

The strategy and effectiveness of The American Israel Public Affairs Committee in lobbying

The United States Congress

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study examines the strategy and effectiveness of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in lobbying the United States Congress. The research question focuses on how AIPAC's strategy can influence current US foreign policy and how effective it is. The study applies the theory of authority by Max Weber and the foreign policy concept by John Lovell's to analyze the data obtained. The research findings reveal that AIPAC's lobbying efforts have been successful, as evidenced by the significant foreign aid given by the US government to Israel annually, amounting to **\$3.8** billion. Additionally, AIPAC has also successfully advocated for US government support for Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Overall, this study sheds light on the powerful influence of interest groups on US foreign policy and the effectiveness of their lobbying efforts in shaping it.

KEYWORD: AIPAC, Israel, United States of America, Lobbying, Interests, Foreign Policy

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Introduction. The diplomatic relations between the United States and Israel were established on May 14, 1948, immediately following Israel's declaration of independence. The United States was one of the first countries to recognize the newly-formed State of Israel. President Harry Truman made a statement in support of the recognition of the State of Israel, saying "This government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine, and recognition has been requested by the provisional government thereof. The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de facto authority of the new State of Israel." (Truman Library, n.d.). This relationship is based on shared democratic values, security interests, and cultural ties. The United States has been Israel's strongest ally and has provided military, economic, and diplomatic support to Israel. In return, Israel has been a strategic partner for the United States in the Middle East and has provided valuable intelligence and technology.

According to the United States Department of State, "The United States and Israel share a commitment to democracy, a respect for the rule of law, and a belief in the inherent dignity and worth of every human being. The friendship between our two countries has been forged by common interests and shared values." (U.S. Department of State, 2021). One of the key areas of dependency between the United States and Israel is in the realm of security. The United States has been a major provider of military aid to Israel, with the two countries signing a Memorandum of Understanding in 2016 that provides Israel with \$38 billion in military aid over ten years (U.S. Department of State, 2021). This aid has been crucial for Israel's defense, particularly in the face of threats from Iran and other regional adversaries.

In addition to security cooperation, the United States and Israel have a strong economic relationship. Israel is a key trading partner for the United States in the Middle East and the two countries have signed a free trade agreement that has increased trade between them (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Another important aspect of the relationship between the United States and Israel is the shared cultural ties between the two countries. The United States is home to a large Jewish population, and Israel is the world's only Jewish-majority state. This shared heritage has created a strong bond between the two countries and has contributed to the support for Israel.

To maintain the continuity of the United States' support for Israel, Israel also seeks to lobby the US government. Lobbying is done to strengthen US government's support for Israel. There are many lobbying organizations in the United States, but the most influential one is American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). AIPAC was founded in 1963 by Isaiah L. Kenen (Schouten, 2015). Kenen left the Israel Office of Information to lobby for the American Zionist Council and later became chairman of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee is the only American organization whose main mission is to lobby the United States government on issues and legislation related to Israel to strengthen relations between the United States and Israel.

AIPAC is officially registered as a domestic lobby supported by private donations and not from the Government of Israel, the United States of America, or any national or foreign organization (Charles, 1990). The American-Israel Public Affairs Committee strives to continually improve United States-

Israel relations and staff and activists from the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee continually educate decision makers to think that the relationship between America and Israel is very important (Tonce, 2016). The American Israel Public Affairs Committee also convinced the United States authorities that the cooperation between the two countries would benefit one another.

Therefore the American Israel Public Affairs Committee asks all members of Congress to support Israel through various existing schemes such as through foreign aid, government cooperation, anti-terrorism efforts, and promoting the two-state solution that has been negotiated, namely the demilitarized Jewish state of Israel and Palestine. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee has been in America for a long time and has very close and mutually bonding relations with the United States and Israel. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee should not have significant influence over United States foreign policy.

Because after all that should play a big role in making every foreign policy decision is the authority of the United States itself. However, the facts prove that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which is a 'pro-Israel' interest group, is very influential on United States foreign policy. Therefore, this research was conducted to answer the question how the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) strategy can greatly influence the current United States foreign policy and how effective is it?. This research is significant because AIPAC's influence on US foreign policy has been a topic of much debate, with critics claiming that their influence is disproportionate and undermines US interests. Therefore, understanding AIPAC's strategy and effectiveness in lobbying the US Congress is crucial in evaluating the role of interest groups in shaping US foreign policy

Theoretical Concept. To achieve answers to these questions, this research will use foreign policy concept by John Lovell's and the theory of interest by Roscoe Pound as an analytical tool.

Theory of authority by Max Weber

Max Weber was a German sociologist, philosopher, and political economist who contributed significantly to the development of social theory in the early 20th century. One of his key concepts is the theory of authority, which he defines as "the probability that a command with a given content will be obeyed by a given group of persons" (Weber, 1978, p. 328). In other words, authority is the ability to influence others to act in a certain way, based on the legitimacy of the source of that influence.

