media, including television, radio, and even comics, and would eventually grow to consist of over 100 staff members.³⁹ Proclaiming in their 1939 annual report that “the present crisis makes the work of the Committee more than ever significant,” the leaders of the AJC would become increasingly tuned into and motivated to act by the rapidly deteriorating situation in Europe.⁴⁰ The publication of new information regarding the Nazi-run mass extermination of Jews would eventually lead AJC President Maurice Wertheim, who served briefly from 1941 to 1943, to join other prominent Jewish leaders like Rabbi Stephen Wise of AJCong in a meeting with President Roosevelt on December 8, 1942. But the president was not receptive to their pleas, including a suggestion for increasing immigration to Palestine, which had been barred by the British. The AJC and other Jewish groups began to push back against U.S. inaction, participating in large demonstrations and even helping to expose Undersecretary of State Breckenridge Long for lying to Congress about the statistics surrounding visas and refugees, ultimately resulting in his removal from office.⁴¹ But despite the group’s noble intentions, the lack of support from the U.S. government and other Western powers ultimately proved catastrophic in the fates of millions of European Jews.

In 1945, the devastation of World War II and the complacency of the international community in responding to war crimes and genocide generated a shift toward internationalist, cosmopolitan thinking within international institutions generally. As Michael N. Barnett explains, the experiences of two world

³⁸ Abrams argues that the *Contemporary Jewish Record* remained a largely marginal publication whose aim was more to “preserve” than to reflect upon developments in the way that its successor, *Commentary*, would. But the main reason for its poor reception had more to do with its connection to the AJC, whose elitism and non-Zionism alienated it and its new magazine from the Jewish-American mainstream. The publication would not begin to attract more prominent intellectual writers until the mid-1940s, where it did, significantly, provide a forum for Jewish thinkers to publicly wrestle with questions of Jewish identity in the postwar period. Already beginning to look and sound significantly different from the type of magazine it was initially created to be, the *Record* would be officially abandoned in November 1945 following the AJC’s internal restructuring around the end of the war. Elliot Cohen would serve as editor of its replacement, *Commentary*. Abrams, *Commentary Magazine, 1945-59*, 30-44.

³⁹ The American Jewish Committee, *Annual Report*, vol. 41, January 29, 1939, http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1939_1940_9_AJCAnnualReport.pdf, 640.; Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 13.

⁴⁰ The American Jewish Committee, *Annual Report*, vol. 41, 640.

⁴¹ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 15.

wars and the Holocaust made clear “the destructive power of nationalism,” and served as a justification for developing new mechanisms to keep such dangerous politics in check.⁴² In the coming years, European and American leaders pursued international cooperation on humanitarian issues more seriously and sought to reconceptualize sovereignty based around a universal obligation to protect all peoples. This reconceptualization held particular currency with Jewish thinkers like Raphael Lemkin, who played the leading role in establishing the legal groundwork for and campaigning for the ratification of an international convention on genocide. Importantly, Lemkin developed his interest in the legal architecture of outlawing genocide against the backdrop of his native Poland, where he witnessed a severe uptick in deadly anti-Jewish violence in the 1910s and 1920s. It was during this period, and particularly in the wake of the 1915 Armenian genocide, that Lemkin began to think about the intersection of sovereignty and humanitarianism, writing: “Sovereignty of states...implies conducting an independent foreign and internal policy, building of schools, construction of roads...[and it] cannot be conceived as the right to kill millions of innocent people.”⁴³ Lemkin and other Jewish thinkers were forerunners in the development of comprehensive internationalist thinking that would motivate the establishment of another postwar institution, the United Nations (U.N.). The United Nations espoused the ideals of and laid the legal groundwork for the enforcement of human rights in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights and International Refugee Convention, to name just two examples.⁴⁴ Both haunted by the Holocaust and inspired by well-established liberal values, Jews from around the world – including René Cassin, Hersch Lauterpacht, and Hannah Arendt – often played major roles in these projects.⁴⁵

Jewish Thinkers in New York

Earlier intellectual developments also exerted influence upon the AJC’s approach. In the 1930s,

⁴² Michael N. Barnett, *The Star and the Stripes*, 122.

⁴³ Raphael Lemkin, quoted in John Cooper, *Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for the Genocide Convention* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 15.

⁴⁴ Barnett, *The Star and the Stripes*, 123.

⁴⁵ Barnett, *The Star and the Stripes*, 123-24.

the epicenter of the emergent Jewish intellectual scene was the City College of New York.⁴⁶ A college education provided young Jewish-Americans with an opportunity to move out of the ghetto, but in the wake of World War I, elite institutions developed admissions policies that *de jure* or *de facto* reduced the number of Jewish students in attendance. In this regard, City College stood out as a notable exception.⁴⁷ There, a vibrant intellectual scene emerged; surprisingly, this took place not as much in the classroom, but rather in the cafeteria, where the anti-Stalinists of Alcove No.1 – who would later go on to form the core of the New York Intellectuals – engaged in often-explosive debates with the Stalinists of Alcove No. 2. In an interview with historian Alexander Bloom, one such member of the former group, Irving Howe, described City College as possessing “a sense of intellectual life as a form of combat, the sharp division, the polemic...[a]nd this has its origins in the Jewish intellectual world, has its origins in the Jewish disputatiousness and the talmudic [sic] disputatiousness...[it] also has origins in the Russian political-intellectual world, which was ferocious.”⁴⁸ During the 1930s, men like Howe and Irving Kristol continued to refine their anti-Stalinist Marxism as part of a coalescing group of Leftist thinkers and also sought to communicate that message widely. Their ideas, and the instruments that they established to achieve this goal, would go on to serve as powerful intellectual feeders for AJC political advocacy.

The foundation of *Partisan Review* in 1934 by the Communist Party-linked John Reed Club in New York marked the opening of a sort of clearinghouse for a Marxist thought. Under the editorship of Philip Rahv and William Phillips, *Partisan Review*, according to James B. Gilbert, represented “a type of cultural criticism in the European tradition, which has, as its subject, the relationships of art, culture, literature, and politics.”⁴⁹ Given the enormous traction that *Partisan Review* gained among the Alcove No.

⁴⁶ For a vivid and informative look into life at City College and the lives of four of the most prominent Jewish intellectuals of this period (Irving Kristol, Irving Howe, Daniel Bell, and Nathan Glazer), see the documentary film *Arguing the World*, directed by Joseph Dorman (New York, NY: First Run Features, 2011).

⁴⁷ At schools like Yale and Harvard, discriminatory admissions policies were just one factor working against would-be Jewish students. Those few that did manage to gain entry to the Ivy League faced serious discrimination on campus, reflective of a widespread anti-Semitism present in the American academy after World War I. This also had the effect of severely limiting the number of Jewish professors at top schools. Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 29-31.

⁴⁸ Irving Howe, quoted in Bloom, *Prodigal Sons*, 39.

⁴⁹ James B. Gilbert, “*Partisan Review: New York, 1934 –*,” in *The American Radical Press, 1880-1960*, vol. 2, ed. Joseph R. Conlin (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), 548-49.

1 members, it is unsurprising that the magazine's orientation ran closely in line with that of the emergent intellectuals who feasted on it. At its origin, the magazine was very radical, stressing the intellectual's role in creating "proletarian literature" that would drive revolutionary change.⁵⁰ But while the members of Alcove No. 1 were always anti-Stalinist and indeed, identified primarily with a variety of different ideologies (Irving Kristol and Irving Howe were Trotskyites, Daniel Bell a socialist, and Nathan Glazer a left-wing Zionist), the increasing brutality of the Soviet regime throughout the decade precipitated a more general shift against Stalin.⁵¹ In response, the writers at *Partisan Review* now envisioned an intellectual whose "self-proclaimed independence and his ostentatious freedom could promote the cause of radical culture."⁵² Withdrawal from the world of corrupted ideology now emerged as the best solution; significantly, this seemingly slight alteration represented the first of several rightward steps that the New York Intellectuals would take in the coming decades.

World War II triggered an ideological reorientation at *Partisan Review* and among the New York Intellectuals generally. First, by 1939, cultural nationalism was exploding across continents, war had broken out, and Hitler and Stalin had signed a Nonaggression Pact.⁵³ Here, Judy Kutulas interprets the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact as a transformative moment: "[T]he Nazi-Soviet Pact did not end quarrels on the left; it made them worse. As anti-Stalinism lost its Marxist perspective, it transferred its concerns. Liberal anticommunism emerged during in 1940 and provided intellectual legitimacy for a post-Pact red scare that directly challenged progressive integrity..."⁵⁴ For the anti-Stalinists (as well as for liberals), the Non-Aggression Pact confirmed their worst fears about the Stalin regime, since communism was

⁵⁰ Gilbert, "*Partisan Review*," 549.

⁵¹ As the film *Arguing the World* (and to a lesser degree, Gilbert) makes clear, violence and denials of rights (e.g., the Moscow Trials) were especially troubling to those in New York. In his highly comprehensive volume, Karl Schlögel acknowledges the global reach of Stalin's terror: "Human lives were abruptly cut short in 1937. It sent shock waves through the entire nation that could be felt far beyond its frontiers. In a single year some 2 million people were arrested, approaching 700,000 were murdered and almost 1.3 million were deported to camps and labor colonies. That was a hitherto inconceivable increase in suffering even in a country that had already experienced huge losses of life." *Arguing the World*, directed by Dorman; Gilbert, "*Partisan Review*," 549; Karl Schlögel, *Moscow, 1937* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012), 1.

⁵² Gilbert, "*Partisan Review*," 549.

⁵³ Gilbert, "*Partisan Review*," 551.

⁵⁴ Judy Kutulas, *The Long War: The Intellectual People's Front and Anti-Stalinism, 1930-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 186.

understood as wholly incompatible with even a cynical agreement with the Nazis. Subsequently, an invigorated liberal ideology became pervasive in the *Partisan Review*, and Rahv and Phillips even threw their support behind American involvement in the war.⁵⁵ This shift was both a matter of ideology and an issue of self-preservation, as the brutality of the Stalin regime and the Soviet Union's new alliance with Hitler resulted in serious soul-searching on the part of these thinkers. They simply could no longer support an ideology that had, in their eyes, become so badly polluted through its ties to systematic violence and now, fascism. The abandonment of Marxism represented a fundamental metamorphosis in the worldview of the Jewish-American Intellectuals, as the intellectual historian Neil Jumonville explains:

First, in the late 1930s and 1940s the New York intellectuals began to abandon their earlier ideological faith and prophetic partisanship for a more modest and precise outlook based on reason, analysis, and pragmatism. This crossover was a genuinely critical crossing: a critically important crossing from one conception of the critical role to another in the volatile Cold War world. In this reorientation that, in turn, influenced the rest of the intellectual community, they became rationalists and pluralists who opposed absolutism, moral crusades, ideology, and intuition. Their intense rationalism was produced partly by their leftwing factional arguments in their youth, debates in which they learned to use reason to destroy an opponent's position. It was also a result of their disillusionment with ideology in the thirties and forties at the hands of Stalin, Hitler, and, later, Senator Joseph McCarthy. In the international arena their rationalist and pluralist outlook was usually referred to as antitotalitarianism.⁵⁶

This change at the core of the New York Intellectuals' worldview would prove to be deeply consequential for the AJC. As a site of intellectual cross-pollination, this new approach to conceiving of and acting in the world quickly found traction at the AJC. Furthermore, the organization would not need to wait long for a test case. World War II created major changes in the global geopolitical order to which Jewish-American civil society had to respond to. The case of India soon brought together the political and cultural pressures – and the ideological orientation and scripts – that had become firmly established in New York by 1945: cosmopolitanism, cultural criticism, liberal anticommunism, and pragmatism. Like in the case of the Jewish soldiers, interacting with India would force the AJC, deeply influenced by liberal anticommunist Intellectuals, to wrestle with what it meant to be both Jewish and American.

⁵⁵ Gilbert, "*Partisan Review*," 552.

⁵⁶ Neil Jumonville, *Critical Crossings: The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), xii-xiii.

Chapter II: American Ideas, Global Vision

“It should be clear that both as Jews and Americans we have a stake in the just solution...”

-- *Jewish Post-War Problems: A Study Course*,
first published by the AJC in September 1942⁵⁷

The Second World War wrought dramatic changes in the global political, economic, and social orders, with consequences for regions far beyond the theaters of Europe and East Asia. Given the group’s already-heightened interest in international affairs, the AJC, in both its internal documents and external communications, naturally monitored these shifts and, especially in the wake of the Holocaust, their implications for Jewish communities worldwide. As early as September 1942, the AJC published *Jewish Post-War Problems*, an eight-volume course that informed and speculated on a wide range of topics, including the future status of Jews around the world, the responsibilities of the Jewish-American community, and the legal structure of new governments. Max Gottschalk, Director of the AJC’s Research Institute on Peace and Post-War Problems, oversaw the production of the course. The AJC’s Committee on Peace Studies had recommended the establishment of such a research organ in September 1940, well before U.S. entry into the war, and the Administrative Committee subsequently brought it into existence in January 1941 “with the function of ascertaining, integrating, and publishing the requisite facts that will promote a better understanding of the Jewish situation by the scholarly and scientific integrity of its findings, provide a reliable basis for subsequent efforts in the field of reconstruction and rehabilitation.”⁵⁸ The course was accessible to a wide audience, even including excerpts from works by familiar figures such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover. In turn, community organizations around the country rushed to order copies.⁵⁹

Equipped with a well-supported apparatus for collecting information, the AJC’s reactions to

⁵⁷ American Jewish Committee, *Jewish Post-War Problems: A Study Course*, vol. 1, *Why Study Post-War Problems*, (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1942-43), 13.

⁵⁸ American Jewish Committee, *Research Institute on Peace and Post-War Problems: Preliminary Announcement* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1941), accessed March 28, 2017, <http://utdr.utoledo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2169&context=ur-87-68>, 9-10.

⁵⁹ “Studies of Post-war Jewish Problems Published by American Jewish Committee,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, October 12, 1942, accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.jta.org/1942/10/12/archive/studies-of-post-war-jewish-problems-published-by-american-jewish-committee>.

different events around the globe were both varied and complex. For instance, the AJC sought to support the material needs of Jews living in the new state of Israel, formed in May 1948. But the organization, which now claimed to speak for the world's largest Jewish community, struggled with how to philosophically approach *the* Jewish state. And while the AJC's interest in Israel is perhaps unsurprising, its robust thinking on the newly decolonized world, especially in South Asia, begs further inquiry. As the organization's works from the immediate postwar years show, the AJC staff employed a familiar language of humanitarianism to justify its support for Jews in Israel, and invoked a similar frame in its earliest documented discussions of the Indian subcontinent. This was both because of the group's prewar engagement in this area and the immediate legacy of the Holocaust, which placed humanitarian questions front and center before the international community. Through the employment of humanitarian rhetoric, the AJC cognitively connected India and Israel through the lens of postcolonialism; within this dynamic, the Committee viewed early Indo-Israel relations as a dynamic within which it could gain political power. The prospect of AJC intervention in India, finally, was enabled by favorable political conditions in the United States, within which the AJC supported an inclusive domestic agenda. Analyzing the AJC's response to the virtually simultaneous births of India and Israel provides a window for understanding how the group reached out into its cultural domain in New York in order to craft an approach to a world in flux, while also shedding light on the institution's unique, contingent political imperatives in its struggle for viability and relevance. At this postwar moment of transition, the Committee's intellectual dive into the India question sheds light on the development of their uniquely Jewish-American perspective on the postwar world.

Israel and the International Vision

The *Study Course* provides a rich starting point for investigating the AJC's international vision. The volumes had a distinctly social scientific tone, seeking to analyze problems through various lenses and outline a range of possible solutions. Unit VII ("Relief, Reconstruction and Migration"), for instance, opened by stating the importance of a stable global economic order: "A durable peace...will depend not

only on the political shape of the post-war world, but also on the economic and social life within its political framework. The future of the Jews is bound closely with the economic order of the world as a whole.”⁶⁰ This logic speaks to the overall focus of the unit, which is almost exclusively concerned with questions of the physical and political reconstruction of European locales and the implications of these actions for Jewish communities.⁶¹ This generalization holds true, too, in the immediate postwar cases highlighted by historian Marianne Sanua as particularly important: anti-Semitism abroad generally, increased threats against the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East, displaced persons, and domestic issues (anti-Semitism in the U.S. and *de facto* discrimination in areas like housing).⁶² While the leaders of the AJC remained thoroughly international in their orientation (they were, after all, still looking at Europe and to a lesser extent, Palestine), the *scope* of their priorities remained rather limited. Namely, the AJC advocated for Jews and issues concerning them.

This was especially true in the case of Israel. Support for Israel among the American Jews was and still is not “natural and inevitable,” as it is commonly thought to be.⁶³ This was especially true in the first half of the twentieth century, when the leadership of early Jewish-American civil organizations (largely composed of elite German Jews) remained deeply concerned that an embrace of Zionism would jeopardize the acceptance of their assimilation among other Americans.⁶⁴ And while the formation of Israel undoubtedly represented a major, even life-saving opportunity for tens of thousands of displaced

⁶⁰ American Jewish Committee, *Jewish Post-War Problems: A Study Course*, vol. 7, *Relief, Reconstruction and Migration* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1942-43), 7, accessed March 10, 2017, <https://ia902709.us.archive.org/30/items/JewishPostWarProblems/JewishPostWarProblems.pdf>.

⁶¹ American Jewish Committee, *Jewish Post-War Problems*, vol. 7, 3-6.

⁶² Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 35-56.

⁶³ Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 12.

⁶⁴ Rather than being “intrinsic to [their] Jewishness,” Waxman argues that five factors account for high levels of support among American Jews for Israel in the contemporary context: (i) familism, or the sense that Israeli Jews are deserving of help in the ways in Jews in need are entitled to support; (ii) fear, including a fear for the safety of Israelis, other Jews of the Diaspora, and themselves in the event of a spike in anti-Semitism; (iii) functionality, in that American Jews are indeed quite physically safe but express anxiety about assimilation, in which support for Israel becomes a vehicle for expressing a Jewish identity believed to be under threat; (iv) faith, especially for more orthodox Jewish communities who understand the Land of Israel within a greater, deeper theological framework; and (v) fantasy, in which the construction of Israel as a “homeland” provides American Jews with a means of expressing their own concerns and goals as a community. Taken together, Waxman believes that in contrast to adopting a “pro-Zionist” position, American support for the Jewish state can more appropriately be referred to as “pro-Israelism.” Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 23-30.

