

Faces Occupying the Crowd by Ron Levitsky

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Recently, I was in a park in Deerfield getting petitions signed for a local candidate. Without even asking the candidate's name, many avoided the petition as if coated with bubonic plague bacillus. One man declared, "I'm not into politics."



Of course, there are exceptions to this apathy. For example, the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street are popular political movements. In some ways they are similar. Both fear for the future of our nation. Neither has a strong, centralized hierarchy. Both oppose the current "establishment" in Washington, D.C., and both disagreed with the taxpayer bailout

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Unfortunately, this man reflects a general disillusionment with both parties in Congress.



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A Comprehensive Look at Robert Dold's Record

Compiled by the people who know him best (the residents of the 10th Congressional District)

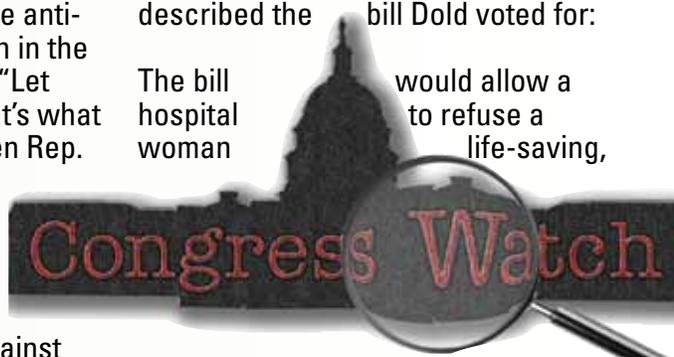
Robert Dold (R-Kenilworth) had a chance to prove us wrong. He had a chance to demonstrate independence, moderation, and compassion. Instead, it's as if he's gone out of his way to prove how out of step he is with the voters in the 10th Congressional District of Illinois. Dold has been in office nearly a year. Let's take an objective look at his record.

Dold votes with the Republican Party 84 percent of the time. Want to make some quick money? Find someone who takes Dold's campaign literature at face value. Pick a vote at random and bet that Dold voted the way John Boehner voted. You'll win more than four out of five times.

Dold voted to deny women access to quality healthcare and voted for bills that the pro-choice community strongly opposed. On October 13, 2011, Dold voted for HR 358, the anti-choice Protect Life Act (known in the pro-choice community as the "Let Women Die Act," because that's what it would do). Even worse: When Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA) offered an amendment that would have fixed the provision that allows hospitals to refuse abortion coverage when a woman's life is in danger, Dold voted against her amendment. The bill Dold voted for imperils women's lives because it allows institutions and doctors to refuse to provide care even in life-threatening emergencies.

Dold has done nothing to create jobs, but he's done plenty to endanger the lives of women. Here's how NARAL Pro-Choice America described the bill Dold voted for:

The bill would allow a hospital to refuse a woman life-saving,



emergency abortion care even if she will die without it. On top of that, it effectively would ban insurance coverage of abortion in state health-insurance exchanges, denying

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FREE! Pizza...Salad...Soft Drinks [See page 9](#)

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A Comprehensive Look at Robert Dold's Record

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abortion coverage to millions of women. This creates jobs how? "This bill is a collection of dangerous ideas that will undermine women's health," said Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America. "Most devastating, the bill eliminates protections for patients seeking care in emergency circumstances, and would allow a hospital to deny lifesaving abortion care to a woman, even if a doctor deems it necessary."

"House leaders just can't keep their eye on the ball and focus on jobs and the economy," said Richards. "In fact, this bill will increase the economic burden on already struggling American families by eliminating health insurance provisions that could save them from bankruptcy."

On May 6, 2011, Dold voted for the anti-choice H.R. 3, which bans tax subsidies for private health insurance plans that include abortion as a covered service, prevents citizens from deducting abortion as a medical expense unless it was the result of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother, and invites the potential for the Internal Revenue Service to investigate how women who had abortions became pregnant and how they paid for their abortions.

"Robert Dold can try to appear moderate all he wants, but after [his May 6] vote there's no way Illinois will buy it," said EMILY's List President Stephanie Schriock. "Dold showed his true colors by standing with his Republican leaders and against the women of Illinois. Dold may have run on job creation, but he has done nothing to create jobs since getting to Washington. Instead, he's done plenty to take away women's freedoms and their opportunities to keep themselves and their families healthy."

