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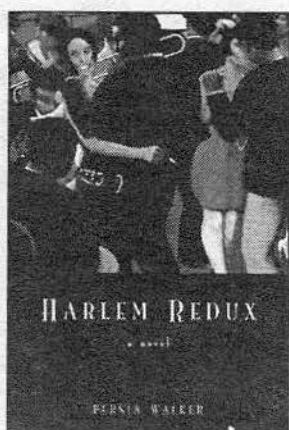
NEWS | ARTS | ENTERTAINMENT

July 18 - July 25, 2002 #896

PIPES' DREAMS

Philly pundit Daniel Pipes took Middle Eastern terrorism seriously long before 9/11. Should we take him seriously today?

BY DANIEL BROOK



ALL FAMILIES HAVE SECRETS.
THURSDAY
JULY 18TH AT 7PM
PERSIA WALKER READS & SIGNS HARLEM REDUX

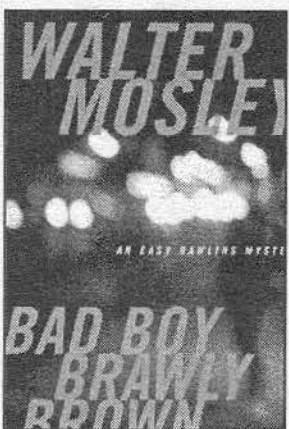
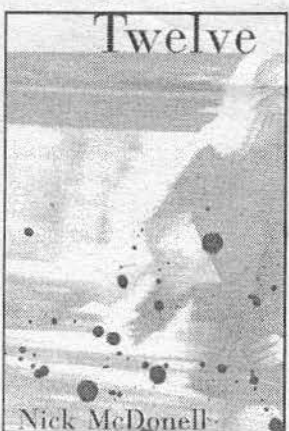
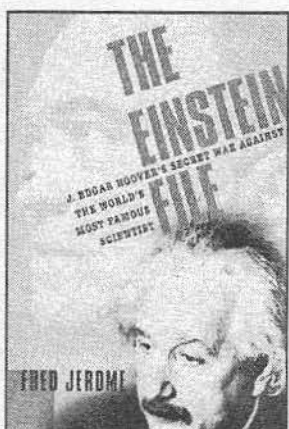
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JULY 22ND AT 7PM
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A WORKSHOP WITH
MEREDITH BROUSSARD.

ABSENT-MINDED GENIUS OR
POLITICAL ANARCHIST?
TUESDAY
JULY 23RD AT 7PM
FRED JEROME DISCUSSES & SIGNS THE EINSTEIN FILE

"NICK MCDONNELL IS THE
REAL THING..."
— HUNTER S. THOMPSON

WEDNESDAY
JULY 24TH AT 7PM.
NICK MCDONNELL READS
& SIGNS TWELVE

EASY RAWLINS RETURNS
THURSDAY
JULY 25TH AT 7PM
WALTER MOSELY READS & SIGNS BAD BOY BRAWLY BROWN



SLANT

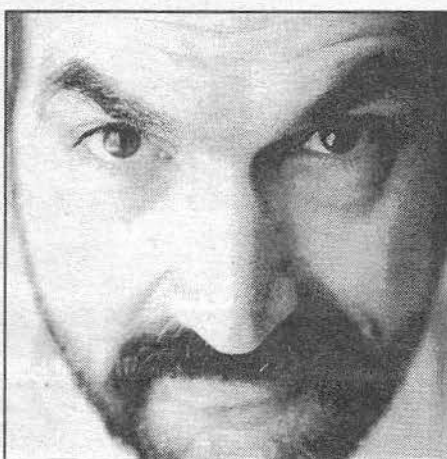
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PIPES' DREAMS

Philly pundit Daniel Pipes took Middle Eastern terrorism seriously long before 9/11. Should we take him seriously today?

BY DANIEL BROOK PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL T. REGAN

Conspiracy theories beget conspiracies. Imaginary plots generate actual ones, actual ones generate imaginary ones, mutually reinforcing each other in an endless, and ever-deepening, cycle of irrationality."

Daniel Pipes wrote these words in a 1996 book on the role of conspiracy theories in the Middle East. Today, Pipes finds himself in the grips of the very cycle he described.

Pipes' backers say it's not the first time that the writings of the Philadelphia-based Middle East scholar foreshadowed the future. Since the 1980s, Pipes has been warning that militant Islam had declared war on the United States.

Before Sept. 11, he was often dismissed as alarmist, even prejudiced. Today, he is being taken far more seriously.