Jews, it also brought to life the perennial and, to many American Jews, deeply uncomfortable question of what it meant to be simultaneously Jewish and American.⁶⁵ The leaders of the AJC experienced this discomfort in a particularly acute way. Composed primarily of highly educated, assimilated Reform Jews, the AJC, in the words of Zvi Ganin, “viewed the Zionist idea as a threat to the very essence of its belief in the emancipation and integration of Jews in America.”⁶⁶ Supporting a state rooted in religious nationalism ran wholly counter to their liberal understanding of nationhood, especially at the Committee’s highest echelon. Joseph M. Proskauer, who took over the presidency of the AJC in 1943, even went as far as to call the idea of a Zionist state “a Jewish catastrophe.”⁶⁷

But in fact, the very push for a Jewish state had already activated the political capacity of the AJC. In the face of such depravity in the former heart of the Jewish world, Proskauer’s non-Zionist position had become a non-starter.⁶⁸ This change had both personal and political dimensions. On one hand, as Proskauer came to better understand the plight of the European Jews, he increasingly saw legitimacy in Zionist claims that portrayed Israel as country in which Jews could ensure their own self-defense. But Proskauer also realized that by 1948, both the refugees and most American Jews were behind the idea of a Jewish state, and that AJC opposition would marginalize the organization amid the development of a broad consensus.⁶⁹ As diplomats debated the future of Palestine at the United Nations, Proskauer, working closely with his vice-president Jacob Blaustein, lobbied within the Democratic Party as well as at the State Department and White House. Proskauer had encouraged David Ben-Gurion to

⁶⁵ Zvi Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship: American Jewish Leadership and Israel, 1948-1957* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), xv.

⁶⁶ Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship*, 3.

⁶⁷ Proskauer was no stranger to the realities of anti-Semitism in the U.S. and wider world. Born in Mobile, Alabama, he regularly experienced harassment as a child because of his religious identity; even after graduating from Columbia Law School, he found many jobs at New York firms closed off to Jewish lawyers. His anti-Zionist stance is therefore particularly striking, given that Zionist leaders repeatedly stressed the importance of the Jewish state for protecting the security of the Jewish people. But Proskauer held true to his position, even as the Nazi extermination effort was reaching its gravest levels at the time he assumed the presidency of the AJC. Joseph M. Proskauer, quoted in Morris David Waldman, *Nor by Power* (New York: International Universities Press, 1953), 240, quoted in Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship*, 4.

⁶⁸ The “non-Zionist” position, first developed under Marshall in response to the 1917 Balfour Declaration, represented a “middle course” between Zionism and anti-Zionism that closely mirrored the divide between American Zionism and European Zionism articulated by Waxman. Non-Zionists supported rendering humanitarian assistance to Jews in Palestine, but rejected calls for state formation. Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship*, 4-5.

⁶⁹ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 23.

cooperate with the United States in hashing out a partition plan, although Ben-Gurion, understandably skeptical of outside influence, eventually moved ahead and rather suddenly declared independence in May 1948. The AJC remained active in the political activities of the early state, although its advice on matters such as the drafting of a constitution was delinked from the extremely volatile situation on the ground. Before turning over the presidency to Blaustein in 1949, Proskauer oversaw the passage of three resolutions urging the U.S. government to help effectuate a partition plan, encouraging Israel to adopt the basic governing structures of other Western democracies, and significantly, reminding leaders of the young state that they represented *only* the Israeli Jewry, in what to Blaustein represented a critical concession from Ben-Gurion.⁷⁰

As president, Blaustein – a non-New Yorker and from an Eastern European family – was primarily concerned with forging consensus around the question of the Jewish state both in the United States and in Israel. The Committee worked to educate the American public about the nature of the new country, used universal language to talk about it like other Western democracies, and publicly hoped for peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.⁷¹ And while Israel would not come into existence until May of 1948, the questions surrounding Zionism, in addition to myriad historical developments abroad and at home during wartime and immediately afterwards, left three key issues and concerns on the AJC's table by the start of that year. How should the organization continue to respond to Israel and, more generally, position itself relative to the emergent post-imperial world (as its internal documents demonstrate its interest in)? Relatedly, in light of the Holocaust, how should the AJC develop a responsive cosmopolitan ideology capable of combatting discrimination generally? And of course, what issues would the organization pursue in order to maintain relevance as an institution? In this vein, India, perhaps unexpectedly, would quickly prove to be a highly fertile test case for the application of the Committee's multi-pronged, cosmopolitan ideology, as the country's own postcolonial situation richly encapsulated all of these questions. Ultimately, the AJC's attempt to construct meaning out of the case of India would

⁷⁰ Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship*, 6-8.

⁷¹ Until both the end of his presidency in 1954 and his life in 1970, the issue of Israel would remain central to Blaustein's work on behalf of the Jewish community. Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship*, 11.

reveal a simultaneous reconstruction of itself. In this reconstruction, the Committee would develop a highly dynamic answer to the question, suitable for the early Cold War political context, of what it meant to be both Jewish and American.

Looking Inward, Moving Outward

When confronted with the emergence of Israel, elite American Jews activated the language of humanitarianism that had now held currency globally and especially in New York. The Jewish-American community's response to the formation of the Jewish state was complex, generally representing a "fusion of Zionism with American patriotism."⁷² In contrast to the traditional European conception of Zionism, which stressed the importance of the return of all Jews to their ancient homeland, Dov Waxman argues that "American Zionism was aimed only at helping persecuted European Jews settle in Palestine, and did not call for American Jews themselves to make *aliyah* [relocate to Israel]."⁷³ The first Jewish-American Supreme Court justice, Louis Brandeis, eloquently articulated this "fusion": "Every American Jew who aids in advancing Jewish settlement in Palestine, though he feels that neither he nor his descendants will live there, will likewise be a better man and better American for doing so."⁷⁴ Even before 1948, American Jews "became a vital source of economic and political support for the *Yishuv* (the prestate Jewish community in Palestine) as it sought to achieve sovereignty and prepared for war with the Palestinians and the surrounding Arab states."⁷⁵ In this sense, the AJC's approach to Israel was reflective of the American Jewry's, as both groups justified support for Israel with broadly conceived notions of collective responsibility and humanitarianism. This does not negate the unique importance of Israel to the AJC as a fundamentally Jewish project, but it does reject the premise that AJC support for the Jewish state was simply an organic act of reflexivity.

⁷² Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 32.

⁷³ Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 32.

⁷⁴ Louis Brandeis, quoted in Jonathan Sarna, "The Question of Shililat Ha-Galut in American Zionism," in *Beyond Survival and Philanthropy: American Jewry and Israel*, ed. Allon Gal (Jerusalem and Detroit: Magnes Press and Wayne State University Press, 1996), 59, quoted in Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 32.

⁷⁵ Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 34.

And it was precisely the domestic realm that provided the AJC leadership with the impetus to begin thinking beyond exclusively Jewish issues. In the postwar United States, the AJC embraced the ideals of religious and cultural pluralism. For example, World War II – a “crucible of unity,” according to Stuart Svonkin – provided the impetus for the development of the intergroup relations movement.⁷⁶ The goal of this movement was the end of discrimination against racial and religious minority groups; within it, American Jewish groups played “the leading role.”⁷⁷ The involvement of Jewish groups, including the AJC, in this movement represented a major change in the self-definition of major civil society organizations. After the war, these groups were no longer exclusively defenders of Jews; now, their mission was much broader, as they advocated for non-Jewish victims of prejudice.⁷⁸ The justification for such advocacy was the supposed existence of, to borrow from John Higham, a “theory of the unitary character of prejudice,” in which all forms of discrimination, including anti-Semitism, were believed to share a common origin.⁷⁹ After some internal debate about expanding the scope of the AJC’s mission, the organization officially committed itself to the movement at its Executive Committee meeting in January 1947.⁸⁰ This declaration had real consequences in terms of the AJC’s political activity. Alongside the ADL, the AJC embarked on an aggressive educational campaign that seized upon a variety of different media in order to spread its universal message of anti-discrimination.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 23.

⁷⁷ Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 1-2.

⁷⁸ Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 11.

⁷⁹ John Higham, *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America*, rev. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 155, cited in Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 18.

⁸⁰ Svonkin presents three main drivers behind the AJC’s adoption of the pro-intergroup relations position. First, his reading of the primary evidence suggests that leaders of the group were convinced of the “unitary character” thesis, in which the Jewish struggle for civil rights was fundamentally inseparable from the campaigns of other minority groups. Second, and significantly for this study, Svonkin claims that AJC staff had become convinced that intergroup relations could serve as an effective platform upon which the United States government could advance its foreign policy interests and therefore limit the growth of totalitarianism. Finally, AJC members seemed thoroughly convinced that earlier efforts at the integration of immigrants whose objective was the elimination of cultural differences had failed. In this sense, the intergroup relations movement emerged a new and rich opportunity to breed peace at home on the basis of consciousness and respect for cultural and religious difference. Thus, the AJC endorsed a so-called “third way” between the full erasure or embrace of differences between groups that the experts of the time dubbed “unity in diversity.” Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 33; Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 21-22.

⁸¹ The Committee’s systematic approach to marketing intergroup relations was in fact itself partially a product of the war, as the AJC’s methods and techniques (including the use of radio, television, and print advertising) closely mirrored those of the U.S. government’s Office of War Information (OWI). Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 42.

By 1945, the AJC was translating its domestic vision of universal anti-discrimination into its international thinking. In 1947, the AJC sought support from the Ford Foundation – a major, New York-based philanthropic agency – for the establishment of an institute devoted to intergroup cooperation. In their proposal, the staff members made the connection to foreign relations explicit: “Good will and understanding among racial, religious and national origin groups are of the utmost importance for the security and welfare of the United States, and for the protection of American institutions and the American way of life from the encroachments of totalitarianism.”⁸² Such a proposal is hugely significant in terms of institutional development. First, the AJC argued that by fighting discrimination at home, the U.S. government could more effectively promote its foreign policy. At this early stage, then, the AJC partially situated its support for civil rights in the international realm.⁸³ Second, rather than contact the federal government directly, the AJC instead reached out to another arm of civil society, and particularly, a non-Jewish agency, reflecting an increased willingness on the part of organization to adapt in order to meet a more ambitious list of priorities. Finally, the AJC’s full-fledged embrace of civil rights can be read as a corollary to the developing language of humanitarianism taking hold, especially among Jewish intellectuals after the Holocaust. This case, then, represents one of the earliest applications of such language to a non-Jewish subject, which would prove to be an essential strategy in the development of a position toward India just a few months later.⁸⁴ Indeed, the AJC was beginning to think about India at a

⁸² “AJC Proposal for “Ford Institute” on Intergroup Relations,” February 5, 1947, 1, quoted in Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 21.

⁸³ Interestingly, the U.S. federal government would fully embrace a very similar position in the 1950s, arguing, for example, in its *amicus curiae* brief in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) that segregation damaged the U.S. government’s credibility in advancing the argument for democracy as part of the Cold War. Mary L. Dudziak, “*Brown* as a Cold War Case,” *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 1 (2004): 34, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3659611>. See also Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁸⁴ The New York Intellectuals had a complex relationship toward Black Americans in the postwar period. In his chapter, Seth Forman argues that a “feeling of marginality” among the New York Intellectuals was a key driver toward radicalism before the war. After the war and into the 1950s, these thinkers largely abandoned social alienation, perceiving it a threat to the ideals of rationalism and modernism that they cherished. This shift ran in contrast to the philosophy of the “Black hipster” in New York, whose political radicalism and even music ran in contrast to those ideals, and was criticized harshly by the neo-conservative icon Norman Podhoretz. The question of a distinct Black identity challenged the New York Intellectuals to wrestle with their own identities as Jews and Americans, in a process whose legacy continues to be debated. See Seth Forman, “The New York Intellectuals and

moment in which American cultural scripts about the country were slowly starting to change.

India in the (Jewish-)American Imagination

In the early twentieth century, Americans' understanding of India had cultural roots, reflective of traditional stereotypes concerning colonized and nonwhite peoples. During this time, Americans came to know India largely through the paternalistic writings of white Westerners like Rudyard Kipling, Mark Twain, and especially Katherine Mayo, which depicted India as uncivilized and culturally backward.⁸⁵ In spite of these powerful cultural scripts, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt enthusiastically supported closer ties with India, and officials at the State Department discussed the potential economic advantage of a partnership as early as May 1941. Furthermore, as a committed anti-imperialist, Roosevelt stressed the importance of guaranteeing eventual Indian independence so much so that the India question became a frequent point of tension between him and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. After numerous diplomatic scuffles surrounding U.S. support for Indian nationalists, Roosevelt was eventually forced to dial back his advocacy so as not to upset the United States' critical alliance with the United Kingdom.⁸⁶

In fact, Roosevelt's position was reflective of a more general shift within the United States toward more constructive thinking about India. Roger Baldwin, the founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, had advocated for Indian independence since 1919 and even became an informal advisor

Their "Negro Problem," 1945-1966, in *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: A Crisis of Liberalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 97-134.

⁸⁵ Andrew Rotter argues that before 1947 a few fixed stereotypes lead many Americans to think of India as first and foremost "a land of mystery, exotic and inscrutable." The chief cause of this was the widespread popularity of Katherine Mayo's 1927 bestseller *Mother India*, which she wrote after a four-month tour of the country (the entirety of which she spent with British imperial forces). In her book, Mayo depicted India as a dirty, backwards country in which the Hindu tradition supposedly promoted the sexual exploitation of women and girls, among other crimes. She tied these problems to the character of Indians and ultimately, then, made an argument for the continuation of British rule over them. Further, Mayo criticized those in the West who supported nationalist figures like Gandhi. After pointing out Mayo's obvious bias and the factual inaccuracies of her work, Rotter ultimately argues that *Mother India* and similar works represented not an accurate depiction of the country but an attempt by Westerners to project fears about their own lives (e.g., the rise of secularism in the 1920s and increasingly liberalized sexual norms) onto a distant foreigner. Rotter argues that these perceptions outlasted English colonial rule; drawing on Edward Said's research on Orientalism, Rotter endorses the view that as the United States subsumed Britain's role as "defender of the West" following World War II, it also adopted the "strategic and psychological investments of a great power," including a sharpened negative view of nonwhite peoples in postcolonial spaces. Andrew J. Rotter, *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 1-6, 8, 15.

⁸⁶ Rotter, *Comrades at Odds*, 14-15.

to Nehru on American foreign policy during the 1920s. Another American, Samuel Evans Stokes, relocated to India at the turn of the century and, as a friend of both Gandhi and Nehru, became a vocal supporter of the nationalist cause; by 1921, he rose to the highest levels of Indian National Congress leadership, the only American ever to do so. By the 1930s in the United States, American and Indian expatriates supporting the independence movements were garnering a notable degree of media coverage.⁸⁷

1937 saw the birth of the India League of America (ILA) under the leadership of businessman N.R. Checker, which spread information around the United States about the independence movement. J.J. Singh, an immigrant from the Indian state of Punjab, took over the group in 1941 and propelled it into the national spotlight by campaigning, testifying before Congress, and publishing the group's newspaper, *India Today*.⁸⁸ Under his leadership, the group fashioned a convincing two-pronged argument against British colonial rule. The first claimed, perhaps obviously, that colonial rule harmed India; secondly, and in what likely resonated with many Americans during wartime, the group argued that colonialism actually harmed U.S. foreign policy interests in all of Asia, since colonial subjects were significantly less likely to positively receive Western calls to reject Japanese imperial aggression. Partially as a result of the ILA's advocacy, many American liberals and intellectuals lined up behind the cause during the war.⁸⁹ Furthermore, as historian Nicole Sackley has shown, New York became a center for pro-India advocacy in the 1930s, as figures such as the socialist leader Norman Thomas merged their critical understanding of American capitalism with their critiques of British colonial policy.⁹⁰

Interest among American intellectuals in India stretched beyond the political realm, too. In this regard, Jewish intellectuals, while not the forerunners of research on India, explored unique angles that

⁸⁷ Clymer notes that Americans have historically been sympathetic to anticolonial causes (somewhat ironically, in light of the United States' own history as an imperial power). The early twentieth century saw a reinvigoration of American anticolonialism within the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912, whose Fourteen Points for reconstruction after World War I emphasized the right to self-determination. Kenton J. Clymer, *Quest for Freedom: The United States and India's Independence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 3-9.

⁸⁸ Clymer, *Quest for Freedom*, 22-23; Robert Shaffer, "J.J. Singh and the India League of America, 1945-1959: Pressing at the Margins of the Cold War Consensus," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31, no. 2 (2012): 71, doi: 10.5406/jamerethnhist.31.2.0068.

⁸⁹ Shaffer, "J.J. Singh," 73.

⁹⁰ Nicole Sackley, "Passage to Modernity: American Social Scientists, India, and the Pursuit of Development, 1945-1961" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2004), 22.

would, in time, also garner the interest of the AJC. For instance, the housing reformer Albert Mayer became active in the area of development after being captivated by India during his service there in World War II. By 1946, he began planning the Etawah project, a plan for village reconstruction that would eventually become one of the world's most famous development initiatives. And while Mayer's project garnered significant attention, by the time he arrived in India, he encountered other Westerners, such as British civil servants and American missionaries, who had already embarked on their projects for building up Indian villages. Importantly, Mayer crafted his plans outside of the frame of the Cold War later developed by the Truman government, and landed in India independent of governmental or institutionalized philanthropic support. In contrast to the limited thinking about South Asia within the federal government, Mayer's project remained closely tied to the situation on ground, as the success of his work required cooperation and support from local Indians.⁹¹

Meanwhile, others focused on Jewish life in India itself. The Jews of India have lived in different communities (most famously, the Bene Israel of Bombay) since ancient times in rather small numbers.⁹² Jewish scholars such as the anthropologist David G. Mandelbaum devoted serious scholarly attention to the study of these communities in the twentieth century. In 1939, Mandelbaum published a detailed study on the Jews of Cochin, a city in the southern Indian state of Kerala. In the study, Mandelbaum commented on the simultaneous unity and ghettoization of the Cochin Jews. He portrayed them as existing at a moment of transformation, as he witnessed the younger generation of Jews demonstrate an increased willingness to step outside the bounds of their insular community. Mandelbaum likely could

⁹¹ As Nicole Sackley argues, Americans and Indians attempted to retroactively shape the meaning of the Etawah project for a variety of different ends. Particularly relevant here is the way in which President Truman "rewrote the story of Etawah as a Point Four achievement" after 1950. Realizing the political capital that could be extracted through the promotion of development projects like Mayer's, U.S. officials "imagin[ed] Etawah as a showcase for American "grassroots" development to counter the "top-down" coercive strategies of the Soviet Union and China" and thereby "erased the transnational roots of Etawah's construction and its dependence on state power." In this regard, one observes yet another example of the federal government's focus on the polar Cold War narrative coming into tension with the transnational nature of many civil society actions. Nicole Sackley, "Village Models: Etawah, India, and the Making and Remaking of Development in the Early Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 37 (2013): 749, 753-56, 759, 768-69, <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dht037>.