Dold flipped on defunding Planned Parenthood. Dold (and Judy Biggert (R-IL)) first voted against defunding Planned Parenthood, but as Bill Beckman, Executive Director of the Illinois Right to Life Committee explained:

"The irony is that when they had the final bill passage, they flipped. Both voted for [the bill that defunded Planned Parenthood]. We're playing games here in reality. Which is better: that they voted against the amendment and for the final bill, or vice versa? I'll tolerate those Republicans if they vote the final bill the right way, even if they want to throw a bone to Planned Parenthood that doesn't count."

Dold voted to gut healthcare reform.

Dold voted at least six times to gut healthcare reform (Roll Calls 97, 98, 99, 100, and 121, 141).

Previously, Dold voted at least 17 times to gut environmental programs that about 75 percent of 10th District residents support.

Dold voted against sensible gun control.

Dold voted with the National Rifle Association to defund the program that requires the reporting of the sale of multiple shotguns or rifles to the same person. As Rep. Chakah Fattah (D-PA) said, "this has nothing whatsoever to do with hunting rifles or guns used in sporting activity. This has to do with long guns with detachable clips used for only one purpose, and that is, shooting large numbers of rounds and killing large numbers of people... I know that some may get paranoid about these issues, but I think we should have at least some paranoia about what this could portend if we don't take reasonable action in the protection of the citizens that we've been elected to protect."

Dold twice voted with his party against anti-Iran legislation

October 26, 2011, Dold and 236 other Republicans voted against a motion that would have stopped an American mining company from partnering with a London-based firm that has dealings with Iran. Adam Kredo reported in *Washington Jewish Week* that at a time when elements of Iranian government plotted to assassinate the Saudi ambassador on U.S. soil, not a single House Republican could bring him or herself to support a rational Democratic motion to keep American businesses out of Iran.

"If House Republicans are going to be willing to put business interests over Israel's interests that's their prerogative, but then it's the height of hypocrisy to be campaigning on Israel as an issue," said one Democratic Hill staffer who tracked the vote.

One week later, on November 3, 2011, Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ) proposed language banning the issuance of securities to businesses that have Iran dealings. Dold voted no. Kredo quoted a Democratic Hill staffer in *Washington Jewish Week* who said, "The most important national security issue facing the United States and Israel is stopping Iran's reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons. But for the second week in a row not a single Republican has been willing to support legislation on the House floor to keep U.S. dollars from going to Iran."

We cannot afford another two years of Robert Dold.

We cannot afford to be passive. The only way for us to combat Dold's head start in fundraising and name-recognition is to start working now. Please—the outcome of the 2012 election is up to you. Get involved now.

Faces Occupying the Crowd (continued from page 1)

"The Tea Party Express calls OWS 'a disorganized unruly mob of shiftless protestors'"



of car manufacturers and banks and other financial institutions. Supporters of both groups would probably grow livid at Bank of America's recent payout, for as much as \$11 million, of fired executives Joe Price and Sallie Krawcheck, described by Joshua Brown (who writes "The Reformed Broker" column) as "paper-pushing failures at parasite banks."

Of course, there are significant differences between these two movements. Looking at them may help Democrats better understand why we stand with one side rather than the other.

The Tea Party has worked hard within the political process to take over the national government. This has meant supporting specific candidates pledged to cut taxes and reduce the role of the federal government. This movement has helped the Republican Party take control of the House of Representatives while moving Republicans even further to the right.

Studies indicate that the typical Tea Party supporter is a white male with an above-average education who identifies strongly with the middle class. What then would make such an individual support keeping taxes low for the very rich? In "Why Middle Class Fears Tax Increases on Rich," Tina Dupuy attributes only part of the reason to Republican propaganda (e.g., the anti-Obama bumper sticker, "Because everyone deserves some of what you've worked hard for"). More important, she posits, is what is called "last-place aversion." It's not that these people see themselves as one day becoming fantastically wealthy. Rather, it's avoiding helping poorer people rise to become their equal. It is "about the very real visceral fear of being, well, the poorest. If the government helps those below you, then they'll be at your level—that's the unfairness they're afraid of."