Finding himself in the spotlight, Pipes has upped the ante, arguing that America's enemies lurk not just in the caves of Afghanistan or the flight schools of Florida. According to Pipes' latest writings, most mainstream American Muslim groups are led by radicals who secretly "dream of turning the United States into an Islamic country."

In the world of politics, I'm number one," Pipes says with an amused grin.

The director of the Middle East Forum, an independent think tank, Pipes recently surpassed Ed Rendell to become the most frequent political commentator beamed to the world from VideoLink, the Center City television studio.

Since Sept. 11, both Pipes' byline and his talking head have been in constant demand. He's become a regular on CNN and MSNBC, and he's been given a weekly column in the *New York Post*. On Sept. 11, 2002, W.W. Norton will release his new book, *Militant Islam Reaches America*. Pipes proudly recounts that he was one of a handful of scholars singled out by the *Los Angeles Times* as people who "got September 11th right."

"There's a sense," Pipes says, "that I understood the problem, that people weren't paying attention enough, and that I need to be paid more attention to now."

In 1997, the Middle East Forum's journal published an article titled "Get Ready for Twenty World Trade Center Bombings." The piece warned that militant Islamic terror networks in the U.S. were extremely well-organized and could pull off far deadlier attacks than they had yet executed.

Beyond taking the terrorist threat seriously, Pipes is being given credit for his earlier work, which, before Sept. 11, was considered too conservative for respectable academic circles.

In 1983, Pipes published a book detailing the role of Saudi Arabia in spreading Islamic fundamentalism throughout the Muslim world. Long swept under the rug to avoid conflict with the world's primary oil supplier, the issue was raised in congressional hearings in May.

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Pipes' 1996 book, *The Hidden Hand*, details the Middle East's rampant conspiracy theories that blame all the region's problems on secret agents from the West. After Sept. 11, Americans were shocked to see poll after poll showing that many in the Islamic world insisted that Muslims had nothing to do with the suicide hijackings. In light of last September, reading *The Hidden Hand* section on the first World Trade Center bombing gives an eerie sense of déjà vu:

"A New York court of law found a gang of six Middle Easterners guilty of bombing the World Trade Center in February 1993. For whom, Middle Easterners debated, did they work? One faction contended that... 'their spiritual leader was a CIA agent' who served his master well by discrediting Islam. Another faction pointed to Israeli intelligence: The mother of prime culprit Muhammad Salama told a reporter: 'The Jews. This is from the Jews, who have done this and blamed my son.'"

Robert Kaplan, a contributing editor at the *Atlantic Monthly* who has written extensively on the Muslim world, says, "Dan Pipes has done much better than most. I give him great credit for focusing on the right areas in light of September 11th." Kaplan notes that only a decade ago, "the Islamic terrorist threat was seen by many to be exaggerated, [and] people who emphasized [it were viewed as] somehow reactionary."

When the planes hit, Pipes was at his University City home preparing for his daily bike ride downtown to the office. The phone rang. It was Channel 6 Action News telling him a jet had just crashed into the World Trade Center and asking for instant analysis. Pipes spent the day at the ABC affiliate's studio.

"It was a madhouse," says Pipes, referring to the days after Sept. 11. "I didn't come to the office for, I think, a week. I was just writing and writing, talking, going on television, going on radio."

"Madhouse," he says again softly, knowing he has found the right word.

On Sept. 12, an op-ed by Pipes ran in the *Wall Street Journal*. Pipes was on a must-read page, in a must-read issue of America's second-largest-circulation newspaper. Pipes used his prime literary real estate to explain, as the headline read, how "Mistakes Made the Catastrophe Possible."

Pipes singled out four mistakes by the government: viewing terrorist attacks as crimes, not acts of war; relying on electronic surveillance rather than human intelligence; not understanding what he called the "hate-America mentality"; and ignoring the terrorist infrastructure inside America.

Some of these mistakes were widely acknowledged immediately. But Pipes' claim that "the tactical blame falls on the U.S. government, which has grievously failed in its topmost duty to protect American citizens from harm," was originally viewed as unpatriotic. Only with the unearthing of the Phoenix memo this spring did Pipes' criticisms become part of mainstream discourse.