⁹² David G. Mandelbaum, "The Jewish Way of Life in Cochin," *Jewish Social Studies* 1 (October 1939): 460, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4464305>; Orpa Slapak, ed., *The Jews of India: A Story of Three Communities* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2003), 22.

never have anticipated that less than a decade later, the establishment of Israel would lay the foundation for the mass exodus of Jews out of India. In this realm, too, then, the establishment of the Jewish state would prove deeply consequential even for the way in which Jewish-American intellectuals could interact with other Jews of the Diaspora.⁹³

Early works from *Commentary* further demonstrate that Jewish intellectuals were active in responding to events on the subcontinent. In an article dated August 1, 1947, C. Hartley Grattan predicted that the loss of India would be a contributing factor to the Empire's "reorder[ing] on an extensive scale."⁹⁴ One month later, Sidney Hertzberg – a New York-born American Jew who worked closely with the India League of America and had contact with both Gandhi and Nehru – also published an article on the demise of the British Empire, although with the advantage of hindsight given that independence on the subcontinent had now taken hold. Herzberg led a fascinating career that fused his passion for labor politics with his interest in the Far East. He established an impressive journalistic reputation, serving as a contributing editor at *Time* magazine and a writer for *Fortune*. In 1945 and 1946, he served as an editorial consultant for *Commentary*. In this article, he approached India on mainly humanitarian terms, likely in part due to his work as an organizer of the American Famine Mission to India in 1947.⁹⁵ In the piece, Herzberg offers a rather novel reading of the British departure from India:

The British, grasping firmly the hand of history, sought to march along. It had long been written that India, the richest chattel in history, would be free. But it had not been written that, at the moment of its release, India would hail its departing master. Yet, on August 15, 1947, when the reign of British Viceroy begun by Queen Victoria came to an end, the last of the Viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten, great grandson of Victoria, was

⁹³ More recent scholarship suggests that the need to negotiate a relationship between their minority religion and the broader society remains a fundamental problem for Indian Jews. See Margaret Abraham, "Ethnic Identity and Marginality Among Indian Jews in Contemporary India," *Ethnic Groups* 9 (1991): 33-60.

⁹⁴ C. Hartley Grattan, "The Aims of British Foreign Policy: Remodeling an Empire While Building Socialism," *Commentary*, August 1, 1947, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-aims-of-british-foreign-policyremodeling-an-empire-while-building-socialism/>.

⁹⁵ Herzberg should not be confused with the famous Jewish basketball player who shared his name. This Sidney Hertzberg would go on to serve and work as a high level official in Asia for the U.N. Appeal for Children in 1948 and later as a special correspondent for *The Hindustan Times*, an Indian paper. There he became well known for protesting the rule of Indira Gandhi in the late 1970s. For a comprehensive biography, see The New York Public Library Archives & Manuscripts, "Sidney Herzberg Papers, 1924-1984," *The New York Public Library*, 2017, <http://archives.nypl.org/mss/1389>.

cheered and praised throughout India. Few would have thought it possible.⁹⁶

Herzberg's account of the final moment of decolonization, of course, conflicted with the reality of the situation on the ground. While several Indian nationalists and British leaders were indeed disappointed with the exact contours of the two-state partition plan, the formation of India nevertheless represented the culmination of a decades-long struggle for self-determination. Historian Robert J. McMahon plainly and accurately describes the minutes before Nehru's first speech as India's prime minister as "an electrifying moment," and certainly, the mood permeated the supposedly backward colony that had toppled "the once seemingly invincible power of British empire."⁹⁷

While a variety of factors could have undergirded Herzberg's mischaracterization, including spotty early reporting or the author's desire to develop a tranquil impression of a country he had grown to love, the way in which the author contextualized this observation is more telling than the apparent error. The main topic of Herzberg's article was the partition plan for the Near East developed by the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. Immediately following the above description of India, the author writes: "Even fewer though it possible that the British would leave Palestine under similarly happy circumstances."⁹⁸ While this description, too, is objectionable on factual grounds, the author's rhetorical linkage of partition in vastly different parts of the world demonstrates how influential voices were, at this very early moment, anxiously searching for coherence in the face of tumultuous geopolitical shifts. Even if the author's conclusions regarding the nature of these events were misleading, his methodological emphasis on the "big ideas" – interactions between ideologies, institutions, and contingencies – was of the same nuanced type that the AJC as an institution would continually employ in responding to India during the next decade. Furthermore, this search for coherence is a clear example of the way in which thinkers tied to the AJC began to frame India and Israel within the same post-imperial frame. This does not negate the special status of Israel to the AJC at this time (as demonstrated by the sheer quantity of internal

⁹⁶ Sidney Herzberg, "This Month in History," *Commentary*, September 1, 1947, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-month-in-history-23/>.

⁹⁷ Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1.

⁹⁸ Sidney Herzberg, "This Month in History."

documents devoted to discussing this topic), but the conceptualization of such a link does demonstrate that Israel was not above comparison, and that it could be understood through broader geopolitical developments. This way of thinking, as one will see, would be employed by AJC leadership in interactions with the outside world by the end of 1948.

The Eruption of India

What the AJC saw as it looked out onto Asia in 1947 and 1948 was decolonization in the Third World based on claims of self-determination. This trend was especially pronounced in Asia, where nationalists in Myanmar (Burma), Vietnam, Malaysia (Malaya), Indonesia, the Philippines and, of course, India, transformed nationalist movements for independence into “boiling cauldrons” during the postwar period.⁹⁹ In India, nationalist leaders associated with the Indian National Congress had been pushing for independence since the turn of the century, and even before the end of the war, British delegates were participating in discussions with nationalist leaders to discuss an eventual turnover of power. But seizing on Britain’s wartime vulnerability, figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru ramped up their opposition to British authority. While Prime Minister Winston Churchill showed an unwillingness to withdraw from India, his ouster in July 1945 by Labor’s Clement Attlee eliminated any hopes for continued British rule. Amid increasingly religious violence between the Hindu majority and Muslim minority 1946 and 1947, a haphazardly crafted partition plan was put into effect in the summer of 1947.¹⁰⁰

The withdrawal of British forces from the Indian subcontinent signaled a profound restructuring of the British Empire. The British partition plan split the former colony into two independent states, India

⁹⁹ While nationalism served as the primary fuel that charged these movements – many of which had emerged at the turn of the century – McWilliams and Piotrowski argue that the associated ideologies of anti-imperialism and anti-whiteness further emboldened these causes. Further, Marc Matera notes that a significant source of anticolonial thought were emerging among black intellectuals living in London, the seat of the British Empire. The author identifies evidence connecting the ideas in circulation in these academic circles in London and the cause of Indian nationalism. Wayne C. McWilliams and Harry Piotrowski, *The World Since 1945: A History of International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 109. See also Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015).

¹⁰⁰ McWilliams and Piotrowski, *The World Since 1945*, 110-15.

and Pakistan, and in the process, greatly worsened existing divisions between religious groups.¹⁰¹ The mass movements of people and ensuing ethno-religious violence displaced tens of millions of people and resulted in the deaths of up to one million. And while many Pakistanis celebrated the creation of a Muslim state under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah on August 14, 1947, Indian nationalists, including Nehru, India's first prime minister, and the British government, were disappointed in the failure to create a truly pluralistic, united Indian state.¹⁰²

Despite the scope of the events in South Asia, the administration of Harry S. Truman had its eyes focused elsewhere during the “crisis-filled summer of 1947.”¹⁰³ To the American political leadership, the convergence of “political instability, economic distress, and social chaos” in Western Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean required much more attention, especially because of massive anxiety surrounding the threat of Soviet incursion into these apparently vulnerable regions.¹⁰⁴ By propping up the physical infrastructure and promoting market development through activities like the Marshall Plan – designed to rebuild the Western European economy and eliminate the conditions of poverty that partially enabled the rise of the Nazi regime – the Americans attempted to form several structural bulwarks against communism. In light of the Eurocentric mindset of President Truman and other leaders, poor, former

¹⁰¹ McWilliams and Piotrowski, *The World Since 1945*, 115.

¹⁰² Bose states that the creation of two independent states defined largely by their religious composition represented “the death of a dream” for Indian nationalists. Partition was especially heartbreaking for Gandhi, who had emphasized interreligious dialogue throughout his career of anticolonial activism. This emotional distress is captured poignantly in Richard Attenborough's 1982 biographical film *Gandhi*. In his innovative study, the political scientist Ajay Verghese combines first-person accounts of ethnic violence with quantitative data in order to demonstrate the persistent legacy of British colonial rule on social relations between members of different castes and religions in modern India. Verghese convincingly shows that while British rule triggered increased violence between castes, princely rule in certain areas of India was the cause of Hindu-Muslim violence. According to the “Indian model” of colonialism under which India was governed, which combined aspects of both imperial and native rule, both of these elements are tied to contemporary violence. Daiya demonstrates how the legacy of partition continues to color national consciousness in India and Pakistan even today, as families remain divided by the border and consistently high levels of violence persist there. More abstractly, the author argues that “the 1947 Partition experience of gendered violence and displacement critically shapes the contemporary ethnic nationalisms that prevail in South Asian political life today,” which continues to make itself felt in new forms across the Indo-Pakistani border. Sumantra Bose, “Decolonization and State Building in South Asia,” *Journal of International Affairs* 58, no. 1 (2004): 96-97, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24357937>; McWilliams and Piotrowski, *The World Since 1945*, 115; Kavita Daiya, *Violent Belongings: Partition, Gender, and National Culture in Postcolonial India* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 2-5. See also *Gandhi*, directed by Richard Attenborough (1982; London: Goldcrest Films, 1982), DVD and Ajay Verghese, *The Colonial Origins of Ethnic Violence in India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

¹⁰³ McMahan, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ McMahan, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 4.

British colonies in South Asia were merely distractions from the principal threat of Stalin.¹⁰⁵ Despite the enormous explosion of activity that emerged on the subcontinent in the lead-up to independence, the Truman administration simply chose not to engage.¹⁰⁶ An early gap was forming between the AJC's interest in India and the U.S. government's.

The Truman administration's position was linked to the very stereotypes about Indians that President Roosevelt had earlier rejected. In reflecting on his request to President Truman to be considered for the Indian ambassadorship, the former governor of Connecticut Chester Bowles stated: "The President was appalled at the thought of anyone wanting to go to India and he said, 'Well, I thought India was pretty jammed with poor people and cows wandering around the streets, witch doctors and people sitting on hot coals and bathing in the Ganges, and so on, but I did not realize that anyone thought it was important.'"¹⁰⁷ In this respect, Truman was no outlier, as Dean Acheson, the Secretary of State after 1949, and others at the Department expressed similar sentiments in regard to India's exotic strangeness.¹⁰⁸ While it is an impossible to determine the exact means by which strategic objectives and cultural stereotypes resulted in action or inaction on the part of the U.S. government, it is clear that both played key roles in the development of an ambivalent American position in the immediate aftermath of decolonization.

While the U.S. government's position on India during the period immediately after independence is best characterized as detached, early discussions among segments of American foreign policy apparatus about the subcontinent's *potential* strategic value foreshadowed deeper changes in the U.S. position that would emerge after 1950. Certainly, critics of Truman like the first American ambassador to India, Henry

¹⁰⁵ The withdrawal of British forces from the subcontinent occurred simultaneously with increased agitation between the Soviets and Americans in other regions, including Europe, East Asia, and the Near East, thus providing a partial logic for the decision on the part of the Truman administration to deprioritize India. Furthermore, U.S. policy toward the retracting British Empire was, as a whole, inconsistent. For instance, immediately following the end of World War II, American forces aided British interests in the Greek Civil War. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 15.

¹⁰⁶ Rudra Chaudhuri, *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States Since 1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 25.

¹⁰⁷ Chester Bowles, quoted in Rotter, *Comrades at Odds*, 15-16.

¹⁰⁸ Rotter, *Comrades at Odds*, 16.

F. Grady, voiced their concerns early on.¹⁰⁹ But by late 1948, even central organs of the national security establishment like the CIA were beginning to frame the subcontinent as potential site of Cold War contestation. Indeed, concerns about “alarming vacuums of power” susceptible to Soviet influence would eventually gain enough traction to as to justify more aggressive U.S. involvement in the region.¹¹⁰ But in the realm of actual intervention, though, the Truman administration’s reluctance and slowness in making the leap from intelligence to action likely bewildered the elements of civil society previously discussed, and even existing segments of the federal government. A gap was forming between White House policy and the opinions of those with the most experience on the ground in India.

On January 30, 1948, the shocking news that Mohandas Gandhi – the face of the movement for Indian independence – had been assassinated at the hands of a Hindu nationalist arrived at the AJC headquarters at 386 Fourth Avenue in New York. Occurring shortly after the enormous bloodshed of partition, Robert Trumbull of the *New York Times* grimly assessed the wider implications of this murder: “The loss of Mr. Gandhi brings this country of 300,000,000 abruptly to a crossroads. Mingled with the sadness in this capital tonight was an undercurrent of fear and uncertainty, for now the strongest influence for peace in India that this generation has known is gone.”¹¹¹ Gandhi’s death continued to add fuel to the fire of civil unrest in the new state, and near immediate rioting in Bombay left fifteen dead. Realizing the potentially destabilizing nature of the event, Nehru, “in a voice choked with emotion,” delivered his now famous “The Light Has Gone Out Of Our Eyes” speech, in which he virtually begged his fellow citizens to resist the urge to engage in further violence.¹¹² As the initial hysteria concerning the possibility that a

¹⁰⁹ Chaudhuri, *Comrades at Odds*, 26-27.

¹¹⁰ McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 15-17.

¹¹¹ Robert Trumbull, “Gandhi Is Killed by a Hindu,” *New York Times*, January 30, 1948, 1, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0130.html>.

¹¹² In the speech, Nehru ambiguously stated: “A madman has put an end to his [Gandhi’s] life, for I can only call him mad who did it, and yet there has been enough of poison spread in this country during the past years and months, and this poison has had an effect on people’s minds. We must face this poison, we must root out this poison, and we must face all the perils that encompass us, and face them not madly or badly, but rather in the way that our beloved teacher taught us to face them.” In a fascinating consideration of the public rituals of mourning surrounding Gandhi’s death, Yasmin Khan convincingly argues that in addition to the structural changes introduced by Nehru in the aftermath of Gandhi’s death (such as the introduction of a draft constitution just weeks later), it was also “through the *performance* of the attendant rituals, ceremonies and the public and private manifestations of grief that Indian state sovereignty was consolidated and extended.” For instance, by presiding personally over the locations

Muslim was behind that attack passed, intergroup violence did subside, although not disappear.¹¹³

The different ways in which the Truman administration and the AJC spoke about (or did not speak about) the threat of prolonged violence are illustrative of the fissure that was opening up between official U.S. policy and an element of civil society during this formative period. When, on the day after the assassination, Herbert L. Matthews of *The New York Times* wrote that “President Truman and Secretary Marshall expressed their grief and condolences in messages to India,” he accurately sized up the limited scope of the U.S. government’s apparent concern with this deeply transformative event.¹¹⁴ While Truman’s brief statement is filled with mournful language, the remarks pay only minimal lip service to the potential implications of this event. In particular, Truman’s comments rather didactically drew on the memory of Gandhi: “His selfless struggle for the betterment of his people will, I am sure, endure as an example for India’s leaders, many of whom are his disciples. I know that not only the people of India but also all peoples will be inspired by his sacrifice to work with increased vigor toward the brotherhood and peace which the Mahatma symbolized.”¹¹⁵ At first glance, Truman’s remarks emerge as perfunctory diplomacy. But in fact, the lack of substantial interest from the U.S. government in responding to this momentous event in world history was yet again reflective of the general disinterest in India. The death of Gandhi was another link in a string of violent episodes tied to decolonization and partition, but during this early period, this chain of events seemed to bear little on the “basic Cold War calculus” of the Truman administration, which sought to draw states away from the Soviet sphere of influence.¹¹⁶

For the anonymous author of the AJC’s “Comment on Gandhi’s Death,” which appears only in

related to Gandhi’s cremation and funeral, Nehru sent Indians a clear message about the strong authority of the central state. Yasmin Khan, “Performing Peace: Gandhi’s Assassination as a Critical Moment in the Consolidation of the Nehruvian State,” *Modern Asian Studies* 41 (2011): 60-61, 77-78, doi:10.1017/S0026749X10000223; Trumbull, “Gandhi Is Killed by a Hindu.” For the entire text of “The Light Has Gone Out of Our Eyes” speech, see Jawaharlal Nehru, “We Must Hold Together,” *The Hindu*, January 30, 2013, accessed February 27, 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/we-must-hold-together/article4358063.ece>.

¹¹³ Khan, “Performing Peace,” 59.

¹¹⁴ Herbert L. Matthews, “All Britain Honors Gandhi; Truman Deplores Tragedy,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1948, 1, Proquest Historical Newspapers (108136753).

¹¹⁵ Harry S. Truman, “Statement by the President on the Assassination of Mohandas K. Gandhi,” *Harry S. Truman Library and Museum*, January 30, 1948, accessed February 27, 2017, <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=1377&st=&st1=>.

¹¹⁶ McMahan, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 11.

the AJC's file records, reports of violence on the subcontinent triggered an association with a variety of issues being debated in the international arena at the time. Both in tone and content, the report stands in stark contrast to the official U.S. government line. Written on the same day as Truman's statement, it opens: "The assassination of Gandhi cannot help but arouse worldwide fear of more violence and bloodshed in India. Anxiety is all the greater because the crime of genocide – the deliberate destruction of racial, religious, national or political groups – it not yet outlawed by the United Nations."¹¹⁷ At the most basic level, the very existence of this statement is historically important, as it demonstrates that Jewish leaders in New York were indeed conscious about keeping tabs on the fluid political situation on the subcontinent. In the coming years, this nascent interest would continue to develop as India rose to greater prominence among mainstream political powers. Similarly, rather than fixating on the actual death of Gandhi and the values he represented, the author of this statement wasted no time in contextualizing the significance of the assassination. In particular, one can already see the way in which the AJC drew upon postwar ideas concerning a peaceful international order in order to substantiate its concern with India.

Undoubtedly informed by the temporal proximity to the Holocaust, genocide figured prominently in the AJC's analysis of the situation. Further, this concern was framed in distinctly universalist terms, especially later in the document: "Genocide is a new word for an age-old crime – such as the slaughter of Armenians in Turkey, of Christians in the Balkans, of Assyrians in Iraq and, most recently, of millions in Hitler-dominated countries."¹¹⁸ Here, the fact that the Holocaust appears last in the list of genocides, and that the mass extermination is described in such broad terms – for instance, nowhere in the document is there any reference to "Jews" – both speak to how deeply and quickly the AJC seemed to embrace the New York brand of cosmopolitanism in the wake of the war and apply it to an entirely new political context. But more than anything else, the position articulated by the AJC in this document is pragmatic, with the author stressing the need to transform this "anxiety" into concrete political action, concluding:

If the convention to prevent genocide, which is coming before the United Nations, were already adopted there would be more hope that violence in India could be averted today.

¹¹⁷ "Comment on Gandhi's Death," January 30, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1; folder 8; YIVO.

¹¹⁸ "Comment on Gandhi's Death," January 30, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1; folder 8; YIVO.

The whole situation emphasizes the need of a strong international law to outlaw genocide and punish those guilty of attempting such a crime.¹¹⁹

The document was forward-looking and stressed the need for institutional change. Interestingly, the author placed the organization's hopes in a newly formed international organization, the U.N., rather than in the U.S. government. While the document stands in isolation (making determining the author's intent impossible), the fact the default position is to trust in the U.N. highlights the Committee's enthusiasm for internationalism. While Truman understandably viewed India through the prism of American foreign policy, multiple forces – the Holocaust, cosmopolitanism, and humanitarianism – led the AJC to develop a rather robust early position on the need for intervention in India.