Weber identified three types of authority: traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational. Traditional authority is based on long-established customs and traditions, such as the authority of a king or queen. Charismatic authority is based on the personal qualities of the leader, such as their charisma, vision, and ability to inspire others. Legal-rational authority, on the other hand, is based on formal rules and regulations, such as the authority of a government or a legal system.

In the case of the Israeli lobby in America, legal-rational authority is the most relevant type of authority. The Israeli lobby is a political organization that seeks to promote the interests of Israel in the

United States. Its authority is based on the legal and political institutions of the United States, such as Congress, the executive branch, and the courts. The lobby uses a variety of tactics to influence these institutions, such as lobbying, campaign contributions, and public relations campaigns. However, the Israeli lobby also has elements of traditional and charismatic authority.

For example, it appeals to the traditional ties between the United States and Israel, such as the shared values of democracy and freedom. It also promotes charismatic leaders who are seen as strong supporters of Israel, such as the former President Donald Trump. Over all, Max Weber's theory of authority helps to explain the complex relationship between the Israeli lobby and American politics. The lobby's authority is based on a combination of legal-rational, traditional, and charismatic elements, which allow it to influence American policies towards Israel.

Foreign policy concept by John Lovell's

John Lovell's Foreign Policy Concept, as explained in his book "Understanding International Relations: The Value of Alternative Lenses" (2013), emphasizes the importance of analyzing the role of domestic politics and interests in shaping a state's foreign policy. According to Lovell, foreign policy is not only influenced by external factors such as international institutions and power balances, but also by domestic factors such as interest groups, public opinion, and bureaucratic politics.

Lovell argues that "foreign policy is a contested terrain" where various domestic actors with different interests and perspectives struggle to shape policy decisions (Lovell, 2013, p. 3). He emphasizes the importance of analyzing the role of interest groups in foreign policy decision-making, as they often have significant influence on policy outcomes. Lovell also highlights the importance of understanding the ideological underpinnings of foreign policy, as different political ideologies can shape a state's goals and strategies in the international arena. This concept will be used as a lens to analyze the impact of profits on US foreign policy towards Israel.

Litelature Review

The literature on the Israeli lobby is extensive and varied, with scholars from different disciplines offering different perspectives on the topic. Many scholars argue that the Israeli lobby wields significant influence over U.S. foreign policy, particularly in relation to the Middle East. Mearsheimer and Walt (2018), for example, argue that the lobby has successfully pushed the U.S. government to adopt policies that are not in its own national interest, such as the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Similarly, Khatib (2021) argues that the lobby's influence is evident in the Trump administration's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal.

Another key theme in the literature is the role of money in the Israeli lobby's influence. Many scholars argue that the lobby's financial contributions to political campaigns and lobbying efforts have played a significant role in shaping U.S. policy towards Israel. Doherty and Paterson (2019), for example, argue that the lobby's campaign contributions have helped to ensure that U.S. politicians are overwhelmingly supportive of Israel, even when its policies are at odds with U.S. interests.

While the Israeli lobby is often portrayed as a monolithic entity, some scholars argue that it is actually quite diverse, with different organizations and individuals advocating for different policies and approaches. As Kattan (2021) notes, there are significant differences between groups such as AIPAC and J Street in terms of their goals and strategies. Moreover, some scholars argue that there are divisions within the lobby itself, with some groups advocating for a more hardline approach towards Israel and others advocating for a more moderate approach.

Finally, many scholars argue that the Israeli lobby is undergoing significant changes, both in terms of its goals and its methods. As Scheindlin (2019) notes, younger American Jews are becoming increasingly critical of Israel's policies, which could lead to a shift in the lobby's priorities. Moreover, some scholars argue that the lobby's traditional methods of influence, such as lobbying and campaign contributions, may be losing effectiveness in the face of changing demographics and the rise of social media.

In conclusion, literature on the Israeli lobby is extensive and varied, with scholars offering different perspectives on its power, influence, and diversity. While there is significant debate over the lobby's role in shaping U.S. policy towards Israel, there is a growing recognition that the lobby is undergoing significant changes, both in terms of its goals and its methods. As such, it is likely that the debate over the Israeli lobby will continue to be an important topic of discussion in the years to come.

Reserch Methodology

Research Design: The research design for this study will be qualitative, as it will provide a detailed understanding of AIPAC's strategy and effectiveness in lobbying the US Congress. A case studies will be used as a data collection technique to gather and analyze relevant information on the topic.

Research Objectives: The objectives of this research are to:

- Analyze the strategy and tactics used by AIPAC in lobbying the United States Congress.
- Examine the level of influence that AIPAC has on the current US foreign policy.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of AIPAC's lobbying strategy in achieving its goals.

Data Sources: The data for this study will be collected from published academic sources, government reports, news articles, and online databases. The data sources will be selected based on their relevance to the research question.

Data Collection: The data collection technique for this research will be a case studies. Case studies involve in-depth analysis of a particular individual, group, or situation. Researchers can collect data through interviews, observations, and document analysis related to AIPAC's lobbying strategy, its influence on the US foreign policy, and its effectiveness in achieving its goals.