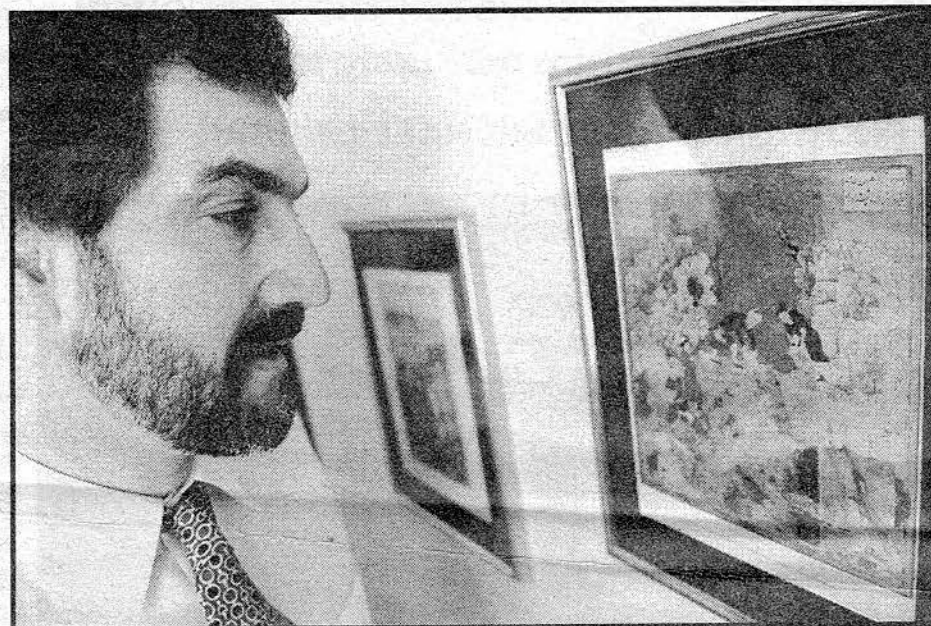
Pipes was initially cautious, only blaming al-Qaeda in late September, after the group

became Washington's official suspect. Soon after, Pipes went public with his contention that the leadership of the American Muslim community is dominated by Osama bin Laden sympathizers.

Pipes published his essay "The Danger Within: Militant Islam in America" in the November 2001 issue of *Commentary*, the influential neo-conservative journal. He wrote:

"Whatever the majority of Muslim Americans may believe, most of the organized Muslim community" agrees with the goal of building an Islamic state in America. "To put it another way, the major Muslim organizations in this country are in the hands of extremists."

The most prominent of the groups that Pipes singled out as sharing this desire were the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the American Muslim Council and the Muslim Public Affairs Council.



EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED: Middle East expert Daniel Pipes in his Center City office.

Pipes says the essay was "unpublishable" before the attacks, "in the sense that it wouldn't be taken seriously. It was premature. I'd written it, and I was just waiting for something to happen that would make this look plausible in a way that it didn't before September."

Daniel Pipes was born in 1949 and schooled in Boston. All of his degrees, including his Ph.D. in Middle Eastern history, are from Harvard, the same university where his father, Richard, is a well-respected professor emeritus of Russian history. At Harvard, Daniel Pipes studied medieval Islam. Only when modern Islam began looking back to the Middle Ages was he thrust into the modern world.

"It happened just as soon as I got my Ph.D., in '78. By the end of that year, Ayatollah Khomeini was making waves. He was the first person on the current scene to be talking about Islam, to be looking back at the history of the Middle East, and so he puzzled a lot of people, and there was a demand for interpretation. Since I'd just finished a thesis on Islam and politics, it was a natural."

Pipes hoped to follow in his father's footsteps as a Harvard professor and spent a year as a lecturer there, only to find himself passed over for tenure, he says, because of his conservative views.

"My politics are at a variance with that which rules in Middle East studies," says Pipes. "As soon as there was an understanding of what my politics are, I was essentially persona non grata."

Having been excluded from the ivory tower — "it's not so much that I wanted to leave it, it's that they didn't invite me" — Pipes headed to Philadelphia in 1986 to run the Foreign Policy Research Institute, a think tank based in Center City. In 1994, Pipes founded the Middle East Forum.

Pipes wears many hats at the office, which is decorated with framed pages of medieval illuminated Arabic manuscripts. Part administrator, part author and part policy analyst, Pipes quips, "When my children asked me, 'What do you do?' when they were small, I was not quite sure."

In his numerous unpaid TV appearances,

Pipes shows lots of range. In a one-on-one interview with Connie Chung, he plays the scholar. "Oh, Connie, I'm not very optimistic," is his opening line. But Pipes can switch to his combative "cut to the chase 'cause we're going to commercial in 15 seconds" persona on MSNBC's *Hardball* when debating a feisty Arab journalist or getting grilled by host Chris Matthews.