Keeping One Eye on Politics

In addition to developing an early general approach to India, correspondence from this time period also demonstrates that the Committee sought to position itself in a politically favorable position on the India scene. In an internal memorandum from May 20, 1948, Milton Himmelfarb reported on a meeting he had two days earlier with H.G. Reissner, a German-Jewish historian who moved to India in 1939 (where he worked as an auditor for the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company) and later to the U.S. in 1948, where he spent the rest of his life.¹²⁰ The May 18th gathering in New York was a meeting of minds. Himmelfarb, born in Brooklyn in 1918, attended City College around the same time as Irving Kristol and Irving Howe, and like these two, was captivated by the socialist politics that dominated the New York scene at the time. With an inclination toward intellectual work, Himmelfarb joined the American Jewish Committee's Research Institute on Peace and Postwar Problems in 1942, where he assisted massively in early Holocaust research. A frequent and influential contributor to *Commentary*, Himmelfarb became an institutional cornerstone at the AJC, variously leading its research activities, establishing a reputation as a leading sociologist of Jews, and editing the AJC's well-known *American Jewish Year Book*. As the David

¹¹⁹ "Comment on Gandhi's Death," January 30, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1; folder 8; YIVO.

¹²⁰ Dianne Ritchey and the Leo Baeck Institute, "Guide to the Papers of Hans Reissner," *Leo Baeck Institute at the Center for Jewish History*, 2010, <http://findingaids.cjh.org/?pID=475546>.

Singer's tribute to him after his death in 2006 states, "Himmelfarb operated in the intellectual big leagues."¹²¹

After sizing up Reissner as someone "intensely interested in Jewish affairs" and of "very sound knowledge," Himmelfarb quickly moved to the core of the matter. Himmelfarb made plans to send AJC documents to Reissner, and significantly, reported that Reissner "volunteered to be of service whenever we need something in India."¹²² The use of the word "we" suggests that Himmelfarb invoked an institutional identity when crafting this statement, as opposed to an individual one. And his statement is quite concrete: it is not a matter of *if* the AJC will need local support in India, but rather *when* it will. Furthermore, in terms of direct action, this document demonstrates that by 1948, the AJC was seeking to cultivate relationships in India in order to seize upon them in the future. In this case and at this early stage, such a task was to begin with dialogue and education. Himmelfarb seemed quite seriously concerned with developing an infrastructure capable of eventually allowing for the exertion of influence on the subcontinent: "[Reissner] was especially of the opinion that with the establishment of the state of Israel, not only Arab-Jewish but also Asian-Jewish relations need to be cultivated intensely. From the point of view of India, he thought a very adequate beginning could be made by having the Hebrew University in Jerusalem invite Indian scholars to lecture and observe, and by having the University enter upon a regular exchange of scholars, materials, etc."¹²³ This tacit endorsement on the part of Himmelfarb is deeply meaningful in terms of understanding the AJC's motivations. While protecting the welfare of Israel was accepted *prima facie* as necessary, the fact that these two thinkers were already attempting to structure and buttress "Asian-Jewish" relations provides powerful evidence that Himmelfarb was thinking about his organization as a potential leading force in an emergent geopolitical dynamic. The desire to turn the AJC into a power broker of knowledge at the middle of the nascent Indo-Israeli relationship indicates that Himmelfarb recognized the AJC's strengths (research and communication) and wanted to capitalize

¹²¹ David Singer, "Remembering Milton Himmelfarb (1918-2006)," in *American Jewish Year Book 2006*, eds. David Singer and Lawrence Grossman (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2006), 695-97, http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/AJYB622.CV.pdf.

¹²² Milton Himmelfarb, "Memorandum for the Files," May 20, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

¹²³ Milton Himmelfarb, "Memorandum for the Files," May 20, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

on them. The AJC would be both a knowledge-disseminator and key negotiator.

It is also relevant that the default position on the table was centered around a university. Both conversations between the two men and their vision for an intellectually robust Indo-Israel relationship can be said to be modeled on the types of exchanges intellectuals in New York had been engaging in for years. It is telling that the next day, Himmelfarb sent Reissner article by Hayim Greenberg from *The Jewish Frontier*, a labor Zionist journal published founded in 1934.¹²⁴ Reflecting on the assassination of Gandhi, the Greenberg article stressed several of the themes seen in the earlier AJC memo in strikingly similar terms: “Everybody who witnessed the rise, and survive the eventual eclipse, of Hitler, ought to remember that persecution of minorities and small nations is a menace to peace in the world. Gandhi was assassinated because he stood for persecuted minorities.”¹²⁵ Greenberg even speculated about alternative historical scenarios in order to emphasize his obvious admiration of the Indian leader:

Gandhi has not only propagated and practised his second weapon, viz. civil disobedience, against British rule in India, but also advocated non-violent non-cooperation for the hypothetical cases of Nazi invasion of the British Isles and Japanese invasion of India respectively. He sincerely sympathised with the Jewish plight in Europe, while being equally outspoken in his condemnation of current terrorist methods in Palestine.¹²⁶

Regardless of the historical accuracy of Greenberg’s claims, the fact that Himmelfarb sent Reissner, who had contact with Gandhi, such an article is telling. By providing such laudatory praise of Gandhi that apparently placed him firmly on the side of the Jews in various domains, Himmelfarb yet again attempted to build a bridge to a person whom he perceived to be a potentially valuable local ally (Himmelfarb additionally asked Reissner for a manuscript he has been preparing on the Indian Jewry, further suggesting a desire to continue communicating).¹²⁷ Further, this exchange demonstrates an early triangulation of thought between New York, India, and now, Israel, that subsequently presented an

¹²⁴ Letter from Milton Himmelfarb to H.G. Reissner, May 21, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO; Mark A. Raider, “Introduction: Free Associations – An Intellectual and Political Profile of Hayim Greenberg,” in *The Essential Hayim Greenberg: Essays and Addresses on Jewish Culture, Socialism, & Zionism*, ed. Mark A. Raider (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2016), 18.

¹²⁵ Hayim Greenberg, “Letter from India: Mahatma Gandhi,” *The Jewish Frontier*, March 1948, in Letter from Milton Himmelfarb to H.G. Reissner, May 21, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

¹²⁶ Greenberg, “Letter from India: Mahatma Gandhi.”

¹²⁷ Letter from Milton Himmelfarb to H.G. Reissner, May 21, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

entirely new set of opportunities and challenges for the Committee.

One final set of exchanges between Simon Segal, an AJC staff member and later a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Cedric Dover, a Calcutta-born Anglo-Indian anthropologist, and Sandy Flowerman, an AJC staffer, highlights how the AJC sought to answer the three major questions of the postwar period through the lens of India.¹²⁸ On November 19, 1948, Segal sent a “confidential note” to Flowerman in which he attached a letter from Dover, writing: “As you will see from the letter, he is making a proposal which we might or might not wish to exploit.”¹²⁹ In the attached letter, Dover thanked Segal for a pleasant lunch the two enjoyed at an earlier date, during which Dover found himself “so charmingly assaulted by such a discerning and informed cross-fire of questions” from Segal (in a fashion not uncharacteristic of the rather cerebral AJC staff).¹³⁰ Dover opened the letter with an opportunistic framing:

The essential problem, in the context discussed, is two-fold: (a) the official recognition of Israel by India, or at which at this stage is considerable, of the publication of an unsentimental re-evaluation of the “Palestine question” by someone who is not Jewish, Arab, pro-Zionist, anti-Zionist, British, American or a paid official. I believe, as I said, that the circumstances are now favourable for a definite response with regard to the first point, while the second is merely someone, with the necessarily [sic] “impartiality,” to carry out the assignment.¹³¹

While Dover goes on (predictably) to suggest that he is the man for the job, his framing and optimistic assessment of the newly emergent Indo-Israeli arrangement is telling, especially because his writing indicates that these were the terms upon which he discussed the situation with Segal. Specifically, when faced with highly complex and fluid situations in both India and Israel, these influential thinkers placed

¹²⁸ Dover made his own mixed race status (he was Anglo-Indian, or as he preferred, “Eurasian”) the center of his academic work. As Nico Slate points out, Dover was atypical: in contrast to other Anglo-Indians who sought to advance their social status by aligning themselves with the British governing authority, Dover instead threw his support behind the nationalist Congress. After moving to the global center of London in 1934, Dover became especially interested in the role of race in social structures; in his 1937 book *Half-Caste*, Dover forcefully argued against discrimination on the basis of race. He eventually linked up with prominent African-Americans in the United States, performing brief stints at both Howard University and the New School for Social Research in New York. Nico Slate, “Cedric Dover’s Colored Cosmopolitanism,” in *The Prism of Race: W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, and the Colored World of Cedric Dover* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 9-30; “Cedric Dover,” *Wasafiri* 27 (2012): 56, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02690055.2012.662322>; Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 178.

¹²⁹ Confidential Note from Simon Segal to Sandy Flowerman, November 19, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

¹³⁰ Letter from Cedric Dover to Sandy Segal, November 15, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

¹³¹ Letter from Cedric Dover to Sandy Segal, November 15, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

the two countries within the same post-imperial frame. In Dover's articulation, the two topics literally appear within the same thought.

The fact that these thinkers were interested in a "re-evaluation" of the situation in Palestine, furthermore, indicates that they believed that such a change in the position toward Israel could result in a change in the relationship with India. By conceptualizing nonobvious linkages between quite dissimilar places, Dover and Segal sought to participate in, to quote historian Mark Philip Bradley, "early struggles to transform colonial and illiberal states [which] emerged against the acceleration of transnational discourses of human rights, anti-imperialism, and racial solidarities during and after World War II."¹³² And even if Dover did not explicitly compare the two, his point of view is still valuable. First, he demonstrated foresight, given that at the time of this exchange, Nehru's government still had not recognized the Jewish state, and would not do so until September 1950.¹³³ And second, Dover's comments provided legitimacy to the idea that the Indo-Israeli relationship was one worth exploring. In this sense, while Jewish thinkers were not the first or only actors interested in these phenomena, their visceral post-Holocaust reality, special relationship to Israel, and history of critical thought and belief in the social sciences equipped them with a particularly relevant language of humanitarianism and institutionalization with which they approached the decolonizing Global South and particularly, India.

During the meeting between Dover and Segal, Segal outlined the issue of Indo-Israeli relations and then asked Dover: "What should we do about it?"¹³⁴ In addition to reflecting the increased pragmatism taking hold among the New York Intellectuals at this time, Segal's question also placed the AJC in an interventionist position: while studying India was important, Segal was clearly interested in action. Dover went on to suggest the following:

My plan of action would be (1) to summarise [sic] the pertinent facts, (2) to reinterpret them through personal impressions and key-discussions in Israel, (3) to place the case for Indian support, both objectively and persuasively, before Jawaharlal Nehru and other

¹³² Mark Philip Bradley, "Decolonization, the Global South, and the Cold War, 1919-1962," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 465.

¹³³ Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, 3.

¹³⁴ Letter from Cedric Dover to Sandy Segal, November 15, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

Indians, (4) to explore the prospects of cultural and other exchanges, (5) to talk with Indian groups and lo-test [sic] reactions, and (6) to furnish you with reports, in publishable forms, which could be reprinted in India and elsewhere.¹³⁵

There is no evidence suggesting that Flowerman ever followed up with Dover, but the fact that such a conversation took place between an Anglo-Indian academic and an influential voice at the AJC is historically significant. Regardless of outcome, the very existence of such a plan – even in hypothetical terms – indicates that the AJC saw potential value in involving itself with India. At a time in which the U.S. government was disengaged from the subcontinent, such a strategy would have had clear political rewards, as the Committee would have marked itself as a forerunner in the emergent Indo-Israel relationship. Furthermore, even if Truman did consider India critical at this stage, it seems highly unlikely that the White House or State Department would have imagined the connection to Israel with this degree of complexity, if at all. The AJC drew on its unique point of view in order to creatively identify transnational connections.

But, more locally, this conversation tells the modern observer about the AJC itself. Specifically, the AJC staff was concerned with projecting the group's own institutional power at this time. By exploring the possibility of becoming brokers in the Indo-Israeli relationship, they not only recognized the potential material benefits to Jews by way of reinforcing Israel's reputation as a legitimate state, but also to their own organization's status as an important actor in the international arena. The early Cold War, while filled with uncertainty, simultaneously represented a moment of rich opportunity in which Jewish Americans enjoyed an ever more favorable position on the domestic scene, providing the AJC with a firm footing upon which it could confidently attempt to spread its influence globally. In sizing up these opportunities, the AJC brought a unique perspective to the day's key questions. As the Cold War suddenly became significantly hotter by 1950, this perspective, against the background of a more uncomfortable domestic political scene, would lead the AJC charging down the new path of liberal anticommunism.

¹³⁵ Letter from Cedric Dover to Sandy Segal, November 15, 1948, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

Chapter III: “Neither Enough Force Nor Enough Faith”

“What is happening in Asia is of tremendous significance to the world...”

-- Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking to the Overseas Press Club,
New York, October 18, 1949¹³⁶

The Soviet-backed invasion of South Korea in the summer of 1950 terrified Americans, as it seemed to validate the U.S. government’s warnings about the grave threat of communist imperialism. The Korea situation was certainly on the mind of *Commentary* writer Herrymon Maurer, who understood the invasion as a watershed moment in the early Cold War. At the outset, American support for Korea and other apparently vulnerable countries seemed to come as a given. But the subsequent messiness of the war effort, coupled with vociferous debate at the United Nations and within the United States about the merits of American support for the South Koreans, shook Maurer’s confidence in the stability of a clear, bifurcated, and superpower-led world order.¹³⁷ Absent a “moral consensus” within the global community, there would be nothing but confusion in international relations at a time in which the U.S. government’s own messaging efforts explicitly discussed the possible end of Western civilization at the hands of the Soviet Union.

Caught in the crosshairs of Maurer’s criticism was Jawaharlal Nehru and specifically, his foreign policy, which the author summarized: “The moral premise is revulsion against war and a desire for the freedom of all peoples from imperialist slavery.” Accordingly, Nehru advocated against aggression, alignment with global superpowers, and the remnants of colonial rule.¹³⁸ While not questioning that Nehru’s refusal to align himself with the United States or Soviet Union flowed out of a legitimate and moral postcolonial morality, Maurer nevertheless considered it ignorant and naïve in the face of the existential threat of communism: “It is not pleasant to suggest that neutrality describes the position of

¹³⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Visit to America* (New York: The John Day Company, 1950), 43.

¹³⁷ Herrymon Maurer, “The Middle Ground Where Nehru Stands: Neither Enough Force Nor Enough Faith,” *Commentary*, March 1951, 207, Reel 3, Microfilm Collection, Boatwright Memorial Library at the University of Richmond, Richmond, VA [hereafter, UR BML].

¹³⁸ Maurer, “The Middle Ground Where Nehru Stands,” 208.

Jawaharlal Nehru, no man to run away from personal danger. And yet his position leaves him no alternative but a running away – an intellectual running away from facts. A person who can put his trust neither in the violence of the worldly morality nor in the non-violence of the anti-worldly is defenseless.”¹³⁹ Nehru’s position on Korea demonstrated “neither enough force nor enough faith.”¹⁴⁰

Although Maurer’s article is the only one from *Commentary* to explicitly address Nehru during the early Cold War, its deeply anticommunist perspective was already in the mainstream of Jewish intellectual thought by the time of its publication, and its foreboding tone would only become amplified in subsequent issues of the magazine, which had become wholly dislodged from its once-firm grounding on the radical Left, throughout the 1950s and into the future.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, although the magazine was largely autonomous from the AJC (which funded it), the anticommunism of the early Cold War – rigorously promoted by the U.S. government – was rapidly becoming one of the two primary lenses through which Jacob Blaustein and his colleagues viewed the world, with the other being the question of Israel. By 1950, these shifts would prove deeply consequential for the way in which the AJC understood – or failed to understand – the place of India within a world in flux.

As AJC’s agenda burgeoned in the late 1940s, a parallel process was taking shape within the U.S. government. In the summer of 1949, increasing fears about the spread of communism in Asia fueled more aggressive public posturing. Truman and top policymakers like Secretary of State Dean Acheson directed their attention toward both communist states and those, such as India, that were not connected to a great power but were nevertheless seen as potentially geopolitically valuable. But diplomatic missteps and frustration with Nehru and his governing philosophy quickly stalled the development of Indo-American relations. Meanwhile, these same fears about communism engendered a deep sense of anxiety among Americans, especially legislators. The ensuing efforts to crackdown on communism looked both outward and inward, employing the image of an Asia “lost” to communism as justification for investigating and prosecuting alleged traitors from within. This ensuing panic would reach a fever pitch with the rise of

¹³⁹ Maurer, “The Middle Ground Where Nehru Stands,” 216.

¹⁴⁰ Maurer, “The Middle Ground Where Nehru Stands,” 207.

¹⁴¹ Bloom, *Prodigal Sons*, 160.

Senator Joseph McCarthy, whose public crackdown on alleged communist sympathizers was but one of several factors shrinking the space for civil discourse and otherwise standard political activity during the early 1950s.

This hostile domestic political environment triggered substantial changes at the AJC, which had little choice but to tone down its more aggressive cosmopolitan position and become more public in its opposition to communism. Simultaneously fueling this shift was a widespread philosophical transformation within the circles of the New York intellectuals, who, during this time, began their decades-long march toward the political Right. And while the AJC still sought to leave its mark on India, it became, especially in 1952, less interested in active intervention. In this context, AJC staff largely abandoned their heightened attention to the humanitarian issues that so troubled Committee staff after Partition. As the domestic anti-communist wave grew more menacing, India faded from the Committee's attention. After undergoing an expansion following the formation of Israel, domestic realities began to limit the Committee's international vision during the early 1950s.

The Communist Threat

1949 was, to quote the diplomatic historian John Lewis Gaddis, a year filled with “shocks” for the U.S. government.¹⁴² The first came in August, when the Soviets successfully tested a nuclear weapon, forcing a complete reevaluation of U.S. diplomatic and military strategy. It was taken as a given that the United States would be the sole possessor of such devastating technology, and American foreign policy was structured accordingly. The Soviet test raised serious concerns about stability in a still-fragile Europe and, more generally, precipitated the mass buildup of nuclear stockpiles for which the Cold War would become infamous.¹⁴³ But no shock was likely perceived as quite as large to the American public as the establishment of a communist China. On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong declared the establishment of the

¹⁴² John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 90.

¹⁴³ Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 323-33.

People's Republic of China (PRC), ending a thirty-year civil war between his communist forces and anti-communist nationalists, who enjoyed American backing.¹⁴⁴ In order to address the rising threats on the international and now, domestic fronts, Truman sought to adopt a firmer anticommunist posture.¹⁴⁵ Fearing the spread of communism across Asia, the India question suddenly became a priority. In the immediate fallout from the "loss of China," Secretary of State Dean Acheson informed the President: "Mr. Nehru is today and probably will be for some-time the dominant political force in Asia."¹⁴⁶ Truman agreed, hoping that an alliance with Nehru could transform India into an anticommunist wall in Asia.

