

WASHINGTON: WHO MAKES THE DECISIONS FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY? *

The title of this session is catchy: "Washington: Who Makes the Decisions for the Jewish Community?" But it is the kind of question about which any self-respecting psychiatrist would ask, "What do you really mean by that?"

And indeed I have found in recent weeks that when people discuss the supposed subject of this session, they have a number of different questions in mind. Most of those questions have to do with the interplay of the acronymized Jewish agencies and organizations which toil in and around the Washington scene: JCF, AIPAC, the PACs, N(J)CRAC, COP, UCSJ, NCSJ and the dozen or so individual Jewish organizations which have offices in Washington or send spokesmen frequently to Washington. Is this an overheated organizational scene? Or is it just an under-coordinated scene? Is there unnecessary competition? Are some of these agencies trying to preempt the functions of other agencies, to the detriment of Jewish causes? And if so, who has the authority to say so -- and ain't pluralism grand, after all?

However, while it is finally impossible to plumb the subject at hand without returning to the agency scene, there are some prior and drier questions. Just in terms of the title of this session, what does the word "Washington" stand for? What kinds of "decisions" are we talking about? And are there any basic problems? ...Is this just an academic exercise, or is there anything that needs fixing?... Because surely we're not just discussing the nature of decisionmaking -- and the expression of those decisions to the policy makers -- but whether the current mode is or promises to be as effective as it might be for the Jewish agenda. And if not, what are the remedies?

No one person or commission is going to answer such questions definitively -- and I for one am certainly not going to try to -- but there are enough signs of potential trouble to warrant the opening of a broader discussion of the subject, a discussion which goes beyond matters of agency turf. And for my part, as one blind man touching the elephant, I would like to initially suggest that trouble may be developing around a serious narrowing of Jewish political vision in this country. At a time of apparent Jewish political success, there may be

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developing a hubristic intoxication with certain aspects of political activity at the expense of others.

A discussion of that pathological "narrowing" of Jewish political vision could start perhaps with a definition of the first word in our session's title: "Washington." Washington is a euphemism for national politics -- a word about which many Jewish organizations have been shy. But all of the agencies represented in this room, all of the agencies of the NJCRAC, are heavily engaged in politics ... not in lobbying, but in politics. The prime dictionary definition of politics is the making of governmental or public policy. All of our organizations are substantially involved in trying to shape the making of some public policy.

That is what citizens and citizens' associations are supposed to do as they redress their grievances and address their aspirations. In the modern democratic statist society, most of our grievances and aspirations have increasingly to do with public policy. Most of our group problems are increasingly affected by public policy, even within the framework of our educational mission. Our interest in having our school system develop democratic values is directly affected in several ways by public policy relative to the schools. And often public policy is the most direct educational instrument we have. Most whites learned to accept blacks as fellow employees at one point in our history, not because they were convinced in a classroom, but because public policy mandated the objective conditions which taught them ...

Most Americans came to understand the importance of Israel to America not because they read learned pamphlets or persuasive editorials to that effect, but because American public policy, as uttered by American policy makers, dictated that understanding.

So, no matter how you cut it, our main business is public policy ... that is to say, politics. Such an understanding was foreshadowed by a definition written early by de Tocqueville and cited recently in an excellent American Jewish Congress study of the political future of American Jews, from which I shall draw on occasion. De Tocqueville wrote that a political association is "the public assent which a number of individuals give to certain doctrines, and the engagement which they contract to promote in a certain manner the spread of those doctrines."

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The Jews in this country comprise a political association when they organize as Jews to promote certain public policy objectives around which there is a substantial Jewish consensus. When we use the word "Washington" in the title question of this session, we must be talking about all of the national-issue activity of the Jewish political association, which we will attempt to further define later. And when we ask "Who makes the decisions?" we are talking about the decisions of that political association.

The public policy attitudes of the Jews often fall out in certain distinctive patterns. But not all of those distinctive, statistical group attitudes are the business of the Jewish political association in this country. So they are not attitudes about which the Jewish political association has to make "decisions."