What is constant is controversy. Pipes doesn't mince words. In a June appearance on Fox News Channel's *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren*, Pipes tells the host matter-of-factly, "In many ways, the Muslim world today is comparable to Nazi Germany in the extent to which one finds anti-Semitic themes found pervasively throughout the culture."

In person, Pipes is soft-spoken and unthreatening. His remarkable 6-foot-4 height is exaggerated by his thin frame. To his supporters, Pipes looks like a biblical prophet, returning bearded and gaunt-cheeked from the desert to tell a lax and overindulgent people the disturbing truths they don't want to hear.

To his critics, he looks quite different. As one opponent said, referring to his arched eyebrows and dark beard, "To me, he looks like Mephistopheles."

Pipes' guiding idea on the Middle East is that there are two competing factions within the Muslim faith: moderate Islam

and what Pipes calls "Islamism."

"First of all, it's an ideology," says Pipes, describing Islamism. "It's a body of ideas that people are very devoted to." But militant Muslims, Pipes insists, are more dangerous than other fundamentalist religious groups. Every religion has its zealots, Pipes says, but "none of them have anything like the drive, the state support, the financial backing or the global ambitions of militant Islam." Unlike other religious fundamentalists who only seek to control their own backyards, Pipes argues, Islamists will not rest until they conquer the world. And America is their prime target because they see the United States as "the main obstacle standing between them and the achievement of their goals."

According to Pipes, "The ambitions of militant Islam are not merely to, say, expel Americans from Saudi Arabia or change American policy vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict or end the sanctions on Iraq. They're far more ambitious and have to do with changing the very nature of the United States."

Because their program is so threatening to the American way of life, Pipes says he sees all those who support it as America's enemies, whether they espouse violence or not. In his forthcoming book, Pipes writes, all Islamists "must be considered potential killers."

"The difference between a moderate Islamist and a radical Islamist is like the difference between a moderate Nazi and a radical Nazi," says Pipes. "Yeah, some Nazi [party members] worked in offices 9 to 5, didn't do anybody any harm. But they are potential killers in the sense that they're helping the killers and they themselves could be mobilized at some point. I take issue with the idea that there are some supporters of militant Islam who are 'OK,' who wear ties and have nice cars and are 'within the system.' I say no, they're not OK, they're all dangerous."

Pipes claims he's not trying to sound overly alarmist. "They're not going to win," he explains. "They're not going to change the country. But they're not going to change the country only if we take steps to stop them."

To defeat Islamism, Pipes argues, the U.S. must bolster moderates in their efforts to get fundamentalists to honestly confront the aspects of their tradition, like *jihad*, that should be left behind. "The message of September 11th is that we have to be part of this process of modernizing Islam," says Pipes. But to aid the moderates, Pipes also insists that U.S. authorities come down hard on the Islamists in our midst.

Because he views every Islamist as a potential killer, Pipes has strongly backed the Justice Department's post-Sept. 11 crackdown.

"I like using the analogy of the London bobby, who for decades and decades was famously unarmed. At a certain point, with the IRA and other problems, it became ludicrous to have unarmed policemen. You had to arm them, and you had to arm them well."

Today, Pipes backs profiling — "this is no time to worry about people's feelings" — and calls the FBI's secret detentions "absolutely necessary." As Pipes sees it, "if some people spend some time behind bars that shouldn't be [there], that is a price I'm willing to pay."

Pipes goes beyond the Bush administration

in calling for tighter borders. Visitors and would-be immigrants should be questioned to see if they are sympathetic to militant Islam. Those who are should be kept out. "Why should we let in people who despise this country?" Pipes asks rhetorically.

But Pipes insists he's not a bigot. "I'm not calling for the persecution of anybody," he explains, arguing that in light of John Walker Lindh, Richard Reid and Jose Padilla, the feds shouldn't limit their tough questions to Arabs.

"I'm saying we have to protect ourselves against those who are defining themselves as our enemies. They declared war on us, not we on them."

The mainstream Islamic groups oppose Pipes' views on all of these specific issues of the "war on terror," but it is his new attack, that the groups themselves are, in spirit, aligned with America's enemies, that has gotten American Muslim organizations the most incensed.

Each of the three major groups Pipes singles out has its own stated goal — and all deny wanting to institute Islamic law in America.

Ibrahim Hooper, spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), says his group seeks "justice and accommodation for the Islamic-American community so we can practice our faith in a multiethnic setting."