At least initially, it was not clear how these events had relevance for the AJC, and the organization persisted in its humanitarian work under Blaustein. Following the invasion of Israel by its Arab neighbors and the enormous influx of Jewish displaced persons (DPs) into the young country, the Israeli economy suffered greatly in its earliest years. In an extension of the AJC's humanitarianism, the September 1949 issue of the *AJC Committee Reporter* solicited financial support for the delivery of kosher foodstuffs to Israel.¹⁴⁷ That same year, Blaustein visited Israel, where he was struck by the generous nature of Ben-Gurion's immigration policy toward the Jewish DPs: "The basis of this immigration policy is purely humanitarian. No attempt is being made to select immigrants for the contribution which they can make toward the upbuilding [sic] of the country. And a haven is being offered to the aged and the sick as freely as to the able-bodied and productive."¹⁴⁸ Back in New York Blaustein's positive reports from his visit and deepened emotional attachment to the Jewish state provided reassurance to members of the Executive Committee that their earlier decision to support the young country was indeed the right one, given its demonstrated commitment to serve the world's most desperate Jewish communities. As a host of new issues emerged out of Israel, especially in the domain of state sovereignty, the AJC became an increasingly vocal proponent of the Zionist project. But at this point, the

¹⁴⁴ Especially embarrassing for the U.S. leadership was that the Chinese communists fought essentially without the support of Stalin, who remained notably detached from the evolving situation in a nearby country. McWilliams and Piotrowski, *The World Since 1945*, 54-58.

¹⁴⁵ McWilliams and Piotrowski, *The World Since 1945*, 58-59.

¹⁴⁶ Dean Acheson, quoted in McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 50.

¹⁴⁷ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 55.

¹⁴⁸ Jacob Blaustein, quoted in Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 55-56.

AJC was still not prepared to endorse such activity on the basis of support for the Israeli government alone. As the report from Blaustein makes clear, support for Israel remained encoded within a language of humanitarianism: Israel was worthy of AJC support not necessarily because the state took care of Jews qua Jews, but because Ben-Gurion heroically attended to the world's neediest cases.¹⁴⁹

Truman Frames the Third World

Meanwhile, for the U.S. government, India quickly came to be understood as problematic. Nehru's mentality seemed fundamentally at odds with the one the U.S. government was attempting to propagate. The cornerstone of Nehru's foreign policy was the principle of nonalignment. A product of Nehru's fiercely anticolonial mentality, nonalignment would have India assume absolute responsibility for its own decision-making in the area of foreign policy. As Minister for External Affairs for India's transitional government, Nehru stated in September 1946: "We propose, so far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale."¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, nonalignment was the bedrock upon which Nehru crafted his entire postcolonial ideology: "What does independence consist of? It consists fundamentally and basically of foreign relations. That is the test of independence. All else is local autonomy. Once foreign relations go out of your hand, into the charge of somebody else, to that extent and in that measure you are not independent."¹⁵¹ This steadfast position did more than just annoy the U.S. government; nonalignment quickly became a major obstacle to the formation of positive relations between the two countries. American policymakers actively worried that Nehru was underestimating the

¹⁴⁹ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 56.

¹⁵⁰ Indians were extremely receptive to this position for, according to McMahon, it "blended so masterfully Indian moral and cultural imperatives with a set of practical ones." McMahon argues that the position linked up with ancient systems of Hindu ethics that Gandhi had made so visibly central to his pro-independence work. Furthermore, Indian elites viewed nonalignment favorably, as it would equip the Indian government with the ability to take stands on moral issues important to the country, while also potentially establishing the Indian position as a sustainable alternative within a bifurcated world. Jawaharlal Nehru quoted in McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 37; McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 38.

¹⁵¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, "Our Approach to the World," in *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Anthology*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), 367.

Soviet threat, a sentiment that would later be echoed by Herrymon Maurer.¹⁵² To add to this suspicion was Nehru's open skepticism regarding the value of American leadership in the world. As early as 1944, Nehru questioned whether a robust American economy after the war would form the basis for "some new kind of imperialism," and Nehru's suspected anti-Americanism was on the radar of the CIA by September 1948.¹⁵³ An important meeting took place between Nehru and Loy W. Henderson, the U.S. Ambassador to India, in January 1949, in which Henderson reported that Nehru found Americans ignorant and materialistic.¹⁵⁴ These impressions further diminished the prospects for meaningful dialogue between the two governments.

Given the shaky foundation of the relationship with Nehru, the crises of mid-1949, and the renewed importance of India to Truman, Nehru's official state visit to the United States in October of that year represented a pivotal moment. But despite vigorous calls from pockets of the State Department, British partners, and the Indian government itself for American economic assistance, there was no decision made even by the time of Nehru's arrival about whether the Americans would provide aid and if so, how large the commitment would be.¹⁵⁵ The issue of economic aid was an important one for Nehru, and it is unsurprising that he made it a central theme of his October 13, 1949 address to the U.S. Congress.¹⁵⁶ But Nehru's optimistic attitude would not be able to overcome the various political and cultural barriers dividing him from Truman. No major plans emerged out of Nehru's visit and in fact, the entire event devolved into a rather unproductive, even strange affair in which the cerebral Nehru and American figures seemed to talk past one another, if they spoke at all.¹⁵⁷ This was a two-way process:

¹⁵² McMahan, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 40.

¹⁵³ Jawaharlal Nehru quoted in McMahan, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 41.

¹⁵⁴ McMahan, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 41-42.

¹⁵⁵ McMahan, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 49, 55.

¹⁵⁶ Nehru, *Visit to America*, 8.

¹⁵⁷ Rotter's assessment of Nehru's visit is so illustrative of the sometimes-bizarre nature of the Nehru visit that it deserves to be quoted at length: "Nehru's 1949 visit was a disappointment. Let it be said that the Truman administration tried to be accommodating. The president even sent his private plane to London to pick Nehru up. (One wonders at the impression created by this gesture, for the plane was called *The Sacred Cow*.) But things just did not work. A welcoming dinner in the prime minister's honor proceeded for the most part in uneasy silence. Acheson tried to salvage the evening by inviting Nehru to his home after hours and urging him to talk about anything at all he wished. Nehru went on until 1:00 A.M., at which point, Acheson recorded in his memorandum of the conversation, "either due to the lateness of the hour or the complexity of the subject, I found myself becoming

while Nehru found the U.S. government staff rude, he also was hesitant to approach the hot topic of economic aid, as he was “determined not to appear as a supplicant.”¹⁵⁸ In his address to Congress, Nehru indicated to the legislators that he was not prepared to simply allow American money to flood his country, fearing its capacity to compromise Indian independence.¹⁵⁹ Preserving nonalignment truly shaped all aspects of his agenda, much to the dismay of Truman’s administrators.

Nehru’s subsequent tour around the United States, in which he visited cities including New York; Knoxville, Tennessee; and Madison, Wisconsin, was more successful.¹⁶⁰ The Prime Minister and his daughter, Indira Gandhi, smiled and waved to crowds outside of India House in New York City, posed arm-in-arm with a taxicab driver in Boston, and shook hands with an Italian-American factory worker outside of the International Harvester plant in Chicago.¹⁶¹ Nehru seemed significantly more comfortable interacting with everyday Americans working in their local communities than at the highest rungs of international diplomacy. Indeed, Nehru explicitly addressed this topic while standing before a large crowd at the University of California, Berkeley on October 31: “But ever since fate and circumstance put me into the high office which I hold today, and, ever more so, ever since I came to the United States, I have been told that I must be careful of what I say... So I have felt a little constrained and have had to function out of my natural medium.”¹⁶² These more informal occasions allowed Nehru to speak poetically about the themes he cared most about such as Indian culture, independence, and the human spirit, and in these contexts, his messages were received positively. It was within American civil society that Nehru seemed to thrive. As the journalist Ronald Stead, who had traveled extensively with the Prime Minister in India,

confused and suggested that we adjourn the discussion.” Nehru “was one of the most difficult men with whom I ever had to deal,” Acheson wrote in his memoir.” Rotter, *Comrades at Odds*, 21. See also Ferdinand Kuhn, “U.S. Regards Nehru Visit as ‘Social,’” *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1949, Proquest Historical Newspapers (152130664).

¹⁵⁸ McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 56-57.

¹⁵⁹ Nehru, *Visit to America*, 8.

¹⁶⁰ Office of the Historian (U.S. Department of State), “Visits by Foreign Leaders in 1949,” U.S. Department of State, accessed March 16, 2017, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits/1949>; Rotter, *Comrades at Odds*, 21-22.

¹⁶¹ Nehru, *Visit to America*, 56-57.

¹⁶² Nehru, *Visit to America*, 115-16.

reported on Nehru: “In America he seemed fresher at the finish than at the start.”¹⁶³

At home, too, the Indian press celebrated Nehru’s steadfast commitment to the orthodoxy of nonalignment. But the experience was a nightmare for the Truman administration, which cared deeply about ensuring that India would be in *their* Cold War camp. The lively debates about India policy preceding the trip quickly came to an end: there would be no large-scale aid package for the Indians, and the Americans would consider non-Indocentric models for halting the spread of communism in Asia. The relationship would become even cooler in the subsequent months, especially surrounding U.S. diplomatic intervention in the Kashmir conflict.¹⁶⁴ The president would continue to strategize on national security policy, but South Asia would no longer figure prominently in it.

With tensions rising generally and India (temporarily) off the United States’ radar, the creation of National Security Report 68 (NSC-68) represented a transformative moment in both the history of the Cold War and American diplomacy. NSC-68 reached President Truman in April 1950. The report was broad and bold (even dramatic) in both its vision and suggestions, asserting in its first section: “The issues that face us are momentous, involving the fulfillment or destruction not only of this Republic but of civilization itself.”¹⁶⁵ NSC-68 found its first test case on the Korean Peninsula in June 1950, where the Soviet Union provided authorization for a major attack by communist forces in North Korea against the

¹⁶³ Ronald Stead, “Genial Nehru Finds U.S. Know-How Stimulating” *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 15, 1949, Proquest Historical Newspapers (508111824).

¹⁶⁴ Aside from McMahon and Rotter, there is little scholarly work on this state visit. This is surprising, especially given that Nehru’s conversations with Truman and American diplomats can be said to have laid the foundation for the nature of U.S.-Indo relations for, minimally, several more years. One would also expect to see more of a focus on the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the United States given the current closeness of the relationship between the two countries. The most instructive work on the event is Nehru’s own *Visit to America*.

¹⁶⁵ The authors of the report proposed the development of a hydrogen bomb to outmatch Soviet atomic capacity, the creation of new regional military alliances, a dramatic surge in defense spending, and the aggressive defense of the entire perimeter of noncommunist areas as an enhancement to the strategy of containment. John Lewis Gaddis takes note of the “rhetorical tone” of a government report. But there was in fact a strategic value in employing such lofty language about American values: while the specific suggestions in the report remained top secret, the proclamations regarding American resolve and the need for collective sacrifice were marketed aggressively by the administration. Gaddis summarizes: “The whole point of the document was to shake the bureaucracy, Congress, and the general public into supporting more vigorous action...” U.S. National Security Council, “A Report to the National Security Council – NSC 68,” April 12, 1950, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf, 4; McWilliams and Piotrowski, *The World Since 1945*, 61; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 91, 107.

South.¹⁶⁶ Seeming “to validate several of NSC-68’s most important conclusions,” in the words of Gaddis, the United States immediately mobilized and entered Korea (with U.N. support), pushing deep into North Korea before being driven back down the peninsula by Mao’s Chinese army.¹⁶⁷ With the entry of China into the conflict, Truman and his advisors coped with significant U.S. casualties and a war that had ground to a deadly stalemate, and a Russian-negotiated truce was agreed to in the middle of 1951.¹⁶⁸ The conflict in Korea had the effect of further reducing the importance of India and Pakistan that now seemed remote to the U.S. government; with no apparent communist threat emerging and hot spots flaring up in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, Truman, for the remainder of his term, which lasted until 1953, only occasionally glanced at India issues.¹⁶⁹

Jewish-American Advocacy in a Time of Fear

The AJC, equipped with a full-fledged Foreign Affairs Department that primarily tracked the situation in Europe in the 1950s, certainly kept a close eye on these geopolitical developments. And yet, even as they monitored world events, new political realities within the United States altered the AJC’s capacity and willingness to act. At first glance, such reticence might seem surprising. Historians of American Jewish history characterize 1945 to 1955 as a “golden decade” within which the American Jewish community made significant progress. During this time, American Jews experienced new economic success and like many other Americans during the postwar years, rapidly moved into new suburban locales.¹⁷⁰ In a trend tied to the shift to intergroup relations among Jewish-American organizations, influential Jewish figures began to expand the scope of their political engagement beyond the realm of exclusively Jewish issues. Philip Klutznick, for instance, would leave the presidency of B’nai B’rith for a long career in government, which included a stint as U.S. Ambassador to the United

¹⁶⁶ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 109; McWilliams and Piotrowski, *The World Since 1945*, 59.

¹⁶⁷ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 112; McWilliams and Piotrowski, *The World Since 1945*, 66.

¹⁶⁸ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 112.

¹⁶⁹ McMahan, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 81, 109-10.

¹⁷⁰ Arthur A. Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 187.

Nations.¹⁷¹ But despite the community's significant advancements (of which there were many), anti-Semitism – often articulated in terms of the supposed “threat” of dual loyalty – remained. Although the world had just bore witness to the large-scale extermination of European Jewry, discourse around the Holocaust and its legacy was only rarely found within mainstream American culture during the postwar years.¹⁷² As historian Peter Novick convincingly demonstrates, this absence was not, as some historians have claimed, the product of some sense of collective guilt for the U.S. government's weak response to the Holocaust during the war; rather, the proliferation of rhetoric around totalitarianism, which had become, as an ideology itself, a kind of “transcendent enemy” during the postwar period.¹⁷³

By 1949, the centrality of the Cold War conflict led the U.S. government to marginalize efforts to dig too deeply into the Holocaust, particularly if it involved Cold War allies. In particular, the U.S. government's adoption of West Germany as a critical ally in the fight against the spread of communism disturbed some Jewish leaders, including senior staff at the AJC as early as December 1947. As the Soviet threat became more prominent, the AJC's concerns became increasingly pointed. In November 1949, Eugene Hevesi of the AJC's Foreign Affairs Department went as far as to state: “[A]s far as Germany is

¹⁷¹ Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews*, 190-91.

¹⁷² On this point there is significant disagreement within the historiographical record. Hasia R. Diner provides extensive evidence that American Jews did not wait until the 1960s to start discussing and memorializing the Holocaust, a belief that she identified as having been widely accepted as fact within the academy. Diner fiercely criticizes Peter Novick for propagating the “communal myth” of forced Jewish forgetting and the argument that Jews remained silent during the early Cold War so as not to, for example, be seen as disruptors in the new U.S.-West German alliance, which was widely understood to be critical in attempting to hold back the tide of communism in Europe. American Jews, so the myth goes, feared being perceived as too ideological to publicly memorialize the Holocaust. But Diner highlights the remarkable degree of creativity and sincerity with which ordinary American Jews approached memorialization during this time period. At a time in which Jewish education was indeed on the rise in the United States, the memory and lessons of the Holocaust played a critical role, although specific forms of memorialization were often tied to the local Jewish communities being served. That being said, Diner's argument is limited in scope to the Jewish community in the United States. There was nevertheless a gap in memory within the broader American society. See Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

¹⁷³ Kirsten Fermaglich shows that there was a lack of a framework for discussing the Holocaust even at the highest levels of American civil society and in the academy at this time. While people certainly knew that genocide had just taken place in Europe, “the Holocaust” did not come into being as a widely recognizable and identifiable concept in scholarship until the late 1960s. Fermaglich considers a variety of cases from 1957-1965 that demonstrate how intellectuals used the Holocaust as a social-scientific device for explaining phenomena in American society, in a way that would likely strike many Americans today as strange or even offensive. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 86-87. See also Kirsten Fermaglich, *Americans Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957-1965* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007).

concerned, America has almost completely lost the hard-won victory in World War II.”¹⁷⁴ Despite the very real nature of these risks, American Jewish leadership was nevertheless required to walk a very fine line on the issue out of fear of reversing the positive strides that the Jewish community had made toward closer integration with American society as a whole.

This fear largely stemmed out of stoking the embers of a long-held anti-Semitic stereotype, which had, at least on the surface level, appeared to cool during postwar period.¹⁷⁵ This trope concerned the association of Jews with radical, Leftist politics, which became especially prominent after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.¹⁷⁶ The image of the “Communist Jew” persisted into World War II, and perversely, seemed to find validation (for those who believed in it) in Jews’ support for the Red Army and its staunch opposition to Nazism, despite the known weakness of the United States’ response, during wartime.¹⁷⁷ Concern about this specific line of attack against Jews was so serious so as to earn a response

¹⁷⁴ This evidence actually provides support for Diner’s contention that American Jews were in fact not afraid to critique what they saw as a problematic alliance with West Germany. There is no argument that anticommunism completely destroyed civil discourse, but rather that it significantly restrained the scope of advocacy. The AJC could continue to speak on Jewish issues, but that advocacy would need to be tempered to fit within the limits of the domestic political environment. Furthermore, this assumes that the AJC wanted to speak out more prominently on the Holocaust when, in reality, there were other pressures (most prominently, the establishment of Israel) drawing on its attention and resources. Eugene Hevesi, quoted in Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 91.

¹⁷⁵ This argument is consistent with both (part of) Novick’s description of postwar Jewish life and Diner’s revisionist claim. Even if, as Diner shows, American Jews were talking about the Holocaust in the period after the war, there were other stereotypes, such as the one described here, that the AJC, especially as a leading voice in the Jewish community, was forced to remain conscious of both during preceding periods and the early Cold War. Furthermore, the interpretation presented here is concerned less with motivations than with tactics, resources, and institutions. In this sense, resolving the historiographical debate between Novick and Diner is not necessary in order to show how a realignment of priorities – the adoption of Cold War anticommunism generally and advocating ever more openly for Israel – marginalized a cause (India) that had previously been an object of serious attention. In reality, elements of both arguments probably influenced the AJC’s position on India at this time. Jacob Blaustein may have very well realized that advocating too loudly for an internationalist vision during the rise of McCarthyism could have triggered anti-Semitic pushback, while also appreciating the fact that given the realities of the Cold War, which frightened AJC members as they did many Americans, concentrating too much energy on India (which was being treated by the U.S. government as marginal, at best) may not have been a strategic use of time and resources.

¹⁷⁶ This stereotype can be said to have even earlier origins, such as in the work of radical Jewish thinkers like Karl Marx and Emma Goldman. To this day, there remains no full-length study on the relationship between Cold War anticommunism and anti-Semitism in the United States, despite the overwhelming evidence considered here that long-held, negative perceptions about Jews became activated amid the impassioned, even vitriolic anti-Soviet rhetoric emerging out of various public channels at this time. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 91; Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 131.