It is my bias that the central hard-core attitudes around which the Jewish political association is distinctively organized have to do with the security of the Jews, here and throughout the world. As a matter of illustration: When American Jews were asked in various years whether the U.S. should send military supplies to Israel, a steady 94 to 96 per cent of the Jews answered in the affirmative. When non-Jewish Americans were asked the same question in the same years, they answered affirmatively in a range from about 40 per cent to about 70 per cent. Now, on its face, that variance between Jews and non-Jews defines the significant difference between a steady consensus and a shifting plurality or majority. It is a significant difference with respect to the building of an effective political association.

But there is an even more significant difference behind those statistics. When the same non-Jewish Americans are asked whether they approve sending arms to Israel during an Israeli/Arab conflict -- and then are asked whether they approve sending arms to Israel in the case that the Soviet Union is sending arms to the Arabs -- their affirmative answers more than double in the latter case. The Jewish answers, however, do not vary. That kind of firm consensus is the basis of a political association -- and that kind of variance between Jews and non-Jews indicates the need for an organized political association.

Or take one other question that was asked in a number of years: "Which side do you most sympathize with -- Israel or the Palestinians?" About 9 out of 10

Jews uniformly said "Israel," with most of the rest saying "both." Less than half of the American public at large said "Israel," with most of the rest saying "not sure" or "neither."

Now that is not an unfavorable political situation, since those Americans with firm opinions generally favored Israel by more than a four to one ratio. Most American policy makers do not find it a political liability to support Israel when the general American public is either friendly or indifferent, and the Jewish public has a strong consensus made explicit by a political association.

On the same distinctive basis, there is a firm Jewish consensus on matters relating to anti-Semitism. (Remember that the last time Americans were asked whether they would vote for or against a Congressional candidate who espoused anti-semitism, few said they would vote for him on that account, but more than 3 out of 10 said it wouldn't make any difference.) And there is that distinctive kind of Jewish consensus on Soviet Jewry, on support for Jewish institutions, on certain basic church/state questions which raise concerns about the "Christianization of America." In one national exit poll in the last election, 8 out of 10 Jews said they were unfavorable to Falwell, but only 6 out of 10 in the general public had an opinion on the subject at all.

To repeat the premise: these are the security-related doctrines on which American Jews have a firm and pristine consensus, and around which they have primarily organized a working Jewish political association in this country.

Now, there are other issues around which American Jews have distinctive attitudinal patterns. Notably, American Jews have had and continue to have a statistically disproportionate concern for the welfare of the needy in general, and for the responsibility of the communitarian state to care for those needy.

Forty years ago, the Allin-Smiths did a study of different religious groups, and their attitudes on public policy which guarantees economic security for everyone. In all cases, except for the Jews, there was a startling correlation between the group's belief in guaranteeing economic security, and its own economic status. Thus, 51 per cent of the Baptists were manual workers, and 51 per cent supported guaranteed economic security. About 55 per cent of the Catholics were manual workers, and 58 per cent of the Catholics supported guaranteed economic security. About 28 per cent of the Congregationalists were manual workers and about 26 per cent supported economic security. But in the case of the Jews, about 27 per cent were manual workers, and about 56 per cent supported guaranteed economic security.

Despite rumors to the contrary, that pattern persists. In the 1984 CBS exit poll, for example, 60 per cent of the Jews said that government spending on the poor should be increased, as against 40 per cent of the general population, though the Jews reported a much higher income level than that of the general population. For whatever reason, the Jews as a group are statistically favorable to welfare public policy in a pattern that is sharply disproportionate to the rest of the population as a whole, or to any other group of similar economic status.

That disproportion has political consequences. It is one of the reasons why the Jews have, in the 20th century, maintained an allegiance to the Democratic Party that is typically about 25 percentage points higher than that of the general population.

But that disproportion is not yet the kind of firm or overwhelming consensus that attaches to Jewish security issues directly, or which serves as the central basis for an overall organized Jewish political association.