Salam Al-Marayati, executive director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), explains, "Our goal is to serve as a voice for the American Muslim community, integrating them. Our focus is on pluralism."

Faiz Rehman, communications director of the American Muslim Council (AMC), says his organization seeks the "empowerment of American Muslims in the political arena," adding, "That is what Mr. Pipes is afraid of."

Muslim leaders say that Pipes uses the false dichotomy of militant Islam and moderate Islam to eschew charges of racism. Pipes says

"IN THE WORLD OF POLITICS, I'M NUMBER ONE,"

PIPES SAYS WITH AN AMUSED GRIN.

that he is not afraid of an organized American Muslim community per se, only one that is dominated by radicals. But since he says the American Muslim community as it currently exists is dominated by radicals, Pipes says he views the community's political empowerment as a threat.

To most leaders of American Islamic groups, this is tantamount to a Klan member saying, "I'm not a racist. I have no problem with blacks. If they weren't all criminals, we'd get along just fine."

At the very least, the Muslim American leaders say he is singling out the most rancid of the proverbial few bad apples and claiming they are representative of the whole crop.

Hooper argues that saying the terrorists speak for Islam is like saying that "America is

the Columbine massacre, and the [former] head of the [Southern] Baptists saying Muhammad was a pedophile. America is O.J. and drunkenness. These things occur in America, but do they represent America?"

Pipes defends himself, saying he supports some American Muslim groups, as well as the vast majority of American Muslims who he claims are moderates, unlike those who speak for them in Washington. In his writings, Pipes praises the Islamic Supreme Council of America (ISCA), which openly opposes what it calls "Islamic extremism" and has long been critical of the Saudi regime for exporting its militant ideology throughout the Muslim world.

No one from ISCA would agree to be interviewed for this article.

CAIR, AMC and MPAC dismiss as pure hogwash Pipes' latest contention that they are secretly working to, as Pipes puts it, "replace the Constitution with the Quran."

"It's never entered my mind," says Hooper. "It's not like I wake up every morning and think, 'How can I take over America?'"

Al-Marayati says that Pipes is either "unaware [of the truth] or distorting reality."

Rehman says the AMC is "a very mainstream organization," noting that its leaders have been invited to the White House and that FBI director Robert Mueller spoke at its most recent convention.

Of Pipes' charge, Rehman asks rhetorically, "If it's covert, how does he realize it?"

When Pipes was posed with this question in November for a Q&A published by the online magazine *Salon*, he responded, "Look, I have a filter. I've studied Islam and Islamism for 30 years. I have a sense of how they proceed and what their agenda is like. And I can see it. You don't."

The comment was mocked in a CAIR press release titled "Daniel Pipes Should 'Clean His Filter,'" which suggested that the "Islamophobic pundit... should visit an oil-change facility."

Most of Pipes' evidence for his claim hinges on a slippery-slope argument. For example, many American Muslim groups are currently defending a Florida woman in her efforts to wear the traditional *hijab* head covering in her driver's license photo. They argue that the woman is simply practicing her religion, a right protected by the First Amendment and a basic principle of our pluralistic society.

Pipes disagrees. "Are we going to adapt to that?" he asks. "Is this going to become a place like Saudi Arabia where women can show just their eyes and this is accepted by the national [authorities]?"

Pipes says that in defending the Florida woman, Muslim groups are "preparing the ground for Islamic law. To put it more broadly, where the United States and Islam differ, they want the United States to adapt to Islam, not the other way around."

Asked last week, Pipes said he now has more concrete evidence for his claim, having recently uncovered quotes from mainstream American Muslim leaders in "unconscious moments or early in their careers" saying explicitly radical things.

In April, during the massive pro-Israel demonstration on Capitol Hill, AMC founder Abdurahman Alamoudi told reporters, "We

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are all supporters of Hamas," and added, "I am also a supporter of Hezbollah," the Lebanese group implicated in the 1983 Beirut barracks attack that left more than 200 U.S. Marines dead. Clearly this is not a mainstream sentiment, but does it prove that the AMC wants to institute Islamic law in the United States?

AMC defends itself, saying Alamoudi is no longer with the group.

Then there is the quote that Pipes considers the closest he's yet come to a smoking gun.

In the early 1990s, Hooper, before becoming CAIR's spokesman, ran the Islamic Information Service, a group representing the Muslims in Minnesota.

In the April 4, 1993, edition of the Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* newspaper, Hooper is quoted saying, "I wouldn't want to create the impression that I wouldn't like the government of the United States to be Islamic sometime in the future but I'm not going to do anything violent to promote that. I'm going to do it through education."