¹⁷⁷ This was directly connected to political activity in the United States. Novick notes that American Jewish groups provided collected and provided material support for the Soviet Army during the war. For instance, Novick cites a press release from the American Jewish Congress papers in which the United Jewish War Effort wrote, in part: “As Jews we are under special obligation to them [the Soviets] and it should be a special privilege for us to repay it even in part.” Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 301.

from the AJC Executive Committee at its meeting in May 1947: “That the staff, by the accepted methods of AJC and as part of its continuous program to strengthen democracy, direct its efforts to combat the attempt of reactionary and communistic minded groups alike falsely and viciously to identify Jews and Communists.”¹⁷⁸ Despite internal tension within the Committee about injecting the organization into the heart of an emerging international debate, the May 1947 resolution demonstrates that the later adoption of a more aggressively anticommunist line on the part of the AJC, while tactically strategic, also had ideological roots. Communism threatened Jews, just as it threatened all humanity.¹⁷⁹ But that did not mean that the U.S. government’s medicine for “curing” communism domestically would prove to be desirable; in fact, the Truman administration’s prescription seemed to be capable of becoming fatal for a Jewish advocacy organization.

During the earliest years of the Red Scare, Jewish leaders also observed the federal government begin to use its legal authority to crack down on communists in the United States through congressional investigations, loyalty oaths, and judicial prosecutions. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), for instance, publicly investigated alleged communists and sympathizers.¹⁸⁰ The Truman administration established “loyalty checks” for federal government service, and prosecuted the Communist Party of the United States 1948; two years later, McCarthy started forming lists of government employees who were supposedly guilty of sympathizing with communism.¹⁸¹ In response to an apparently nefarious communist threat that was capable of spreading (and appearing to, such as in China), these bodies operated on a “doctrine of exposure” that would bring subversive activities to light.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Minutes of the AJC Executive Committee, May 10-11, 1947, quoted in Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 346.

¹⁷⁹ Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 346-47.

¹⁸⁰ M.J. Heale, *McCarthy’s Americans: Red Scare Politics in State and Nation, 1935-1965* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 8-10.

¹⁸¹ Heale, *McCarthy’s Americans*, 2.

¹⁸² The 1952 AJC *Annual Report* expressed serious concern about the development of such institutions, especially the passage of the McCarran Act in 1950, which required the registration of domestic communist organizations and enhanced the federal government’s surveillance capacity. One incident outlined in the report captures the mood at the AJC with particular clarity: “As a result of the climate of opinion evidence on a national scale by the McCarran Act, state legislation and local laws echoing its viewpoint have mushroomed...An unwarranted attack utilizing the smear of “Communism” with anti-Semitic overtones, was recently directed against Assistant Secretary of Defense

The institutionalized form of surveillance that arose during this period alarmed AJC leadership. Lucy Dawidowicz, at the time the AJC's in-house advisor on issues related to the communism, kept a close eye on these committees. Dawidowicz noted, for example, that in 1953 and 1954, Jewish Americans frequently composed upwards of 75 percent of "hostile witnesses" brought before these public bodies. At the same time, Jews appeared as defendants in several high-profile espionage cases, of which the trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg emerged as most troublesome.¹⁸³ According to Michael N. Barnett, the ordeal, in which the couple was charged with, convicted of, and executed in June 1953 for passing nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union, "put on trial not just two suspected spies but American Jewry's anxieties and dreams."¹⁸⁴ In the wake of the trial, second-generation American Jews were forced reckon with the practice of their Jewishness through the promotion of far-left politics, which had become a norm in New York's Jewish community through the years. In this sense, the Rosenberg case would soon prove to be transformative, as American Jewish groups rushed to distance themselves from convicted traitors, and with that, the radical politics that they and the wider American Jewish community once stood for.¹⁸⁵ The Rosenberg case encapsulated the political stakes that the AJC and other Jewish civil society organizations perceived in deploying political discourses and strategies that had come to be judged as foreign, dangerous, or unpatriotic.¹⁸⁶

Anna M. Rosenberg. Because of our regular and unremitting scrutiny of anti-Semitic publications and our ceaseless investigations of overt and latent anti-Semites, we were able to provide startling evidence of the fact that at the bottom of the hue and cry against Mrs. Rosenberg lay many well-known anti-Semites..." The American Jewish Committee, *Annual Report*, vol. 53, 1952, http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1952_20_AnnualReports.pdf, 555; Heale, *McCarthy's Americans*, 12-13.

¹⁸³ Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 92.

¹⁸⁴ Barnett, *The Star and the Stripes*, 131. See also Deborah Dash Moore, "Reconsidering the Rosenbergs: Symbol and Substance in Second Generation American Jewish Consciousness," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 8, no. 1 (1998): 21-37, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27500639>.

¹⁸⁵ Barnett, *The Star and the Stripes*, 131.

¹⁸⁶ Sanua argues that even after the war and the horrors of Nazi genocide became increasingly well known, anti-Semitism continued to prove itself to be a stubborn force in American politics that had direct implications for the security of the world's most vulnerable Jewish communities. After the liberation of Nazi concentration and extermination camps, one of the largest questions plaguing the international community was the status of the 250,000 DPs languishing in Europe. The question was especially pressing in the period before the establishment of an Israeli state, as the British colonial forces had blocked the entry of refugees into Palestine starting in 1939, and since the United States had virtually barred immigration into the country starting in 1924, which also provided other countries with an apparent justification for refusing to allow new entrants. In 1950 AJC librarian Edward N. Saveth noted numerous troubling aspects of the way in which young Americans learned about immigration in an analysis of

Adopting Anticommunism

Starting around 1950, *Commentary* authors began to walk the anticommunist line more closely, projecting it onto the prominent issues of nationalism and self-determination. This change both influenced and paralleled a similar transformation within the AJC as it reevaluated the potential role of India in the world. Two articles from the summer of 1950 – the same summer in which the Rosenbergs were arrested – are instructive in this regard. A piece by Richard H.S. Crossman, an influential anticommunist and Zionist voice in the British Labour party, entitled “Nationalism: Enemy or Ally? Can Democracy Afford the Internationalist Fetish?” appeared in July.¹⁸⁷ Crossman began his article provocatively, calling proponents of internationalism in the United States and Britain a “cult” that undermined the concept of nationhood and thereby lost its benefits in terms of its capacity to protect individual freedom. Significantly, the author tied this apparent error to the situation of decolonization in Asia:

It is, I believe, the abject failure of our appeal to nationalism which explains our defeats in the Far East. Here Communism not only caters to empty bellies, but is a popular movement against Western imperialism. Among the colored peoples, racial inequality is at least as effective a breeding ground for Communism as poverty and disease, since it provides the intelligentsia and the more idealistic section of the ruling class with a motive for siding with social revolution...What differentiates the position in Western Europe from that in Asia is the fact that, in the former case, for national reasons, the educated classes are mainly anti-Communist, whereas in Asia nationalism drives them to school with Marx and Lenin.¹⁸⁸

Given his fierce anti-imperialism and refusal to take a firm position on communism, it is not difficult to envision Nehru as one of the subjects of Crossman’s critique. Far from the humanitarian language

textbooks used in schools, which cast doubt on the motivations and character on more recent waves of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. A quota system established in 1929 provided for only a very small number of new immigrants from these areas, and even for those who did obtain visas, rigorous immigration inspections resulted in deportations (these inspections often brought the anti-Semitic views of immigration officers to light, since a lack of “democratic political beliefs” and the connection between Jews and communism were reason for refusing entry). Despite President Truman’s calls on Congress to admit more DPs, the legislature stalled, and several congressmen continued to introduce legislation that would further limit immigration or take other action intentioned to rid out supposedly foreign elements from American society, including one bill that would have outlawed foreign language schools (including Hebrew and Yiddish institutions). The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 set extremely high standards for the admission of new entrants and specifically targeted areas with high Jewish populations. The law, in fact, ultimately excluded most Jewish DPs. Meaningful if still-limited reform came in 1950, only after the new Jewish state had already accepted or was in the process of accepting most Jewish DPs. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 92; Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 51-55.

¹⁸⁷ Richard H.S. Crossman, “Nationalism: Enemy or Ally? Can Democracy Afford the Internationalist Fetish?,” *Commentary*, July 1950, 1, Reel 3, Microfilm Collection, UR BML.

¹⁸⁸ Crossman, “Nationalism: Enemy or Ally?,” 4-5.

employed internally by the AJC in the immediate postwar period, Crossman's *Commentary* analysis fixated on U.S. national security and broad ideological questions.¹⁸⁹ In fact, rather than discussing the humanitarian concerns (such as starvation) on their own merits, Crossman appropriated the physical plight of formerly colonized peoples as further reason to treat countries like India as politically vulnerable.

The pivot away from a broadly humanitarian approach to the world, one that condemned human suffering and injustice against any person, can also be seen in *Commentary* writers' increasingly vocal support for the Zionist project. Under the administrations of Jacob Blaustein, who took over the AJC in 1949, the organization solidified its support for Israel. While humanitarian assistance for Israel remained important during this time period, this language would become fused with pro-American anticommunism as the Cold War became more prominent in the early 1950s. In August 1950, Ludwig Lewisohn, a German-born intellectual, published an article entitled "The Future of American Zionism" in which he spoke harshly about the persistence of anti-Semitism in the United States. Anti-Semitism at the highest level of U.S. policymaking earned itself a particularly vigorous rebuke:

Here, in the unexampled freedom of America, Congressman Rankin makes his speeches in the manner of the late Goebbels and his fellow Congressman utter no rebuke and no reply. Dark and numerous vocal cohorts are behind him, and Jews, deeply attached to their American ideals and allegiances, read and hear and remember and tremble. Let them remember!...Whence arose the modern Zionist movement with its secular aims and methods? It was forced upon us by the failure of the Emancipation, by the circumstance that Jews were not given liberty and equality except sporadically and briefly at the sacrifice of both their Judaism and their Jewishness...¹⁹⁰

Lewisohn's attack on a sitting congressman was extraordinarily bold, as the writer compared a member of the U.S. government with the chief Nazi propagandist. But Lewisohn's critique, interestingly, was framed so as to come at the problem of anti-Semitism from the *Right*. In an articulation very much in line with

¹⁸⁹ There are two reasons to believe that Crossman was speaking for the AJC on this issue. First, despite enjoying significant autonomy, the AJC did perceive the magazine as their own tool for educating American Jews, writing in 1952: "The education program which we launched early in 1950 [the same year of Crossman's article] seeks to build an understanding among American Jews of their heritage, the meaning of their Jewishness today, and the problems that are uniquely theirs. Our magazine *Commentary*, of course, performs an important function in this area." Second, the AJC's agenda was largely fixed on the domestic scene in 1950, where it was tied to the same general anticommunist ideology expressed in this article. The American Jewish Committee, *Annual Report*, vol. 53, 552-55.

¹⁹⁰ Ludwig Lewisohn, "The Future of American Zionism: What Is Still to Be Done?" *Commentary*, August 1950, 124, Reel 3, Microfilm Collection, UR BML.

the spirit of intergroup relations, anti-Semitism was depicted as wrong because it was un-American. Rather than being inherently detestable, Lewisohn framed anti-Semitism as offensive to American Jews who, by fully embracing the foundational ideals of the United States, earned the right not to be discriminated against. And in a comment that would likely surprise many modern Zionists, it is this logic of victimization that sets the author up for his full-throttled endorsement of the Jewish state: “For to the Jew Israel is a religious and redemptory culmination; to the Christian it is a constant reminder of the fact that modern political Zionism and the colonization of the land and the erection of a state in this generation and in this age were ultimately occasioned by the Christlessness of Christendom.”¹⁹¹ America remained a Jewish home, but the survival of the Jewish state had now become a key imperative; this vision would gradually become widely accepted within the Jewish-American community capable of mobilizing government institutions, especially in the wake of the Six-Day War, and would not begin to show real fractures until the contemporary period.¹⁹² These cases of Crossman and Lewisohn are instructive, as they demonstrate early articulations of an emerging orthodoxy, pro-Zionism within an anticommunist framework, which would dominate the AJC’s international vision after 1950.

India Returns to the Margins

The idea that American Jews had something to fear in the United States, in particular, created anxiety at the top levels of the AJC. Starting in the 1950s, John Slawson actively attempted to undermine this concern in his discussions about Jewish education, which he believed should continue to promote the integration of young Jews into American society generally.¹⁹³ This concern became so pronounced during the 1950s that the 1954 Tercentary celebration of Jewish life in America quickly became not an effort to celebrate the accomplishments of Jewish Americans past and present, but rather one to reinforce the message of belonging among American Jews themselves. A major AJC pamphlet series released between

¹⁹¹ Lewisohn, “The Future of American Zionism: What Is Still to Be Done?” 124.

¹⁹² It should be noted, though, that this position preceded that of the American Jewish community as a whole, and especially its leadership. Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 11-13.

¹⁹³ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 93-96.

1952 and 1957 entitled “This Is Our Home,” underscored the message. Americanness first was paramount.¹⁹⁴ This consideration represents a new stream of evidence that demonstrates how changes in the domestic space altered the AJC’s international vision. The emerging Red Scare, of course, had the most deleterious effect on Jewish civil society action generally, but this unique concern related to the AJC specifically. Resources, attention, and political capital are finite, and given the flurry of national political activity unfolding during this time period, it is unsurprising that India, always somewhat peripheral, would fade into the background.

The AJC did not completely withdraw from international affairs, though. But it is remarkable how limited the scope of the Committee’s activities become. In the Executive Committee’s report on 1950, the section on foreign affairs begins with the following line: “The American Jewish Committee is not a relief agency, but we have devoted much time and attention to projects which, we hope, will eventually lessen the heavy burden of relief now shouldered by the American Jewish community.”¹⁹⁵ The statement intentionally distances the organization from any strong commitment to humanitarian relief, going as far as to frame the issue of supporting Jews abroad in domestic terms (as relief for the “heavy burden” dealt with by American Jews at the moment). Nevertheless, the Committee did outline some major activities. The AJC reached out to the U.S. State Department and High Commissioner for Germany, John J. McCloy, in working to collect \$4,000,000 in restitution for heirless Jewish property throughout Europe. The Committee also obtained leaked information out of Austria that revealed an unfair restitution plan; the AJC lobbied the State Department to intervene, eventually killing the adoption of the plan. The report also stated that “your president” engaged in “high-level confidential talks with highly placed people” in order to ensure the legal protection for Iraqi Jews fleeing persecution. The AJC contributed educational resources toward denazification programs run by various U.S. Executive Departments and lobbied for and won an amendment to the discriminatory DP Act of 1948 to allow for the admission of around 135,000 additional refugees (although the establishment of Israel took most of

¹⁹⁴ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 96-97.

¹⁹⁵ The American Jewish Committee, *Annual Report*, vol. 53, 559.

the pressure off the DP issue by this point).¹⁹⁶ The legacy of the Holocaust entirely reshaped the group's international agenda, which was largely constrained to the familiar domains of lobbying and education within U.S. government channels.

Narrowed in scope, the depth of the AJC's international agenda now paled in comparison to the breadth of its domestic agenda. The 1950 report devoted many pages to explaining the AJC's ambitious domestic agenda, which included (in part) educating American Jews on the incompatibility of totalitarianism and Judaism, gaining media coverage for Jews who denounced communist groups, submitting *amicus curiae* briefs in prominent civil rights cases, promoting domestic intergroup relations through programs and events like "I Am An American Day," and working toward the elimination of anti-Semitic references in Christian school textbooks.¹⁹⁷ The variety of AJC activities demonstrated the organization's commitment to its conceptualization of American values such as opposition to communism and support for civil rights. And this intense focus on the domestic sphere demonstrates how the Red Scare altered the nature of political advocacy unevenly. As Nicole Sackley shows, it was around this time that American civil society actually became much more engaged with India and more generally, development projects around the globe as part of "an emerging international development regime."¹⁹⁸ The Ford Foundation, for example, opened its first field office in New Delhi in 1952, where the staff negotiated and worked with local Indians in order to plan and execute projects.¹⁹⁹ Internationalist thinking was certainly not off the table, but for the AJC, the dual pressures of a hostile domestic environment and the need to support Israel constrained its capacity to act on India with the same rigor it possessed in the aftermath of decolonization.

Walking back on the language of active humanitarianism and the shrinkage of space for discourse on active engagement abroad limited the ability for the AJC to frame India and Israel and existing in the

¹⁹⁶ The American Jewish Committee, *Annual Report*, vol. 53, 560-63.

¹⁹⁷ The American Jewish Committee, *Annual Report*, vol. 53, 552-59.

¹⁹⁸ Nicole Sackley, "Foundation in the Field: The Ford Foundation New Delhi Office and the Construction of Development Knowledge, 1951-1970," in *American Foundations and the Coproduction of World Order in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Ulrich Herbert and Jörn Leonhard (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 232-35.

¹⁹⁹ Nicole Sackley, "Foundation in the Field," 232-35.

same postcolonial space, as it had done previously. On one level, it is telling that after corresponding with Cedric Dover in November 1948, the AJC's India file goes cold until late 1951, when the nature of the conversation emerges on wholly news terms. On September 26, 1951, Richard J. Walsh, the Chairman of the India League of America's Executive Committee, and Sidney Hertzberg, Chairman of the Clearing House Committee, wrote a letter to John Slawson in which they proposed the "creation of an information Clearing House through which American voluntary organizations can keep informed 1) on general problems affecting Indo-U.S. relations and 2) on aspects of these problems in which they are especially concerned."²⁰⁰ The letter was forwarded to Simon Segal, director of the Foreign Affairs Department, who agreed to send an AJC representative to an upcoming meeting concerning the establishment of the clearinghouse, agreeing "that friendly relations between our country and India is one of the most important problems in our foreign relations."²⁰¹ Segal's use of "our" is especially striking: since he was communicating with a non-Jewish organization, it seems more likely that the "our" refers to American problems rather than Jewish ones. Another telling element of the original letter from the India League is in its turn away from intervention: "No organization would be required to commit itself in any way at any time. Any action taken in pursuance of this exchange of information would be the responsibility of the individual organization."²⁰² Indeed, Segal's interest in participating could be read as a proactive step toward increased engagement with India, but it could also very well be a product of a desire to stay on the same page as other civil society groups working on similar issues. With the language around humanitarianism and the framing of the Indo-Israeli dynamic changed, the pressure to maintain institutional viability and relevance did not. If anything, these priorities were likely enhanced by an increasingly troublesome and constrained political arena.