At this point, we have to start returning to a consideration of the Jewish agencies and organizations, but first another distinction must be made among the kinds of "decisions" that we may be talking about in our subject title. Most public policy issues are, after all, not framed in general philosophical terms. They are usually framed around specific strategies. Policy makers are not asked whether they favor Israel or the Arab nations; they are asked whether they approve the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia in a given year. Similarly, policy makers are not asked whether they approve of the Christianization of America; they are asked whether they want to authorize non-sectarian prayers in the public schools. And, indeed, in the realm of social welfare, they are not asked whether they want to provide a safety net; they are asked whether they want to provide cost of living allowances to social security recipients.

A political association is based on a consensual commitment to certain basic philosophies or doctrines, to use de Tocqueville's term. Those doctrines are not yet evaluations of strategy. That is where the organized aspect and the leadership of the political association come in. There is a principle of deference which normally operates. It is a standard principle of governance. Take the analogy of the American government and one aspect of American foreign policy. By and large, the American public has a doctrinal consensus that Soviet adventurism should not be allowed to endanger American security. By and large,

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the public, insofar as it has trust in its elected government, defers to its government on strategic decisions that must be made to fulfill that doctrine, and supports its strategic actions.

The handling of the Cuban missile crisis was one example of deference, as is much of America's commitment to Israel in the Middle East. When the deference breaks down, as it did in the case of Vietnam, it breaks down explosively -- and partly because the link between doctrine and strategy has become unconvincing. But there have been fewer exceptions to the principle of deference than some would like, and so far the principle of deference has re-established itself after the exceptions have occurred.

The principle of deference applies even more sharply, but with a different pattern, within the Jewish political association, the Jewish public affairs community. Daniel Elazar has estimated that about half of the Jews in this country are somehow participants in, associated with or affiliated with some Jewish agencies, organizations or institutions. Another quarter of the Jews are somehow "in touch" through occasional contributions or consumership. These connections are, of course, voluntary. The great bulk of these Jews are in agreement with the hard core security-connected doctrines of the Jewish political association. Nobody has to make those decisions for them. Objective circumstances do that -- although it is their Jewish connections which help to remind them of the urgency of those issues.

(I am reminded that the 1967 war in the Middle East broke out at the height of the Haight-Ashbury phenomenon in San Francisco -- the gathering of thousands of "flower children" from around the country -- a disproportionate number of them Jewish, and most of them having made sharp and deliberate breaks from establishment, family and tradition, including Jewish tradition. The morning when the war broke out, clearly threatening the existence of Israel, the JCRC office in San Francisco was visited by a large delegation of Jewish flower children who wanted to print up a leaflet, wanted to do something -- and, not incidentally, who wanted to know what the strategy was for doing something ... a most dramatic example of deference.)

Perhaps 10 to 15 per cent of the Jews, at the most, participate somehow in the strategic decisions. (That is certainly no lower a percentage than normally participate in the strategic decisions of the American society at large.) The

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rest of the Jews, as long as they are assured of common doctrine, a common agenda of basic concerns, will defer to and accept the strategic decisions offered by the multiple leadership of the Jewish political association -- as long as that leadership seems to be in agreement in its own ranks. And under those conditions, the policy makers will accept those expressed strategic decisions as those of the Jewish community at large.

This natural arrangement will work as long as the vocal managers of the overall political association do not attempt to stray too far beyond the bounds of the doctrinal consensus that exists among the Jews at large.

This does not mean that the management of the political association does not have room for the exercise of leadership and persuasion. Indeed, these managers do not have delegated legislative powers, they have only the power of persuasion among their constituencies. Often the educational job is to make a convincing link between common doctrine on security, and the strategies which will serve that doctrine.

It is not that neat, of course. None of it is. Nor is it that limited. For example, American Jews have a disproportionate statistical propensity to support public policy guaranteeing civil rights and civil liberties. The multiple leadership has brought some of that civil rights and civil liberties agenda into the agenda of the overall Jewish political association. But they have been most successful in that venture when the issues at hand related most closely to the hard core agenda of Jewish security. Strategic decisions on equal employment, equal housing, or freedom of the press, for example, have been largely accepted as part of the working consensus. And American Jewry has, to a degree sufficient for the political association, consensually accepted some strategies on social welfare as part of the association agenda -- for example, certain strategic decisions on public policy in aid of the aged, given the nature of the Jewish demography, and of many Jewish institutions ... or certain strategic decisions on social welfare policy brought onto the association agenda by a leadership convinced that bitter division between haves and have-nots, especially when there are racial dimensions, can only lead to the kind of political extremism which would be dangerous to Jewish security.