In contrast, rather than being against a government that is too big, the Occupy Wall Street movement is against a government that is too big to care. It is a movement ridiculed by conservatives. According to Robin Bravender and Kenneth Vogel ("Tea party goes after Occupiers"), the Tea Party Express calls OWS "a disorganized unruly mob of shiftless protestors." Criticisms include that OWS is fuzzy in its objectives, too decentralized without responsible leadership, and prone to disorder. Of course, many in this movement would reply that frequently the authorities instigate violence, that lack of a hierarchy demonstrates how widespread and popular the movement is, and that its objectives are to protest corporate greed, growing poverty, a shrinking middle class, and government cuts for helping those most in need. What's interesting to me, as a

former history teacher, are the roots of this movement. Some look to the 1960s and the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements. In a *Chicago Tribune* Perspective, "The seeds of a movement," Marilyn Katz, a member of the SDS back in the '60s, recalls the "cognitive dissonance" her generation (and mine) felt, having been brought up to believe that America was "a beacon of democracy," yet seeing racism at home and imperialism abroad. That led to the great protests of that era. She makes the connection between then and now: "This discomfort between promise and reality, this decision to 'do something,' seems also to have motivated the amazingly diverse crowds that have gathered in cities across America and around the globe."

I think the roots of this movement are far deeper in history. When I was in graduate school, one of my history professors was George Rudé who specialized in social history, specifically trying to gain a greater understanding of mass protest movements in 18th and 19th



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Faces Occupying the Crowd (continued from page 3)

"Like the working people centuries ago, they fight for a government that represents all the people, not just those who pay to play"

century pre-industrial Europe. One of his books is *The Crowd in History*, from which the quotes in the next paragraph are taken. His conclusions regarding these movements not only offer interesting parallels to what's going on today but also lend validity to the OWS's grievances and tactics.

Rudé analyzed primary-source documents (letters, arrest records, news articles, etc.) surrounding food riots, Luddite machinery breaking, and political marches/demonstrations that took place in pre-industrial England and France to better understand who were those unseen faces in the crowd. Frequently dismissed by contemporary aristocrats and political historians as mobs or rabble, these crowds as Rudé called them, were really quite different. He found that very few arrested during these activities had prior criminal records. Indeed, most were of fixed abodes and settled jobs. Even during the French Revolution, most protestors were sober householders and citizens. While many were from the lower orders, others included students, professionals, and small businessmen. Many had families.

A common thread among these protests was a leveling instinct, the call for elementary social justice at the expense of the rich. In addition, many in the crowd had an antipathy to capital innovation, such as laborsaving machinery that threatened their security of employment, as well as privatizing what had long been held in common, such as pastures. Overall, rather than calling for less government, there was a yearning for protection against individual greed and callousness. The OWS protests in our post-industrial society bear remarkable

similarities to the "crowds" of past centuries. Those protesting come from all walks of life, and for many protests across the globe violence has been the exception rather than the rule. This sense of leveling is exemplified by criticism of our population's top one percent that controls 37 percent of the nation's household wealth, giving our nation greater income inequality than over 90 other nations, including China and India. As *Chicago Tribune* columnist Eric Zorn wrote recently, the U.S. has an "ever larger, ever more restive, Third-World-style underclass."

In his article, "Are American workers in a race against the machine," Zachary Roth refers to a study by Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee (their book is *Race Against the Machine*) arguing that our advanced technology reduces the economy's ability to create jobs for humans. Although this new reality benefits the highly skilled while not impacting lower skilled jobs (such as home healthcare), the middle class will further erode.

The authors don't call for new Luddite riots to break machinery but rather for the government to invest more heavily in education and infrastructure. And regarding a yearning for protection against what should belong to us all, November's *Progressive Magazine* was dedicated to "Defending the Commons"—protecting state parks from private oil and gas drilling and public libraries from defunding.

It's devastating to feel that one's way of life is threatened. Some, like members of the Tea Party, draw inward, thinking to keep what they have and let the rest of the world be damned. Others, such as those

engaged in the Occupy Wall Street movement, have a different vision. Like the working people centuries ago, they fight for a government that represents all the people, not just those who pay to play, and that will protect its citizens' right to a healthy environment, affordable healthcare, decent jobs, and peace.