Hooper notes that when he made the statement CAIR did not even exist and that it does not represent the views of CAIR. He says the statement meant he wanted America to reflect "Islamic norms of justice and of tolerance." As for the implementation of Islamic law, Hooper asks, "Has CAIR in any public utterance in its nearly nine years of existence ever said anything that could be construed as meaning it wants to apply Islamic law in America? Ibrahim Hooper doesn't want that. CAIR doesn't want that."

What Ibrahim Hooper, CAIR and other Muslim groups overtly want is less attention paid to Daniel Pipes.

"Before 9/11, he was viewed for what he was — someone who just wanted to whip up the passions of the masses," says Ahmed Bouzid, who heads Palestine Media Watch, a national organization based on the Main Line. "After 9/11, he was ushered back in as if he was a prophet, as if he was right all along."

"He had been totally discredited, and then September 11th happened," laments Rehman.

Indeed, Pipes was embarrassed by his suggestion that the Oklahoma City bombing was likely the work of Muslim radicals. But even today, Pipes insists that "there's still a live concern that there was a connection between [Terry] Nichols when he went to the Philippines and the Islamist groups there."

Al-Marayati even disputes the mainstream view that Pipes deserves credit for "getting September 11th right," thus giving him a right to the limelight. Pipes' research interests, like conspiracy theories and the Saudi role in funding militant Islam are "common knowledge," says Al-Marayati. "Anyone who spends any time looking into the Middle East could have made the same points."

Why, then, has Pipes become so prominent? MSNBC spokeswoman Cheryl Daly says it's simple. "He's been interviewed on MSNBC shows because we find him knowledgeable and insightful on Middle Eastern affairs."

Professor Ian Lustick thinks it's more complicated than that. The University of Pennsylvania faculty member, who debated Pipes in front of the Philadelphia chapter of

the American Jewish Congress, says the Middle East Forum head "takes views that no responsible academic would ever articulate. He's so far outside the pale of mainstream scholarship, yet the networks need people to give this view because it's a popular view. A reasonable position they can get anywhere. What they're looking for is an unreasonable position."

Spokesmen for two of the Islamic groups Pipes criticizes allude to something more sinister at work.

Al-Marayati says, "The pro-Israel lobby has made him into a loud voice [through its] PR machine. There are so many other Jewish scholars that are more moderate than him, but he gets on the shows more frequently, so obviously he has a lot of backing."

Hooper says, "Daniel Pipes is basically the pro-Israel lobby's point man in their effort to disenfranchise the American Muslim community ... all to the benefit of a foreign government — that of the State of Israel."

According to Josh Block, a spokesman for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), "While Daniel Pipes is often correct in what he says, he does not speak for the 'pro-Israel lobby' — he speaks for himself."

"He has his own political views," says Giora Becher, Israel's consul general in Philadelphia. "Many times, these coincide with the Israeli government's views. But you know, we're a democracy. It depends on what government we have in Israel. It speaks well for him that he's not always supporting the decisions of the government of Israel."

Pipes, who declined to discuss his ethnicity or religion, is not a member of AIPAC but is a frequent speaker at the group's conventions.

Pipes notes AIPAC's prominent role in Middle East conspiracy theories. One theory, detailed in *The Hidden Hand*, holds that Israel controls the United States through AIPAC, among other agents. The crux of the theory, according to Pipes, is that "the U.S. and Israel can't have normal state-to-state relations but that someone has to be running someone else. That's pure conspiracy theory."

Hooper says it's Pipes, not CAIR, who is spreading conspiracy theories. "It is the mother of all ironies," Hooper says, "that he would write a book debunking conspiracy theories. It's a conspiracy theory that [4,000 Jewish] people didn't show up to the World Trade Center; but it's also a conspiracy theory when Pipes says Muslims are aiming to take over America. One gets justly ridiculed and the other gets support from certain political quarters."

For all his influence and renown, Pipes is not declaring victory. "These are very ambitious ideas," he says, "and since September, they go against the interpretation of the U.S. government." The Bush administration, Pipes notes, "is referring to the problem as 'terrorism.' It insists on ignoring the connection to Islam."

But Pipes, slipping into prophetic mode, has faith that the country will ultimately come around. "What I see is we're going to be hit and hit again. At a certain point, I think we're going to win, and the question is how many superfluous losses are we going to take because we're not serious enough about it. What I rue is that we learn only after people get killed."

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