Lest anyone think that this is a cynical account of matters, certain important qualifications should be made. "Jewish values" as they affect public issues beyond the issue of Jewish security, are not being cast aside. They provide the bound-

aries of any Jewish consensus. Jewish values, as they are brought to the public arena by politically active Jews, can be said to have a considerable effect on the American political scene. But we are asking a very specific question here: Who makes decisions on public affairs matters for the Jewish community?

Our answer so far is that there is a doctrinal consensus among American Jews on a body of identifiable issues related to American policy on Israel, beleaguered Jews abroad, first-class citizenship at home, including some basic church/state matters, a group of issues related to the strength of the American democracy, and the protection of Jewish institutions. The multiple leadership of the organized Jewish political association makes the strategic decisions for the Jews on those doctrinal and consensual issues, the principle of deference normally operating.

But the further you get away from the epicenter of the hard core consensus, the further you get away from the working principle of deference -- ~~and~~ the further you get away from the possibility of anyone making decisions for the Jews or for the Jewish community.

Of course, there are a number of Jewish organizations which carry their own agendas beyond that of the national political association. They are mini-political-associations, if you will -- and some of them have a doctrinal consensus on certain matters of social welfare, for example, which go beyond the national Jewish political association -- but these individual organizations do not "make decisions for the Jewish community," except insofar as they are part of the decision-making on the common agenda.

Having set up this phenomenon known as the National Jewish Political Association, for some analytical purposes, it is now necessary to hastily dismantle it. Everyone here knows that there is no such organizational animal as the NJPA, the National Jewish Political Association -- nor would it be desirable. But it is more than a construct. Without form, it does exist as a real force, a complex structure of interdependent elements -- and strategic decision-making for and by the Jews would be impossible, or at least ineffective without it.

How describe this organism? It is a network of many disparate parts without any central authority.

That network consists of more than four million Jews who are somehow connected to thousands of different Jewish organizations and congregations, many of those tied to their own sub-networks. This is a formidable pattern of organizational

life; there is no other like it. The national Jewish political association exists insofar as, within the common doctrinal agenda, there somehow develops a convincing consensus among multiple leadership on strategic decisions.

There was no national Jewish political association in America in the 1930s. In describing the failure of American Jewry in the 1930s, which, along with other factors, contributed to the tragedies inherent in American public policy in that decade, the author of the recent book "The Abandonment of the Jews" described the following situation:

"To read through the archive and publications of American Jewish organizations in the period is to journey through a landscape of continual fighting. Zionist organizations regularly clashed with ... non-Zionist bodies ... Zionists feuded bitterly among themselves ... Orthodox non-Zionists quarrelled with each other. Acrimony interfered with cooperation in rescue between the Joint Distribution Committee and Jewish organizations that claimed that the JDC was holding back funds. Twice between 1942 and 1945, power struggles within the United Jewish Appeal nearly destroyed that combined fund-raising mechanism. Little wonder, then, that an early War Refugee Board memorandum ... warned that one of our problems is to get all the groups, particularly the Jewish groups, to work together and to stop fighting among themselves."

There were, of course, some doctrinal differences involved - and sometimes the boundary between doctrinal and strategic is indistinct -- but the bottom line was that, too often, no one made strategic decisions for the Jewish community, and that had some direct, tragic consequences. To the extent that there was no national Jewish political association, American policy makers could and did more easily ignore the Jews and their despair.

Today, there is a national Jewish political association, and we tend to be rather euphoric about its success. But it may be developing some problems which we had better examine.

At the moment we have a network which works. It is an informal network, as it must be. Judah Magnes well noted in 1918 that "the European notion of a uniform, all-controlling Kehilla cannot strike root in American soil, because it is not in consonance with the free and voluntary character of American religious, social, educational and philanthropic enterprises." However, we have developed some crucial network mechanisms. The NJCRAC is such a mechanism, of

course, as are over a hundred local Jewish community relations committees and councils. There are other formal mechanisms such as the Presidents Conference.