Between 1949 and 1953, the Committee's engagement on India issues experienced a significant

²⁰⁰ Letter from Richard J. Walsh and Sidney Hertzberg to John Slawson, September 26, 1951, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

²⁰¹ Letter from Simon Segal to Richard J. Walsh and Simon Segal, October 1951, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

²⁰² Letter from Richard J. Walsh and Sidney Hertzberg to John Slawson, September 26, 1951, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

decline compared to the immediate postwar period. One letter from William I. Battin, Jr. requested that the AJC provide a donation to the Good Parents Fund, an Indian organization that was sponsoring an essay contest on family planning in January 1952. The files contain no response from the AJC.²⁰³ Another letter sent later that year from Dr. Abraham J. Klausner, a Boston Rabbi, requested the AJC's support in establishing an academic exchange program for Jewish Indians, although this too seemed to generate no organizational answer, and there is no evidence that such an initiative came into existence.²⁰⁴ The most interesting piece of correspondence came from Samir K. Das, the secretary of an organization called the Society for the Defence of Freedom in Asia, who sent the AJC a document entitled a *Plea for a Fourth Force*. In the document, the author, R. Swarup, provides generic (if familiar and hyperbolic) arguments about the dangers of communism. Swarup then delivered a rather far-fetched proposal that "we must argue with the soviet [sic] leaders and try to enlist the elements of reason and humanism in them against the cruelty, inhumanity and irresponsibility of their system."²⁰⁵ Somewhat surprisingly, AJC Foreign Affairs Secretary Eugene Hevesi penned a response dated August 22, 1952, writing:

We acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter of July 9, as well as of Mr. Swarup's fine article, the noble intentions of which are beyond question.

On the practical side, we do not see, at this time, the slightest promise in the proposal (well-intentioned as it is) that the Soviet leaders could be approached with our sincere arguments for peace, with the prospect they would respond in the spirit of reason and humanism. To our feeling, these leaders are still prisoners their own ideologies and aspirations, in no condition to respond to, and act freely under the impact, of truth and reason. We sincerely hope that a growing realization of the immutable resistance of free men to their blandishments will, one day, make these leaders see the light. We are afraid, however, that this is not yet the case.²⁰⁶

It is perhaps easy to dismiss Hevesi's reply as a perfunctory note to a man with whom he has no intentions of seriously engaging, and indeed, there would be no further exchanges between the two organizations despite the Indian group's subsequent attempts to obtain another reply. But when read in the context of the early Cold War, Hevesi's language was actually quite telling, as Hevesi seemed to already

²⁰³ Letter from William I. Battin, Jr. to the AJC, January 9, 1952, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

²⁰⁴ Letter from Dr. Abraham J. Klausner to the John Slawson, January 9, 1952, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

²⁰⁵ R. Swarup, quoted in *Plea for a Fourth Force* (enclosure), 4, in letter from Samir K. Das to the AJC, 1952, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

²⁰⁶ Letter from Eugene Hevesi to the Samir K. Das, August 22, 1952, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

have perceived the Cold War as having fallen into a deep freeze. At the same time, there is no question that the AJC figure was as firmly opposed to communism as Das. Like the U.S. government, the AJC stood for anticommunist ideology at the expense of heterodox thinking about international engagement. This pattern is especially clear in *Commentary*, where articles like “The Near East’s Communist-Fascist Front: An Ominous Alliance Against Israel and the West” (May 1952), “Stalin Builds a Trojan Horse Against America, Warning: Another “Popular Front” in the Making (November 1952), and “The Colonial System of the U.S.S.R.: Soviet Communism and Backward Peoples,” (May 1953), are indicative of the magazine’s near obsession with the threat of communism during this period, at the direct expense of engagement on issues like India.²⁰⁷

The AJC’s anticommunist position drew on an emergent movement within the New York intellectual scene at this time. McCarthyism presented the New York Intellectuals with a serious dilemma. On one hand, McCarthy’s crackdown on civil discourse and his particular distaste for intellectuals obviously threatened these radical Jewish thinkers. But on the other hand, the thinkers had already rejected communism, understanding it as a grave threat to the creation of a flourishing high society that they were so thoroughly enmeshed in, as well as to civil liberties. Having long rejected Stalin for perverting what they saw as a prime opportunity for the creation of a state based on the radical politics they had spent so much time reflecting on as students at City College, the position against communism was a much more recent development. By 1952, Irving Kristol was writing in *Commentary* about how liberals were “becoming blind” to the real dangers posed by communism in relation to civil liberties, while simultaneously critiquing the McCarthy’s extremism, a position echoed by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Bell.²⁰⁸ There is a direct parallel between the AJC’s pro-America advocacy after the Holocaust and

²⁰⁷ See Mark Alexander, “The Near East’s Communist-Fascist Front: An Ominous Alliance Against Israel and the West,” *Comentary*, May 1952, 456-62, Reel 3, UR BML; Maurice K. Goldbloom, “Stalin Builds a Trojan Horse Against America, Warning: Another “Popular Front” in the Making,” *Commentary*, November 1952, 403-12, Reel 3, UR BML; Hugh Seton-Watson, “The Colonial System of the U.S.S.R.: Soviet Communism and Backward Peoples,” *Commentary*, May 1953, 508-12, Reel 4, UR BML.

²⁰⁸ Murray Friedman claims that to this day, Kristol’s ““Civil Liberties’: 1952 – A Study in Confusion” remains the “most controversial” essay of his career, as it was a turning point in solidifying a nascent divide between persistent liberal voices and the emerging neoconservative strain within intellectual circles. Overall, Friedman argues that Kristol came to understand communism as a more significant threat to liberal ideals than the existing American

the broad embrace of the anticommunist position by the New York Intellectuals in the early 1950s. In both cases, an appreciation for the opportunities presented by the American experience developed into norms within their respective settings. In July 1953, Diana Trilling summarized the state of affairs in blunt terms: “The belief that a choice between America and the Soviet Union is a choice between anything except democracy and totalitarianism obviously does not disqualify the intellectual for political action. It merely disqualifies him as an intellectual.”²⁰⁹

Repudiating communism as a legitimate intellectual philosophy, Trilling, Glazer, Bell, and others in this Jewish American circle labeled communism as totalitarianism, a critical step in fashioning the intellectual framework of American “freedom” vs. Soviet “totalitarianism” that was shaping wider political discourse. It was during the early 1950s that the New York Intellectuals began to talk about the world in polar terms, a way of thinking that would have been foreign to them less than two decades earlier, but that now seemed necessary. As the intellectual historian Alexander Bloom explains, the Cold War seemed to leave intellectuals with only two options. With the communist position basically off the table by this point, these radical thinkers now associated themselves with American democracy, the object of so much of their criticism just a few years earlier.²¹⁰ Indeed, this shift was a profound development, generating a sense of unity and participation that was experienced at all levels of the American Jewish community, from middle-class homeowners who purchased new houses in the suburbs to the thinkers in New York, who were now thoroughly convinced that American, market-based democracy represented the

state. As one of the “premature neocons,” Kristol would go on to become a leading and highly influential conservative voice later in life, eventually becoming a prominent proponent of capitalism and working for a variety of private conservative causes, earning him significant fame (even in the present day) as “the godfather of neoconservatism.” Dorman’s *Arguing the World* shows that the adoption of the anticommunist line in the early 1950s by Kristol, Glazer, and Bell divided this group from Irving Howe, who criticized his friends for their willingness to moderate their radical politics (although he too would gradually move away from the extreme Left, eventually becoming a mainstream socialist). *Arguing the World*, directed by Dorman; Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 77-79. See also J. David Hoeverler, “Irving Kristol: Bourgeois Gentleman,” in *Watch on the Right: Conservative Intellectuals in the Reagan Era* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 81-114.

²⁰⁹ Diana Trilling, “America Through Dark Spectacles,” *Twentieth Century*, July 1953, 39-40, quoted in Bloom, *Prodigal Sons*, 200.

²¹⁰ Bloom, *Prodigal Sons*, 200.

best hope for avoiding another communist catastrophe.²¹¹

In the triangle of the U.S. government, Jewish-American civil society, and elite intellectual circles, the early 1950s can be said to be the first moment in which the three forces come onto the same page in terms of their overall worldview. And while no shift in one area can be said to have directly triggered a change in another, the convergence of positions that developed during this time was no accident. These different agents continued to influence one another greatly during this period and probably more so, given the increasingly optimistic prospects for Jews to obtain powerful positions in government and civil society.²¹² The fact that after Nehru's 1949 visit the Truman administration virtually shut down activity on India undoubtedly played some role in how AJC leadership understood the strategic value of the country relative to the new primary focus of their attention, Israel. This fact was enhanced by the close relationship between the Department of State and the AJC, which enjoyed the closest relationship to Foggy Bottom of any Jewish-American group. During the early 1950s, the AJC leadership used this position to press the case for the development of a close alliance between the United States for Israel, with Irving Engel, President of the AJC from 1954 to 1959, even meeting with Senator John F. Kennedy in December 1955 in order to discuss the Jewish state.²¹³

Similarly, despite the editorial autonomy of *Commentary* from the AJC, AJC leaders were reading (and funding) the magazine in these years and must have noticed the explosion of activity and publicity that was emerging around the anticommunist position being worked out by the Intellectuals. This "unified triangle" shows that in response to a particularly acute challenge presented by the anxiety surrounding the early Cold War (that forced American Jews to wrestle with the question of their identities), the elite end of this group chose – or rather, was forced – to adopt the position of the dominating power. This reorientation was not simply a function of U.S. foreign policy, as anti-Semitism outside of the halls of the State Department – both on the domestic scene (e.g., HUAC) and generally

²¹¹ Bloom, *Prodigal Sons*, 201.

²¹² It stands as an interesting historical irony that McCarthy employed Jews on his staff even as he took actions that directly threatened (disproportionately) the capacity of Jews to maintain these key positions, a reality that Friedman says both the AJC and ADL were keenly aware of at this moment. Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution*, 66.

²¹³ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 91.

within the cultural domain – likely played the largest role in altering the group’s perspective on India. But regardless of cause, anticommunism closed the door, at least for the time being, on creative thinking about India, which had once shown so much promise as a means for building up institutional power in Israel affairs among the AJC leadership. After 1950, pressures concerning institutional viability would prove to be decisive, a necessary but insufficient condition for the construction of an internationalist worldview that began to take shape immediately after World War II. Rather than emerging organically out of the policy organs of the AJC, the Committee would only return to the question of India after momentous political changes had taken hold domestically and on the subcontinent.

Coda: Watching the Windows Close

“I pointed out that Indians...had criticized our foreign policy with great justice...”

-- Chester Bowles, American diplomat, to Irving Engel, AJC President,
July 1956²¹⁴

“It is not logical, my answer, but there it is.”

-- Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking about Israel and the Bandung Conference,
June 1956²¹⁵

During a closed session of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia in April 1955, Nehru gave an impassioned, extended defense of nonalignment. Nehru instructed his fellow delegates, leaders of other recently decolonized or decolonizing Asian and African countries, to avoid superpower politics in order to prevent future global conflict.²¹⁶ But as the conference membership suggests, Nehru’s commitment to nonalignment was not simply an effort to safeguard the emerging international order after the war. It was also an attempt to build a collective postcolonial, or in his specific case, Asian, identity. At the close of the conference, Nehru linked his stated goal of international cooperation with the Buddhist idea of Panchasheela, drawing on its precepts to frame “five principles” of conduct in the global arena.²¹⁷ Certainly, Nehru’s attempt to paint the portrait of a unifying Third World with such a broad brush can be read as an attempt to erase salient differences between the participants’ agendas, especially concerning China’s goal of becoming a forerunner of global communist revolution.²¹⁸ However, the prime minister’s big-tent rhetoric can also be read as an act of self-affirmation, as Nehru implicitly claimed the authority to speak as the “leader of the Third World,” a position for which he had gained wide recognition globally by

²¹⁴ Letter from Chester Bowles to Irving Engel, July 2, 1956, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

²¹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, quoted in Michael Brecher, *The New States of Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 210, quoted in Kumaraswamy, *India’s Israel Policy*, 193.

²¹⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, quoted in Gopal, ed., *Jawaharlal Nehru*, 398.

²¹⁷ This use Panchsheela at Bandung was prefigured by an agreement on Indo-Chinese cooperation signed one year earlier between Nehru and Zhou En-Lai. Panchsheela provides instruction on how to life the good life. Even earlier, Ahmed Sukarno invoked the concept when drafting the Indonesian constitution. Nataša Mišković, “Introduction,” in *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi, Bandung, Belgrade*, ed. Nataša Mišković, Harald Fischer-Tiné, and Nada Boškovska (Florence, Great Britain: Routledge), 5-6. ProQuest ebrary.

²¹⁸ Mišković, “Introduction,” 5.

the early 1950s.²¹⁹ Not all of the countries' leaders (especially the Indonesians) were pleased by Nehru's understanding of India as, to quote historian Antoinette Burton, "*prima inter pares* in civilizational terms."²²⁰ But it was likely difficult for even them to deny Nehru's apparent capacity to captivate the masses. As Nehru waved at cheering conference spectators, the crowd yelled back "*Merdeka, pak!*" ["freedom, sir!"], the rallying cry of the Indonesian revolution.²²¹

But for all the glory that this new position brought Nehru, the conference's treatment of Israel demonstrated to the Indian leader the limits of nonalignment. At the crossroads of Africa and Asia, Israel's exclusion from the summit was not inevitable. By 1955, Indonesia was in dialogue with the Jewish state, both India and Sri Lanka recognized Israeli independence, and Burma even had positive ties with Moshe Sharett's center-left government. Furthermore, taking a seat at the conference did not require diplomatic recognition of other attendees (the majority of participants still had not recognized the PRC, for instance). Nevertheless, these factors would prove insufficient for overcoming the vociferous opposition to Israel's participation, from the Arab League to Muslim-majority Pakistan, whose Prime Minister Mohammed Ali had introduced a resolution at an earlier South Asian conference calling the establishment of Israel illegal.²²² Here, it is important to note that the United States had entered a military alliance with Pakistan in May 1954. The deal provided justification for Nehru's belief that "the West supports Pakistan," and the United States was fixed on bringing Cold War politics into the region.²²³ Despite his belief that Israel ought to be invited to the meeting, Nehru acquiesced to the political reality

²¹⁹ B.N. Pandey, *Nehru* (New York: Springer, 1976), accessed March 27, 2017, <https://goo.gl/G8zg8P>, 337.

²²⁰ Antoinette Burton, "The Solidarities of Bandung: Toward a Critical 21st Century History," in *Making a World After Empire*, ed. Christopher J. Lee (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 354.

²²¹ Naoko Shimazu, "Diplomacy as Theater: Staging the Bandung Conference of 1955," *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (2013): 246, doi:10.1017/S0026749X13000371.

²²² Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, 190.

²²³ Although official U.S. government support for Israel is now widely expected, this was certainly not always the case, especially during the early Cold War. Waxman summarizes the American position at this time bluntly: "In the 1950s, this was no easy task, as the Eisenhower administration was more concerned with gaining Arab allies in the Cold War than helping Israel." The U.S. government's ambivalence on the issue of support for Israel would not begin to make serious shifts until the Six-Day War. Jawaharlal Nehru, quoted in Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, 195; McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 189-91; Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 155-56.

that Israeli participation would have decimated conference attendance.²²⁴ One year later, Nehru reflected on the experience of Israeli exclusion with an uncharacteristic degree of moral flexibility and even confusion: “Conditions were and still are that the Arab nations and Israel don’t sit together. They do sit at the United Nations, but apart from that, they just don’t sit. And one is offered this choice of having one or the other. It is not logical, my answer, but there it is.”²²⁵ Bandung was not only a transformational moment in the establishment of a more crystallized politics of the Third World (at least by way of staging), but also in a shift on the part of Nehru toward a “realpolitik” grounded in the overlapping contexts of regional and international institutions.²²⁶ From 1955 on, not only would Pakistan, bolstered by U.S. backing, exert ever more power over Indian foreign policy, but so too would the prospect of Arab support at the United Nations, where support from allies would be necessary for earning political victories on key issues, such as Kashmir.²²⁷

Realpolitik in Action

Bandung set India on a course toward further alignment with the Arab League and away from Israel. The Suez crisis of the following year sealed off hopes for cordial Indo-Israeli relations. In 1952, following the ouster of Egypt’s King Farouk, Gamal Abdel Nasser rose to the presidency of Egypt, promising a revival of Arab dignity in the wake of the humiliating 1948 loss to Israel and more generally, centuries of European colonial injustice toward Muslims.²²⁸ The fiercely anticolonial Bandung conference had allowed a reinvigorated Nasser to return to Egypt on an even more confident footing.²²⁹ Within this

²²⁴ Kumaraswamy argues that the exclusion of Israel from the Bandung Conference “legitimized its political exclusion from the emerging bloc of Third World countries,” marginalizing the Jewish state within international diplomatic, cultural, and intellectual circles in a way that extends into the present day. Furthermore, exclusion came over Israeli objections and efforts to court individual Asian leaders. Kumaraswamy, *India’s Israel Policy*, 190-94.

²²⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, quoted in Michael Brecher, *The New States of Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 210, quoted in Kumaraswamy, *India’s Israel Policy*, 193.

²²⁶ Sridevi Menon, “Where Is West Asia in Asian America? ‘Asia’ and the Politics of Space in Asian America,” *Social Text*, 86, no. 24 (Spring 2006), 61, quoted in Burton, “The Solidarities of Bandung,” 353.

²²⁷ Kumaraswamy, *India’s Israel Policy*, 195.

²²⁸ Following Nasser’s rise to power in 1954, he sponsored periodic acts of violence against Israel and publicly committed himself to the destruction of the Jewish state. McWilliams and Piotrowski, *The World Since 1945*, 151.

²²⁹ Christopher J. Lee, “Between a Moment and an Era: The Origins and Afterlives of Bandung,” in *Making a World After Empire*, ed. Christopher J. Lee (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 10.

tense atmosphere, both Egypt and Israel stepped up arms purchases from the superpowers; intensification reached its apex in July 1956, when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, which had been under French and British control. In October, the United Kingdom and France, together with the Israelis, attacked Egypt in retaliation. The coalition swiftly overpowered Nasser's forces, and a variety of factors – including opposition from U.S. President Eisenhower to continued war, concerns about Soviet intervention, and an active United Nations force – helped secure a truce. Egypt was again humiliated, but would at least maintain control over the canal, so long as Israeli ships could pass through. Arab-Israeli tensions continued to simmer.²³⁰ Following Nasser's nationalization of the canal, Nehru quickly lined up behind the Arabs, further diminishing the prospects for a normalization of Indo-Israeli relations. Nehru criticized Israeli retaliation and even went as far as to claim that Israel had violated the spirit of Bandung, willfully ignoring his own role in excluding Israel from that same conference. From the Suez crisis forward, this new characterization of Israel as an imperial power would become deeply engrained in Indian foreign policy, so much so that normalized Indo-Israeli relations would not come about until 1992.²³¹

The AJC “Returns” to India

It is no coincidence that AJC interest in India began to pick up again in the summer of 1956. Conversation about India within the AJC emerged on entirely new terms than those upon which the AJC staff discussed the country a decade, or even five years, earlier. By the mid-1950s, Israel had become the prism through which AJC leadership assessed Nehru and India. Virtually absent from the internal documents of this period is rhetoric of humanitarianism or even anticommunism; rather than viewing India as a place of opportunity in its own right, AJC staff now asked how India could be handled, or better

²³⁰ Control over the canal would remain a major point of tension between Egypt and Israel. Nasser's decision to end Israeli access to the canal in the spring of 1967 would eventually snap the truce; as Arab forces lined up behind Egypt, Israel launched a pre-emptive strike, again quickly annihilating Egyptian and Jordanian forces in the Six-Day War. McWilliams and Piotrowski, *The World Since 1945*, 152.