Trade unionist George Loveless was a face in one of the crowds that George Rudé studied. In 1837 Loveless wrote that nothing will be done to relieve the distress of the working classes, unless they take it into their own hands. Today's faces on the crowd, demonstrating in Wall Street and in cities around the world, are doing just that.

**Corporations
Are Not
People..
We Are**



“... so many millions of people are suffering, that it is a wonder that their cries aren’t heard”

You’re sitting at a window table in a delightful restaurant with a companion, both interesting and interested, and the conversation is engaging. Your waiter brings your food and drink at just the right times, and everything is delicious and so satisfying that you don’t even notice your growing sense of contentment. Your belly is full, and all is right in your world.

You glance to your right through the window and notice a man looking into the restaurant. His clothes are in poor condition, he has a plastic bag slung over his shoulder, and his back is hunched as he peers through the glass. He looks hungry; but that is something that is difficult for you to understand, because you are anything but hungry. Indeed, empathy—feeling what another person feels—is very difficult when you are feeling the opposite, and it’s almost impossible to imagine a homeless person’s feeling of hunger in that moment when you have just completed your meal.



So it is for the one-percenters and their political pawns. Their lives are working quite well, they are more than content, and, hard as some might try, there is not even a remote chance that they can feel what the members of a family feel as Mom and Dad lose their jobs, one because of a plant closure and the other to a layoff because business is depressed. It’s impossible for the one-percenters and their political pawns to have even a remote understanding of the powerful feelings of the members of that family as they lose their house to foreclosure.

And when Mom and Dad join the local Occupy march, it is so easy for the one-percenters and their political pawns to dismiss them as rabble, as lazy people, and to blame them for their own circumstances. According to Herman Cain, if Mom and Dad aren’t employed or rich, it’s their own fault.

But here’s the thing: Mom and Dad played by the rules. They stayed in school and got an education. They got jobs and worked hard, paid their taxes, coached their kids’ soccer teams, and went to their holiday pageants. They followed the American playbook, page by page, doing the right things and doing things right. And now they have lost everything and are wondering what happened to the dream they were promised.

The answer, of course, is that it was stolen from them by the big-money interests who purchased their way into power and influence and who then rigged the game. The big-money interests changed the playbook and didn’t tell anyone that they were gambling with the welfare of the entire world. They didn’t care about

consequences because they would get their payday whether their bets paid off or lost, since all the rest of us would bail them out of their failed bets. They were confident of that bailout because they had a gun to the head of every one of us.

So much has crashed and burned, and so many millions of people are suffering, that it is a wonder that their cries aren’t heard. Yet, what is happening instead is as predictable as the tides. Those one-percenters and their political pawns aren’t even able to hear the cries of hunger of the millions because the rich have always just finished that metaphorical meal. Furthermore, they don’t want their world challenged or changed because it works so well for them, so they have their local muscle brutalize demonstrators as though tear gas, nightsticks, and rubber bullets might somehow make the challenge to the rich go away.

But they won’t. Swatting at symptoms never makes the root cause disappear.

The root cause is an unanswered human need for fairness. Until the game gets unrigged and the promises kept, there will be people in the streets and nearly everywhere else with the simmering anger of having played by the rules and, in return, gotten screwed.

There are consequences to treating people that way. One-percenters and political pawns beware: You may not like what’s coming. Just know that you set it up to happen this way, whether you’re simply unable or, worse, callously unwilling to understand the hunger of the people.

TAKING BACK WISCONSIN: HOW YOU CAN HELP, PART II

by Eleonora di Liscia



The time is nigh! The battle to recall Wisconsin Republican Governor Scott Walker officially began on November 15, 2011.

Last August, Wisconsin Democrats won an unprecedented number of recalls, prying two State Senate seats away from entrenched Republicans who had stripped state workers of their collective bargaining rights. Now on the heels of progressive victories in Ohio, Mississippi, and Maine, Wisconsin Democrats are hoping to ride that momentum in order to rein in Republican power abuses within their own state.

Under Wisconsin law, Governor Walker was not eligible for recall until this month. Step One involves gathering enough petition signatures to put the recall on the ballot. Wisconsin Democrats have one month to mobilize, fund, and train an army of volunteers to collect the 540,208 valid signatures necessary for the recall. This number is based on 25 percent of the total who voted in the last governor's election.