But these network mechanisms of conventional Jewish membership organizations are all part of a larger network. There are other organizational elements. There are lobbyists and lobbying organizations, like AIPAC. A lobbyist, by strict definition, is someone who works on behalf of a political association in a highly technical capacity. He does not make strategic decisions. He is a tactician, operating on the strategic decisions made by the political association on whose behalf he is working. Being committed to Israel's survival is doctrinal; opposing AWACS sales to Saudi Arabia is strategic; helping to arrange, negotiate or inform matters among the policy makers on the spot so that they will act together in efficient concert to defeat an AWACS sale, is tactical. In the modern world that is an indispensable function.

Then, of course, there are the PACs which make contributions to help elect political candidates whose records indicate that they will support the strategic decisions of the political association.

Lobbying organizations and PACs are not formal parts of the Jewish political association network -- but then most Jewish organizations are not such formal parts of that association. Lobbying organizations and PACs are not even members of the network mechanism. But by dint of natural communication and leadership exchange, they are ideally part of the network, and of the strategic decisions which emerge from the network.

But even if the consensus on strategic decisions were to operate so neatly, and to continue to do so, that would not explain the full strength of success of the Jewish political association. The aggregate influence of the American Jews is greater than that exerted by the organizations. It is based, in ways that need no great elaboration here, on the generally integrated activity of individual Jews on the American scene.

The most significant access to policy makers has typically turned around individual Jews who have become influential on one or another general community level -- usually not related to the basic Jewish agenda -- and who then have become politically influential. Their political influence has opened access to policy makers and to political circles which include other policy makers,

and has been the foundation of much of the organizational access to policy makers.

All of these elements comprise the national Jewish political association: the connected individuals, the national and local organizations with their large memberships, the national and local network mechanisms which include those organizations, and the specialized lobbying and electoral agencies. From the organized elements of this association emerge pools of local and national leaderships. Insofar as they have organizational mobility, insofar as they have contact with each other, insofar as they share means of communication, to that extent do they form -- whether they intend to or not -- a political association. Insofar as they agree in some substantial way on strategic policies, to that extent do they form -- whether they intend to or not -- a political association. And insofar as the bulk of the American Jews connect in some way to a segment of this network, feel an affinity to the common agenda and defer, as they usually do, to the strategic consensus of the multiple leadership, to that extent do they form -- whether they intend to or not -- a political association.

Much more can be written about the working of this complex and delicate decision-making process -- and some reference will be made to the special leaderships which may be more involved than others in shaping the strategic consensus -- but it is there and for the moment it works. There is no reason to be too sceptical about it. For the moment, its strategic policy making on the consensual agenda is accepted by most American Jews; and the decisions, on that limited agenda, are recognized as those of "the Jewish community" by most public officials. Insofar as this remarkable association provides an important edge for common Jewish causes, it is not one the Jewish community can afford to lose.

There are a number of ways in which this national Jewish political association can become defective, or less effective; and there are -- or at least there are perceived -- a number of darkening clouds on the horizon. The forthcoming list of interconnected and potential trouble spots is outlined from the vantage point of a man from Mars, or a rube from the West, in order to open discussion.

Over-competition. Budget committees are wont to ask: "Is there duplication of effort among Jewish public affairs organizations?" The answer is: of course.

In the lush organizational growth which is the Jewish community, there is bound to be duplication of effort -- and, in itself, that duplication is normally not harmful. One of the strengths of this political association is that there is some engagement of large constituencies. With all of our complaints about unconnected Jews, there is no other ethnic or religious population in America which comes even close to being as connected to its community as do the Jews of America.

In order to achieve and maintain that kind of engagement, multiple organizations and organizational programs are needed, with all their duplications. Duplication in itself was not the enemy during the tragic failures of the 1930s and 40s and is not the enemy now. An effective national Jewish political association does not require that the Jews speak with one voice, but only that, on the common agenda, they speak with one language. An effective political association does not require that there be one spokesman, but only that the various spokesmen reflect, as often as possible, similar strategic decisions.

