

Abstract

My paper explores the ways in the American Jewish Right, most associated with more extreme pro-Zionist positions, attempted to use Jewish fears of Islamic anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in order to sway Jewish voters, who along with African Americans have in recent history constituted a key foundation for the Democratic Party, towards supporting John McCain. American Jewish reticence towards supporting Obama, which is more pronounced among older Jews, many of whom supported the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, highlights the split between the African-American and Jewish alliance but in a way says more about the current state of Jewish political and cultural confusion than it does about the state of African-American/Jewish relations.

In order to make my case I will draw from diverse media sources including prominent United States and Israeli newspapers, and will use my own background as a Middle Eastern scholar-in-training to demonstrate how and why the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts have featured so prominently in the Jewish debates over Barack Obama. Thus this paper deals not only with Islamophobia and inter-communal relations but also with foreign policy and perceptions of religio-racial political behavior. It is essential for African-American/Jewish relations, the Jewish community as a whole, and the Democratic Party that they strive to understand the issues this paper confronts if they hope to build a secure future together.