Petitions are due January 13, 2012. If you wish to volunteer, donate or attend a volunteer training event, see <http://www.wisdems.org/RecallHQ>. A schedule of recall events can be found at http://grassroots.wisdems.org/page/event/search_results?orderby=day&state=&country=US&event_type%5b%5d=&limit=900&radius_unit=mi. Be advised, however, that only Wisconsin voters can circulate recall petitions.

If the petition drive is successful, then the election could be held six weeks after the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board certifies the signatures. As of yet, the Democrats have not named a challenger. Another group stepping up for the recall is United Wisconsin, a non-partisan grassroots PAC that mobilized to recall Walker. On their site, you can buy bumper stickers, make donations, and help spread the word through blogging and other social media. <http://www.unitedwisconsin.com/how-can-i-help-recall-scott-walker>

Also involved is We Are Wisconsin, a coalition of unions, religious leaders, student, community and political action groups. (<http://www.wearewisconsin.org>) Check their website calendar for upcoming events or to make a donation.

Act Blue is the fundraising clearing house for Democratic candidates and causes. You can donate to the grassroots Recall Scott Walker campaign at https://secure.actblue.com/page/walkerrecallcampaign?refcode=actblue_homepage.

To help undermine financing for Scott Walker and his right wing agenda, you can find boycott lists of Koch brothers products at <http://inspirationgreen.com/koch-brothers-products.html> or <http://democratsforprogress.com/forum/showthread.php?tid=3188>. The Koch brothers put the money behind Americans For Prosperity, a group that pours millions into elections for Republican candidates.

YES, WE DID! OBAMA AND THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

by Eleonora di Liscia

"Immigration issues have been a major concern for the Hispanic community"



As the party of the big tent, Democrats embrace a wide range of communities. With so many to please, a particular group may easily feel its needs have been slighted. But sometimes change is not found in a policy tailor-made for a particular group. Sometimes change is in the broad brushstrokes that benefit the whole.

And so it goes with the Hispanic community. This is not to say that Obama has not accomplished his share of tailor-made initiatives for Latinos. But if Hispanics want to know why they should vote for Obama and the Democrats, they should also look to the policies that benefit working people as a whole, policies largely opposed by Republicans. For example, extending child healthcare helped Hispanic children, and providing mortgage relief helped Hispanic homeowners. If passed, the Obama jobs plan, praised by Janet Murguía CEO of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), would help unemployed Hispanics.

CHANGE SOUGHT BY HISPANICS:
Immigration issues have been a

major concern for the Hispanic community. While Obama has deported a record number of undocumented immigrants, the administration has been aggressive in challenging some of the draconian state immigration laws popping up around the country. In September 2011, the administration appealed Alabama's law that would allow police and school officials to question people, including children, about their immigration status. The administration also sued Arizona and is considering challenges in Utah, Georgia, Indiana, and South Carolina.

"I don't recall any time in history that the Justice Department has so aggressively challenged state laws," Jonathan Turley, a George Washington University Law School constitutional law expert, told *Washington Post* readers in a September 29, 2011 op-ed. In the meantime, Obama has changed

how deportations will be enforced. The Department of Homeland Security will now review its backlog of 300,000 deportations to weed out low-priority cases and instead target violent criminals and gang members. Deciding on a case-by-case basis, the Department can dismiss deportations against longtime, lawful permanent residents, minors, the elderly, pregnant, or nursing women, victims of domestic violence and other crimes, individuals with serious health conditions or disabilities, veterans of the U.S. armed forces, and those who have lived here since childhood.

Although Obama could not pass the Dream Act due to Republican opposition, the new enforcement rules might enable many undocumented students to attend college—the very same students who would have benefited under that legislation.



Besides immigration, Obama has reached out to Hispanics in many other ways. The administration held the first-ever White House Hispanic Policy Conference, at which the president met with 160 Hispanic leaders to discuss the impact of his agenda on the Hispanic community.

Obama made many significant Hispanic appointments, including Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, and the first Hispanic Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor. According to *Hispanicbusiness.com*, Obama set a record with his appointment of Hispanics to the cabinet.