However, there is a dynamic in the competition which could threaten the network. Organizational competition finally means competition for funds. And there is no other way. There can be no super agency which applies some rational blueprint to it all. We must operate on the principle of "an open marketplace of organizations." And that process must finally operate on the basis of "one dollar, one vote." To try to depart from those principles would not only be impossible, but would be counter-indicated as far as the health of our political association is concerned.

However, in that fundraising zeal there is always a potential threat to the balance of a network. There is sometimes a temptation for a given organization to pull away from the network, or even to try to preempt it, in order to increase that organization's fundraising appeal.

Take the possible case of Organization X, which at this late date decides to go into the already established business of fighting anti-semitism and educating about the Holocaust. Using modern fundraising techniques on these highly emotional subjects, Organization X is able to raise millions upon millions of dollars. There is, after all, the open marketplace of organizations; and the duplication of program that ensues is not in itself harmful.

However, Organization X, to serve its fundraising purposes, does tend to stay away from the network and even finds it useful to attack the network in

general. The political association network is called "the-establishment-which-is-doing-nothing." Therefore, your money should go to Organization X, which is doing everything. In network terms, this has a destructive potential.

But there are such centripetal tendencies within the old network itself. Since World War II, Jewish public affairs organizations and bureaucracies have become big and costly, and life is inflationary. And there are financial ramifications. Some of my fundraising friends tell me that the Jewish fundraising reservoir is still untapped, and that if someone is stimulated to give more in one place, he is more likely to give in another, likening the giving impulse to the sex drive; but some of us have difficulty believing that. In modern circumstances, giving is more often a zero-sum affair: the more you give to one place, the less you can give to another. The levels are high, the demands are higher, the economic restraints are greater. The federated funds are symptomatically facing an increasing number of independent drives. The competition for funds is getting fiercer. And the temptation to pull away from the networks, in order to establish a more unique fundraising identity, is growing.

Resisting the Network Mechanisms. As we have seen, the network mechanisms such as the NJCRAC and the local CRCs are only pieces of the political association, although they are key pieces. But they operate imperfectly, and are under the kinds of centripetal pressures outlined above.

One of the important developments in the Jewish community has been the growth of organized local participation. This broader base of participation has immeasurably increased the strength of the political association. But the NJCRAC, which is the formal network mechanism for the local CRCs, has not yet found a formula which would fully provide an opportunity for the local communities to fully participate in the strategic decision-making.

Some feel that deficiency cannot be overcome because of natural factors such as geography. But consider Washington D.C. itself as a site of decision-making and of information related to decision-making. There has been some discussion of the need and feasibility of a network mechanism in Washington D.C. -- as perhaps an offshoot of the NJCRAC. There is perhaps no need for a network mechanism in a situation where the network is actually working well. Most of the national organizations in Washington, I am told, feel that the network is working well enough there among themselves and doesn't need fixing -- even

though some have suggested that there have been some recent cases of critical non-sharing among them.

But whether the national organizations need it or not, the local communities and the broader participation within those communities would be better served by some kind of network arrangement in Washington D.C. itself with which the local communities could more directly connect.

One other factor should be noted, related to the movement of Jews away from the central cities. Baltimore's share of Maryland's presidential vote declined from 48 to 17 per cent between 1940 and 1980; New York City's share of its state's vote dropped from 51 to 31 per cent. In most parts of the country, there are more Jews living outside the highly organized Jewish areas. It is indicated, for the sake of the continued health of the political association, that these outlying bodies of Jewry be brought more systematically in touch with some network arrangements.

The point is that, at a time when there should be a strengthening of formal network arrangements, there is some steady resistance, partly because network mechanisms by their nature do not have a strong constituency; and they are seen by some as an impediment to independent fundraising.

Elitism. The strength of the political association, of joint strategic decision-making, of effective deference, depends upon as broad as possible a state of colloquy or at least communication among various leaderships in the network and their constituencies. The general health of the Jewish community may also be involved, but we are only talking here of the strength and credibility of the Jewish political association.

At the same time that there are certain centripetal tendencies in the Jewish public affairs community, as suggested above, there are some centrifugal tendencies which might be described as elitist, whose effect would be to diminish the broad base of the association.