²³¹ Meanwhile, Nehru refused to condemn the Soviet Union's November invasion of Hungary, locking him into a hypocrisy for which he received serious pushback. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, 21, 198.

yet, instrumentalized, to advance Israeli interests and U.S.-Israeli diplomatic relations.

The AJC moved toward Israel at a moment in which many Jewish Americans seemed to be stepping away from Zionist activities. While the American Jewry played an important role in the immediate wake of the state's founding – joining Zionist groups, contributing to the purchase of materiel, or even relocating to Israel to fight – this “outburst of Jewish nationalism” was largely fleeting as Israel found itself on surer footing following its decisive victory in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.²³² Accordingly, American Jewish membership in Zionist organizations declined by 75 percent between 1948 and 1956; donations to Israel fell by 40 percent between 1948 and 1953. These trends alarmed prominent American Zionists and Israeli leaders who recognized the importance of American moral and material support.²³³ Jewish intellectual Sidney Hook criticized his fellow Jewish Americans who could be “sensitive to the national aspirations of all other persecuted people...[y]et when it came to our own kinfolk...leaped into a proud universalism.”²³⁴ It was in this context of a perceived falling off in American Zionism that the AJC became more vigorous than ever in its defense of Israel.

The impending Arab threat against Israel mobilized an aggressive AJC response at all stages of the Suez crisis. Ralph E. Samuel, the chairman of the AJC's Administrative Board who met frequently with Israeli Prime Minister Moshe Sharett and Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Abba Eban, commented as early as January 1956: “The Arab-Israeli crisis represents far and away our greatest problem and at the same time our greatest opportunity for usefulness.”²³⁵ With violence on the horizon, the Committee would not wait to highlight its own usefulness as a defender of Israel. Employing one of their favorite tactics,

²³² Barnett, *The Star and the Stripes*, 145.

²³³ On the other hand, Yossi Shain warns that one should not overstate the decline in American-Jewish monetary support for Israel as compelling evidence that American Jews as a whole were turning against the Zionist cause, or that they were even really ambivalent about the project. Shain argues that while this funding did decline, overall levels remained high (at their lowest, \$55 million in 1955) and that one reason for the possible decrease was “that the critical danger to Israel's existence had passed for the time being.” Such an explanation finds support in the uptick in American-Jewish support for Israel as a result of the 1967 war, which is well-established in the literature on the American Jewry. Yossi Shain, *Kinship and Diasporas in International Affairs* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 55-56; Barnett, *The Star and the Stripes*, 146.

²³⁴ Sidney Hook, quoted in Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 37, quoted in Barnett, *The Star and the Stripes*, 146.

²³⁵ Ralph E. Samuel, quoted in Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 92.

AJC staff members lobbied the U.S. government to sell Israel weapons, provide loans, and support the resettlement of Palestinian refugees. All of these plans received support from U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in 1955. And while the Israeli actions during the war were met with disappointment and even anger by the Eisenhower administration, Irving Engel and Jacob Blaustein played important roles as Israel advocates at the White House after 1956.²³⁶ Considering that just over a decade earlier the AJC's president had referred to the Zionist project as "a Jewish catastrophe," the AJC's activity around the Suez crisis represented a marked transformation.

The AJC wasted no time in channeling this Zionist energy toward India. Rather than a place of worrying inter-ethnic violence or a potential target of communism, India now reemerged in internal AJC correspondence as strategically valuable to the security of Israel. On July 2, 1956, former U.S. Ambassador to India and Nepal Chester Bowles penned a letter to AJC president Irving Engel, recounting several recent conversations he had. The first was with the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, where the duo discussed the relationship between India and the Middle East, including the possibility of diplomatic normalization. Bowles wrote to Engel: "As you probably know, while India has recognized Israel she has not exchanged ambassadors." Both the fact that Bowles wrote to Engel and that Bowles expected Engel to be connected to some of the important news on this issue strongly suggests that India has indeed reentered the spotlight by mid-1956. Just a few days thereafter, Bowles had dinner with India's ambassador, Gaganvihari Lallubhai Mehta, where they discussed normalization for "nearly two hours." While Bowles informed Mehta that he understood "that Indian and other Asians had criticized our [U.S.] foreign policy with great justice" for its apparent duplicity in the treatment of Western and non-Western nationalist movements, the former ambassador also explained that "many of us [Americans] were deeply disappointed in the position she [India] has taken on Israel and the Middle East." And while Bowles expressed satisfaction that Mehta would report back favorably to Nehru, the most striking aspect of the letter is the utilitarian language with which Bowles discussed India: "If India would agree to exchange ambassadors with Israel – thereby dramatizing her recognition of Israel's continued right to exist, and if

²³⁶ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 92-93.

India at the same time should offer her good offices in trying to ease some of the conflicts between the Arab world and Israel, she might perform a very valuable function.” Clearly speaking from experience on the ground, Bowles strategized about how the AJC could contribute to this goal:

It occurs to me in passing this thought along to you that you might have an opportunity to see the Indian ambassador or other prominent Indians and you may have some influence on Indian policy. I feel that the Indians are very sensitive to any suggestions that their policies are expedient or a departure from principle. Here at least, it seems to me, they are highly vulnerable to attack and if the attack is tactful appreciative of their problems, and at the same time gently reminds them that they are departing rather significantly from the Gandhian morality, the effect might eventually be to bring them into this situation in a creative and positive way to everyone’s benefit.²³⁷

From mourning the death of Gandhi in 1948 to discussing the ways in which Gandhi could be used to advance Israeli ends in 1956, Zionism had reshaped the entirety of the AJC’s international vision.

Engel was clearly intrigued by the Bowles letter. A few days after receiving it, he forwarded it to Seymour J. Rubin, a Washington, D.C. attorney. Engel opened the letter by informing Rubin about the AJC’s earlier plans: “You will recall that before Nehru’s trip to Washington was cancelled, we were endeavoring to set up a conference with him for the purpose of discussing India’s role in Middle East.”²³⁸

Engel seems to have been privy to at least some high-level diplomatic channels, given that Nehru’s trip had been cancelled before being publicly announced. The president’s introduction suggested that even before the outbreak of the Egyptian crisis later in July, the AJC had already been seeking to intervene in the Indo-Israeli bilateral relationship. Engel requested answers on five questions:

1. Is Nehru still planning to come to this country and if so, when?
2. If he is not coming in the near future, would you think it a good idea for us to try to set up a conference or conferences with other prominent Indians in this country?
3. If you answer to the previous question is in the affirmative, what prominent Indians would you suggest?
4. How would you suggest that we go about making the appointments? (I can always use Chester Bowles for that purpose, but would rather hold him in reserve.)
5. Either because of the Logan Act or as a general matter of policy, should we get the approval of the State Department before arranging for any such conference?

²³⁷ Letter from Chester Bowles to Irving Engel, July 2, 1956, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

²³⁸ Letter from Irving Engel to Seymour J. Rubin, July 9, 1956, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

Rubin's answers from a few days later are quite telling.²³⁹ Rubin suggested that the Department of State would not be open to a formal meeting between Nehru and the AJC, not necessarily because Foggy Bottom would consider it inappropriate (although this too was mentioned), but because, in the words of Rubin:

I get the distinct impression that the Department feels that talking with Mehta would have few results. The Department feels, I think, that the Indians are just as expedient as anyone else, despite all professions of moral superiority, and that their actions re [sic] Israel, Kashmir, etc., prove it. Nehru is meeting with Nasser in the next few days, and it seems unlikely to those I've talked with that he would taken any action along the lines desired by us.²⁴⁰

Just as with the adoption of anticommunism, Rubin's response to Engel suggests that official U.S. government policy limited the scope of civil society advocacy. But in contrast to anticommunism, the issue of anti-Semitism was now less salient. Where previously the AJC appeared to moderate its international policy based upon very real concerns about associating themselves with left-wing politics, the AJC now operated within a much more rigid foreign-policy framework in which strategic outcomes (in relation to Israeli security) seem to have become the criterion of success abroad.

Domestic Politics and Institutional Viability, Redux

Why did the AJC come to align itself with Israeli interests by the 1956 Suez crisis while most American Jews came to this position only in the wake of the 1967 Six-Day War? It is of course possible that, at this moment, the AJC was simply more tuned into the situation in the Middle East. Equipped with significant resources and political power and perpetually international in its vision, it could be the case that if American Jews understood the gravity of Nasser's threats against the Jewish state, they too would have arrived at a position closer to that of the AJC. But given that the Suez crisis was a well-publicized event in the U.S. media and that there was a generalized disinterest in Israel as time passed (recall how many American Jews actively chose to leave their Zionist organizations or stop donating to Israel by this

²³⁹ Letter from Seymour J. Rubin to Irving Engel, July 11, 1956, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

²⁴⁰ Letter from Seymour J. Rubin to Irving Engel, July 11, 1956, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

time), it seems as though exposure to more information would not alone have been able to precipitate a wave of renewed grassroots support for Israel. Another possibility is that fears concerning anti-Semitism embedded within anticommunism remained great enough so as to minimize the AJC's desire to publicize its activities. But the primary sources contradict such an assertion, demonstrating that high-level AJC staff and those associated with them were actively engaged in conversations about Israeli security even before Suez. And of course, neither of these hypotheses could uniquely account for the AJC's particular and extensive interest in India.

Just as was seen with the rise of anticommunism, domestic politics seemed to force a tactical reorientation on the part of the AJC. Historian Dov Waxman argues that after 1948, the U.S. pro-Zionist lobby, which had slowly won the support of a majority of American Jews, "became (with the prodding of the Israeli and American governments) a much more cohesive and centralized pro-Israel lobby. It also became, not coincidentally, a major player in American politics and foreign policymaking."²⁴¹ The most notable products of this process were the emergence of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations (Conference of Presidents), both of which remain major players in American politics today.²⁴² Here, it is important to note that there was no radical turn on the part of the AJC, as the organization continued (or at least attempted to) keep Israel at arm's length, obsessively checking on Ben-Gurion's statements for compliance with the Blaustein-Ben-Gurion Declaration, for example. But the AJC was indeed increasingly falling within the pro-Israel camp at this time; in turn, argues Sanua, the "hands-off public posture" may have functioned more as a means to "soothe troubled consciences" on the part of those AJC staffers who still held reservations about Zionism.²⁴³

In this regard, the Suez crisis represented a key moment in pushing the AJC ever closer to the emergent pro-Israel lobby. As tensions rose in the Middle East, the AJC sent out a declaration to its chapters that membership in the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism was not acceptable if one

²⁴¹ Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 154.

²⁴² Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 154.

²⁴³ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 91.

wanted to be a member of the AJC.²⁴⁴ Anti-Zionism was no longer a tolerable position within the Committee. Furthermore, since the AJC had only a very limited history of active advocacy on the Israel issue, its leaders could leverage its “useful neutrality” within elite power circles, such as at the State Department, in order to lobby more *effectively* on issues concerning Israeli security.²⁴⁵ And of course, by the time a hot conflict in the Middle East actually materialized, the AJC would play a particularly extensive role in pro-Israel efforts.²⁴⁶ Thus, both external developments and decisions within the organization made the AJC’s commitment to Israel ever stronger. Externally, the rise of pro-Israel groups helped transform support for Israel into a norm within the Jewish-American community, providing a firmer basis upon which the AJC could justify its already existing move toward the Jewish state. Furthermore, there is an element of path dependency also at play within this dynamic: for each action that the AJC took in support of Israel, it limited its own capacity to reverse course later down the line as new violent conflicts between Israel and its neighbors emerged. Finally, Israel provided the AJC with a new platform for connecting with channels of state power, especially as the pro-Israel lobby accumulated more political capital over time. And none of this is to undermine the possibility of small, contingent changes accumulating over time in which individual players within the AJC became more connected to the defense of the Zionist project in the face of increasingly aggressive enemies.

Out of Their Control

If Nehru’s support for Nasser during the Suez crisis closed the window on the possibility of normalized Indo-Israeli relations, then the mid-1950s also witnessed the expiration of two other opportunities. The first of these came between the United States and India. The United States’ embrace of Pakistan in mid-1954 greatly disturbed Nehru, and the reasons for the Indian Prime Minister’s distress

²⁴⁴ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 91.

²⁴⁵ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 91.

²⁴⁶ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 92.

surrounding Pakistan inexplicably eluded Secretary of State Dulles.²⁴⁷ In a saga reminiscent of Nehru's troublesome visit to the United States, another state visit by Nehru, now to Eisenhower, failed to make meaningful progress on either one of these two flashpoints, despite increased cordiality this time around.²⁴⁸ The Pakistan issue eventually proved to be truly decisive, temporarily stalling any significant military or diplomatic progress between the United States and India until the end of the decade, despite a significant investment of time and thought from Eisenhower.²⁴⁹

The third window to close was that of the AJC's dynamic thinking on India. As part of a general trend toward stronger pro-Israel advocacy in American politics and as an immediate consequence of Suez, Israel and Israel alone had become the means through which the AJC understood India. Further, the understanding that emerged was an increasingly problematic one, in a development reflective of the state of affairs between the U.S. and Indian governments: just as nonalignment seemed to obstruct U.S. foreign policy objectives in the context of the Cold War, locking in an unconstructive status quo, so did Nehru's position on Israel and in fact, his support for its sworn enemies, virtually eliminate the prospects for AJC intervention into India. The AJC leadership found Nehru's connection to Nasser particularly troublesome. In an August 6, 1956 memorandum entitled "India and Israel," AJC Foreign Affairs secretary Eugene Hevesi seemed to indict Nehru as a supporter of anti-Jewish violence:

Much of Colonel Nasser's strength in his own country and his influence in the Arab world stems from the support India has accorded him. It is worth noting that Nasser's active anti-Israel leadership in the Arab world and Egypt's virulent hostility toward Israel date from Nasser's participation at Bandung.²⁵⁰

Atop this, as it became increasingly apparent that Nehru would not relinquish his position as the "leader of the Third World" by abandoning his Arab allies, the AJC's critique became ever sharper: "India's present attitude toward Israel gives indirect aid and comfort to a policy endangering the very existence of

²⁴⁷ A March 1956 meeting between Nehru and Dulles in New Delhi failed to achieve any meaningful results, in no small part due to the Pakistan issue. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 225-26.

²⁴⁸ McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 229.

²⁴⁹ McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 232-33.

²⁵⁰ Eugene Hevesi, "India and Israel," August 6, 1956, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

a recognized state and of its people.”²⁵¹ Hevesi’s memo is highly significant, seeming to return to the very exclusive cause of Jewish defense for which the AJC was originally founded. For the first time in the existing record of the AJC’s monitoring of India, the Hevesi memo suggests that Indian foreign policy was now a danger to the lives of fellow Jews.

In this context, it is unsurprising that by the end of 1956, with the Nehru state visit on the horizon, that the AJC would become more active in its efforts to court support, or at least a compromise, from the Nehru government. In a “strictly confidential” memo to John Slawson dated August 28, 1956, Simon Segal reported that he had a friend meet with Ambassador Mehta, and that the Indian ambassador would be willing to receive an AJC representative in the future. Segal enclosed with the letter a memorandum that depicted India in purely instrumental terms:

The problem is how Nehru can help to pacify the Arab-Israeli situation. The assumption is that Nehru is the only important world statesman with influence on the Arabs who also has some sympathy for Israel. The central technique to be used would be a conference between two or three AJC spokesmen personally.²⁵²

But there would be no conference, no direct negotiations, and no major breakthrough. In a December 1956 letter to Simon Segal, Slawson reported on a November 29 meeting at the Israeli embassy at which he received instructions that Jewish organizations should not negotiate with Nehru during his state visit.²⁵³ But the opportunity for AJC engagement, one that had appeared to be so rich in the immediate postwar years, had all but disappeared. As tensions between Israel and Egypt locked the two in a standstill, so did the prospects for brokering a peace deal or really, any engagement with India. In August 1957, AJC President Engel concluded privately that based on the reports of Sidney Herzberg, who had recently met with Mehta, there had been no significant diplomatic breakthroughs. While Engel floated the idea of negotiating with Nehru’s advisor V.K. Krishna Menon, his conclusion was noncommittal:

It was Herzberg’s thought that we might consider approaching Krishna Menon, not so much on the basis of an appeal to the principle as on the basis of what our group might do for India, either in connection with Kashmir or in connection with the forthcoming

²⁵¹ Eugene Hevesi, “India and Israel,” August 6, 1956, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

²⁵² Letter from Simon Segal to John Slawson, August 28, 1956, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 8; YIVO.

²⁵³ Letter from John Slawson to Simon Segal, December 10, 1956, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 9; YIVO.

termination of negotiations between India and Pakistan regarding canal waters. This of course would require careful consideration of what, if anything, we might be able to contribute toward a solution of either of those two problems.²⁵⁴

Just as the years of the AJC's thinking on India began with a question of what the organization might be able to do to help India, so did they end. But even for an organization as dynamic as the AJC, a perception of an unfruitful political environment soon left them with few alternatives. With both Indo-U.S. and Indo-Israeli relations entering a frozen state, and with changes within the American-Jewish community increasingly prioritizing Israel, India permanently lost its once-privileged place.

Toward a More Critical Approach

The story of the American Jewish Committee's foray into India is a new one, and so with it comes not only new historical lessons, but also methodological and historiographical insights. Returning to Naomi W. Cohen's call for a cross-border approach to Jewish Studies, this study takes a multidimensional view in order to capture the way in which multiple feeders including institutional structure, old ideologies, external geopolitical events, national governments, intellectual thought, and even local geography could simultaneously intersect in order to produce unexpected historical outcomes, such as successive changes in the views of a Jewish-American organization in its understanding of South Asia. This thesis makes an organ of civil society its subject, in line with Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht's prescription for decentering the federal government in the study of U.S. foreign relations. Through its exploration of the AJC, this study seeks to account for the vast uncertainties that nevertheless structured the scope, nature, and timing of the organization's advocacy during the postwar period. Bookended by major global events, World War II and the Suez crisis, this project demonstrates how political, intellectual, and social pressures continued to exert authority over institutions even in moments that largely appear as voids in the historiography. The case of the AJC and India is one of processual, nonlinear change.

The history of the AJC's engagement with India points us to a more progressive model for Jewish

²⁵⁴ Irving M. Engel, Memorandum, August 15, 1956, RAJC; RG 347.7.1.; folder 9; YIVO.

Studies in the United States. It illuminates the self-reflexive nature of political activity: the exploration of the interactive modes between Jewish institutions and a non-Jewish world can capture the organization's perception and public projection of its own values, goals, or vision. "From New York to the World" also reminds the contemporary reader about the complex nature of Jewish-American advocacy. The emergence of Israel was a unique priority for the AJC that provided the organization with a metaphorical anchor for crafting a more interconnected conceptualization of the decolonizing world; simultaneously, the threat of anti-Semitism and its capacity to shatter a dream of Jewish assimilation considered fragile acted as a major constraint – both ideologically and in terms of the allocation of resources – on the organization. Collectively, these realizations may lead us to a better appreciation of the complexity and sometimes, difficulty, of what it means to be – and to live as – a Jewish American.

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