"While we may not always agree,

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YES, WE DID! OBAMA AND THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

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"The Affordable Care Act gave greater access to healthcare for about 9 million Hispanics"



Hispanics do have a voice in the administration, and the Latino community does have the president's ear," Murguia told CNN Politics July 25, 2011.

In October, 2010, Obama issued an executive order to boost education for Hispanic students. The order set goals to increase Hispanic children's readiness for kindergarten, reduce the drop-out rate, and increase college access.

CHANGE IMPACTING HISPANICS:
One of Obama's first acts upon taking office was to extend healthcare coverage to legal immigrant children

and pregnant women. While ensuring healthcare for four million more children, the expanded Children's Health Insurance Program ended a five-year waiting period that had been in force for a decade. For the first time, states could now cover legal immigrant children.

The Affordable Care Act gave greater access to healthcare for about nine million Hispanics. For example, by providing free preventative care in new insurance plans, Hispanics who could not afford their deductibles can now get the tests they need. In 2009, 61 percent of Hispanics availed themselves of Federal

Housing Administration financing to buy a home. Many have also benefited from loan modification programs. The President's Wall Street Reform bill was hailed by Latino leaders as a "Major Victory for Latino Families," for protecting consumers against predatory loans and fees. The Department of Education estimates that 150,000 additional Pell Grant awards will be made to Hispanic students by 2020 and that 143,000 Hispanics will benefit from more affordable student loan repayment terms.

According to NCLR, Obama's proposed jobs plan, if passed, would improve economic security for Hispanics along with everyone else. Several measures targeting distressed communities include 1) tax credits aimed at boosting the paychecks of low and middle-income workers, 2) extending the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to help jobless adults and low-income workers feed their families, 3) funds for nonprofit community-based organizations to train low-skilled and non-English speaking workers, and 4) increased Department of Labor enforcement of workers' earnings, safety, and health.



You're Invited!

Free Pizza, Salad and Soft Drinks

**THE TENTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT DEMOCRATS
ANNUAL HOLIDAY MEMBERSHIP PARTY**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2011
FROM 6:00 PM 'TIL 8:00 PM**

**AT THE
SILO RESTAURANT
625 Rockland Road, Lake Bluff
(Between Waukegan Road and Route 41)**



Preregistration is not required, but space is limited.
RSVP at TenthDems.org, call Tenth Dems at
847-266-VOTE (8683), or send an email to
Events@TenthDems.org. If you call or write, please
include your name, address, email, and phone number.

President Obama and the United Nations by Steve Sheffey

This article first appeared in *Sh'ma: A Journal of Jewish Responsibility*

President Barack Obama's special envoy on anti-Semitism, Hannah Rosenthal, observed in 2010, "Looking at U.N. statistics over the last six years, where there have been negative remarks against a country, 170 have been against Israel. Compare that to North Korea that had eight... Israel has had 50 resolutions condemning alleged human rights abuses. Compare that to the Sudan which has had five. Clearly Israel is being held to a different standard and that means it [the U.N.] has crossed the line from anti-Israel policy to profound anti-Semitism."

The United States contributes 22 percent of the U.N.'s regular operating budget, which came to upward of 582 million dollars in 2010. Taking into account U.S. contributions to the U.N. peacekeeping budget and contributions to other U.N. agencies, the total U.S. contribution in 2010 was \$7.69 billion.

Where some have suggested that the U.S. respond by cutting funding for the U.N. or boycotting its committees, Obama has charted a wiser course.

The Obama administration has pursued a policy of active engagement at the U.N. to fight

efforts to delegitimize Israel. In 2010, Obama told the U.N. General Assembly that "Israel's existence must not be a subject for debate" and that "efforts to chip away at Israel's legitimacy will only be met by the unshakeable opposition of the United States." And the Obama administration succeeded in pushing through the toughest set of sanctions against Iran ever enacted by the U.N. Security Council.

Perhaps most significant, the Obama administration cast its only veto in the U.N. Security Council against the biased anti-Israel resolution on settlements and promised to veto any U.N. Security Council resolution recognizing an independent Palestinian state. The Obama administration opposed the report of the U.N. Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, popularly known as the Goldstone Report in reference to its author, Justice Richard Goldstone. Israel's ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren, said, "The administration came out with a statement against Goldstone that was from our perspective just perfect—condemned it as a travesty of justice, upheld Israel's right not just to defend itself but to investigate itself during its own military operations."