One kind of example might be found in the growing Jewish PACs. In this age, they are important agencies of access and communication to public officials about certain strategic decisions. While the PACs are not formal parts of any

network mechanisms, and they do their own decision-making, there is the practical question of whether the signals given to public officials by PACs are roughly the same as those given by the other parts of the political association. If not, the potency of the political association is seriously diminished. As long as the decision-makers in the PACs are personally in touch with and personally responsive to the political association in general, there is no problem. But it must be acknowledged that the phenomenon of the PACs, operating generally out of a few purses, can reverse the process which has made the political association so successful, just as it can alternatively serve as a critical adjunct to that association.

It has been suggested to me that the same kind of potential problem might apply to any other agency, which in the course of its special functions naturally develops special access to policy makers. AIPAC, which is also not a formal member of any network mechanism, has been mentioned in that connection. AIPAC has taken on some other functions, in keeping with the open marketplace of organizations, but its main function is as a lobbying agency. It has had remarkable success in that important capacity, has grown rapidly and has a preponderance of contact with policy makers in Washington D.C., on the subject of Israel. As long as the signal makers in AIPAC are personally in touch with and personally responsive to the strategic decision making in the political association in general, there is no problem. Otherwise, the effectiveness of American Jewry, on the common agenda, would suffer.

One-issuism. The common doctrinal agenda of the national Jewish political association, as we have seen, consists of a number of different issues. The genius of that agenda, which we euphemistically call the "community relations agenda," is that the different issues are strongly interconnected. For example, the ability of American Jews to influence American policy on Israel or on Soviet Jews is directly related to the status of those American Jews, as affected by such other issues as anti-semitism, basic church/state separation, general democratic life in America. All of those issues affect each other deeply. Any attempt by the national Jewish political association to deal with any one of these issues without affecting the others at various times would be doomed

to longterm failure.

In addition, the multiplicity of issues on the agenda enables elements of the political association to make alliances on one kind of issue which serve other issue campaigns as well. Most notably in this regard, the multiplicity of issues enables Jewish groups within the association to work more integrally and influentially as American citizens with various public officials and policy makers. It further strengthens the element of integration which contributes so heavily to the aggregate influence of the Jews and of their political association.

The major Jewish public affairs organizations, such as the ADL, AJCommittee and AJCongress -- as well as, to varying degrees, all of the national agencies in the NJCRAC -- and the local CRCs in the country, all understand the central importance of the multiple-issue agenda. And the network which is the Jewish political association, at its best, reflects that multiple-issue agenda, and makes multi-issue strategic decisions as often as possible.

However, it need not be belabored here that a more limited agenda, and even a one issue agenda on American/Israeli relations has become dominant in the network. That dominance is understandable and justifiable, and exists on the agendas of most of the individual Jewish organizations. But there is also a tendency to slight the other issues, which would be destructive for the political association in general, and for the issue of American/Israeli relations in particular.

Most pertinently, the network would suffer from the excessive dominance of one-issue organizations and agencies. Simply, if exclusively pro-Israel organizations such as PACs came to monopolize access to policy makers, that would distort the Jewish political effort and diminish its effect. Because of the special access to policy makers enjoyed by PACs, for example, that is a potential new hazard.

By the same token, it should be noted again that the political association maintains its agenda balance mainly through the prominence in the network of the major national community relations agencies and of the network mechanisms such as the NJCRAC and the local CRCs. Other organizations, other membership

mechanisms like the Council of Jewish Federations and their local federations, and other elites like the PACs, must be an integral and participant part of the political association. But there is a body of public affairs history, experience and knowledge which is carried through these particular community relations agencies and network mechanisms, a continuous leadership discourse on these matters over many recent decades, which provides a special leadership resource for the Jewish political association. The preemption of their role, partial as it is, as a result of current competitive, elitist or one-issue fashions, would predictably weaken the efficacious balance of the network.

Conclusions. To put the matter roughly, the strategic decisions of the Jewish community are made by the consensual leadership network of the Jewish political association. They are made on the basis of the natural doctrinal consensus of most American Jews on a limited body of issues related to their security, and with their deference.

There is really nothing mysterious about that process, however vague or sociological it may sound. It can be documented that the great bulk of American Jews do have a sense of shared fate, and a consensus of concerns about a body of issues related to that fate -- despite a wild disparity of beliefs on many

other issues. The great bulk of American Jews are connected in some way to the organized Jewish community, even if it is a secondary connection through their associational patterns. The majority of American Jews still report that most of their friends are Jewish. And a disproportionate number of Jews are activist in nature.

Out of that unusual combination of group characteristics emerges the phenomenon that the great bulk of Jews will support, at one level or another, most of the strategy decisions on common agenda made by the leadership in whose orbit of attention they fall. And, finally, there has been in fact enough of a working consensus developed among the multiple leadership, because of their own associational patterns, to project a strategic consensus on many critical issues. It is that point in the process about which we can most nervously hold our breath and cross our fingers.

There are tendencies of over-competition, of elitism, of one-issuism which could distort that policymaking process, weaken the strength of the Jewish political association generally, and impair the ability of the multiple leadership network to arrive at strategic consensus.

It would make sense for the Jewish community to take measures to maintain the strength of Jewish political effectiveness against the incursion of these tendencies. But there is virtually no direct way for the Jewish community to take such measures because of its thoroughly voluntary nature. Ironically, the very principle of an "open marketplace of organizations," which is an unchangeable strength of the American Jewish community, is also that which would prevent it from taking any direct remedial action.

For example, the health of the Jewish political association would prosper by more encouragement of and less resistance to formal network mechanisms. But those mechanisms are themselves so voluntary in nature that they will not succeed in the face of resistance. The commitment to network must precede the commitment to network mechanisms.

So, the primary appeal is not to structural reform. The primary appeal is perhaps to a shift in general Jewish consciousness on this subject.

It may even be difficult to get many Jews to focus on the possibility that there are looming problems, because the current situation seems so good, even exhilarating. But it is that very exhilaration which may underlie some of the potential problems. I just returned from a "Washington mission." Our delegation was visited by a dozen glamorous U.S. Senators and more Congressmen, who dined with us, wined with us and generally paid us court. That is heady stuff. So was the 1984 election, during which many of the prestigious speakers from the rostra of both parties took time out to pay homage to one or another Jewish cause. And so are the results in Washington, where we have won most of our recent issue campaigns. We look like winners, especially on the subject of American/Israeli relations and some of us are rubbing shoulders with the most glittering personalities in the nation's capital.

The resultant euphoria has led us to forget some fundamentals. The first, just to provide perspective, is that American policy makers primarily make strategic decisions to support Israel, because they are convinced that it is

good for America. Of course, our access helps us to build that conviction among them -- but our case has to be good. And of course, there are those problematic policy decisions in which the strength of our political association is enough to tip the balance.

That access and that edge is often critically important, on Middle East issues as well as others. As a matter of fact, we may in the future need more of both than we have. We cannot be dazzled by courtiers into forgetting that we are always operating within the arena of objective conditions -- foreign and domestic -- which can be more powerful than all of our resources. Much of our success has been critically buttressed by favorable objective circumstances, and we sometimes forget the times that we have failed because of unfavorable circumstances.

Perhaps, indeed, the more complicated circumstances that America is facing should impel us to try to extend the kind of decision making we do within our political association, so that we can "make our case" more convincingly. For example, support of Israel will increasingly depend more on general American foreign policy than on the feelings of American policy makers about Israel. But the possibility of such extended discussions about related matters of American foreign policy within the Jewish public affairs community is less likely as our political vision narrows.

But the other fundamental which we must revive is the understanding that our access and edge are the result of the total strength of our political association. What happens in Washington D.C. is the tip of the iceberg. The importance of that sharp tip should not be undervalued. The body of the association today would be relatively ineffective without it. But the Washington tip would mean little without the body of the association network. That may be a truism, but, in our present state of intoxication, we might tend to overlook it. And if, in overlooking it, we do not pay enough attention to the negative effects associated with over-competition, elitism or one-issuism, we may find our political association seriously eroded.

Then it won't make any difference who is making the decisions for the Jewish community. Those decisions will be so scattered that few will care.