Although Obama won nearly 80 percent of the Jewish vote in 2008, some maintain that the Jewish vote could be in play in 2012, even though there is little statistical evidence to support this claim and even though Obama's record is solidly pro-Israel. The Obama administration worked feverishly in September 2011 to



prevent or defeat a vote on Palestinian statehood in the U.N. Security Council and to muster as many votes as possible to diminish the impact of a non-binding vote in the General Assembly. By maintaining that only direct negotiations between the parties can lead to peace, President Obama put the Palestinian Authority in the position of either forgoing their U.N. statehood bid and returning to the negotiating table or refusing to negotiate, thus weakening their credibility and increasing the likelihood that more countries would join the U.S. in opposing U.N. support for Palestinian statehood.

In a speech described by the Israeli newspaper *Yehidot Aharonot* as the most pro-Israel speech ever given by an American president at the U.N., Obama told the world that "America's commitment to Israel's security is unshakeable" and that "Israel deserves recognition. It deserves normal relations with its neighbors." This type of consistent engagement at the U.N. has been essential in attempting to redress the efforts to isolate and delegitimize Israel. In

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President Obama and the United Nations

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response to criticism from Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), the chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and others who believe that instead of engaging at the U.N., the U.S. should first demand reforms and only then fund the U.N., Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Esther Brimmer said, "President Obama's decision to pay our U.N. assessments in full has given us greater influence with allies, partners, and others, and helped us achieve both our policy goals at the U.N. as well as much-needed management reform and budget discipline."

Prior administrations that generally supported Israel at the U.N. sometimes chose not to veto anti-Israel resolutions. For example, the Bush administration neglected to veto a 2004 U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Israel to stop demolishing Palestinian homes. The Reagan administration supported a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning Israel for its 1981 attack on Iraq's nuclear reactor.

In 2006, the U.N. General Assembly created the U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to address human rights violations and to replace the U.N. Human Rights Commission, which had lost credibility because it included countries with poor

human rights records. The Bush administration refused to join the UNHRC because it believed that the UNHRC was not much better than the Human Rights Commission and that the U.S. could make a stronger statement by not participating.

Before the U.S. joined the UNHRC in 2009, the UNHRC passed 32 resolutions, of which 26 were critical of Israel. The Bush administration refused to engage UNHRC, thus leaving the council to Israel's enemies. U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice explained that the Obama administration joined the UNHRC to battle the "anti-Israel crap."

By engaging with the UNHRC, the U.S. not only leveraged its power to defend Israel but it also helped shift attention to what the UNHRC should have been focusing on during its years of neglect under the Bush administration: freedom of assembly and association, women's rights, the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community's rights, and religious rights. The U.S. also spearheaded U.N. efforts to highlight human rights abuses faced by the LGBT community around the world. According to Esther Brimmer in remarks to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the U.S. "led unprecedented resolutions condemning human rights abuses in Libya, Iran and then Syria and putting in place mechanisms to document abuses and hold those governments to account" at the UNHRC.

These are important ends in themselves, and they also serve to diminish the council's disproportionate focus on Israel, which is a product of both the Arab world's efforts to delegitimize Israel and efforts by certain countries to deflect attention from their own human rights violations. It is clear that



Hannah Rosenthal and Susan Rice understand that the UNHRC and the U.N. in general are laden with anti-Israel sentiment and that engagement with the U.N. and its agencies is the best way to combat that sentiment. For Rice, defending Israel at the U.N. is, in her words, "a significant part of my job."

So what is the rationale for the commitment Obama made in September 2010 before the U.N. General Assembly? At the time, he said, "It should be clear to all that efforts to chip away at Israel's legitimacy will only be met by the unshakeable opposition of the United States." According to Rice, it's simple: "We're doing what we think is right." As President Obama told the U.N. in September 2011, the "Jewish people have forged a successful state in their historic homeland. Israel deserves recognition. It deserves normal relations with its neighbors. And friends of the Palestinians do them no favors by ignoring this truth, just as friends of Israel must recognize the need to pursue a two-state solution with a secure Israel next to an independent Palestine."

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