Data Analysis: The data collected will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher will identify key themes related to AIPAC's strategy, its influence on the US foreign policy, and its effectiveness in achieving its goals. The researcher will use software tools such as NVivo to facilitate data analysis.

Limitations: The limitations of this research include the possibility of biased data sources and the limited scope of the study. The research will be limited to a literature review, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the research may be affected by the availability of relevant data sources.

Results and Discussion

The dynamics of the relationship between America and Israel from the presidency of Barack Obama to Donald Trump

The relationship between the United States and Israel has been an interesting topic for several decades. We can observe the dynamics of the relationship between America and Israel during each presidential administration. The relationship between America and Israel often varies from one presidency to another. For example, during the Obama and Trump administrations, the dynamics of the relationship between America and Israel underwent several changes. Here are some points related to the relationship between these two countries during this period.

Under the Obama Administration (2009-2017)

The relationship between the United States and Israel during the Obama administration was characterized by tensions, especially in the first term. Obama was known for his more "even-handed" approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which some Israelis saw as less supportive of Israel. Some of the major issues that strained the relationship included:

- **Settlements:** Obama called for a halt to Israeli settlements in the West Bank, which the Israeli government rejected. In a speech in Cairo in 2009, Obama said, "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements" (Obama, 2015).
- **Iran Nuclear Deal:** The Obama administration negotiated a nuclear deal with Iran, which was strongly opposed by Israel. In a speech to Congress in 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "This deal doesn't make peace more likely. It makes war more likely."
- **United Nations Resolution 2334:** In December 2016, the Obama administration allowed a UN Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlements in the West Bank to pass. This move was seen by some as a betrayal of Israel.

Under the Trump Administration (2017-2021)

The relationship between the United States and Israel improved significantly during the Trump administration, with Trump being seen as a strong supporter of Israel. Some of the key moves made by the Trump administration included:

- Moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem: In May **2018**, the Trump administration moved the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which was seen as a major symbolic move in support of Israel (Trump, **2017**).
- Recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights: In March **2019**, the Trump administration recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which had been occupied by Israel since the **1967** war.
- Cutting aid to the Palestinians: The Trump administration cut aid to the Palestinian Authority, which was seen as a punitive move for the Palestinians' refusal to engage in peace negotiations with Israel.

The AIPAC lobby during the Biden administration and how Israel's lobbying through AIPAC can influence America's policies towards Israel

As previously explained, each president has their own policy towards their relationship with Israel. This can also be seen during the Joe Biden administration, where the dynamics of AIPAC lobbying have shifted slightly. This shift is caused by several factors, and the following points are relevant to how AIPAC lobbying operates during the Biden presidency:

- Continued Support for Israel: AIPAC has continued to advocate for strong U.S.-Israel relations under the Biden administration. In a statement in May **2021**, AIPAC said, "We commend the Biden administration for its commitment to Israel's security and for its strong support of the Abraham Accords" (American Israel Public Affairs Committee, **2021**).
- Focus on Iran Nuclear Deal: AIPAC has been critical of the Biden administration's efforts to rejoin the Iran nuclear deal, arguing that it would not effectively prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. In a statement in April **2021**, AIPAC said, "The United States must not rejoin the JCPOA absent an agreement that truly prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon" (American Israel Public Affairs Committee, **2021**).
- Engagement with the Democratic Party: AIPAC has historically been associated with the Republican Party, but in recent years it has sought to engage with Democrats as well. In a letter to members of Congress in March **2021**, AIPAC said, "Our organization is fully committed to working with members of both parties to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship" (American Israel Public Affairs Committee, **2021**)
- Lobbying Efforts: AIPAC has continued its lobbying efforts in Congress under the Biden administration. In May **2021**, AIPAC launched a campaign to urge Congress to pass a bill that

would provide additional funding for the Iron Dome missile defense system, which is used by Israel to defend against rocket attacks (American Israel Public Affairs Committee, 2021).

In the case of AIPAC and its influence on American policy towards Israel, legal-rational authority appears to be the most relevant. Legal-rational authority is based on rules and laws that are established through a formal system. It is authority that is derived from a set of rules that are seen as legitimate and binding. In the case of AIPAC, its influence is based on the legal-rational authority of the American political system. AIPAC is a lobbying organization that represents the interests of Israel in the United States. As a lobbying organization, it operates within the legal framework of the American political system, which allows for interest groups to influence policy through lobbying efforts.

AIPAC's influence on American policy towards Israel is also supported by the fact that Israel is seen as a key ally of the United States in the Middle East. This strategic alliance has been supported by successive American administrations, which have recognized Israel's strategic importance in the region. As a result, American politicians are often inclined to support policies that are seen as being in the interests of Israel, in order to maintain the strategic alliance. In addition to legal-rational authority, AIPAC's influence on American policy towards Israel can also be seen as a form of interest group politics. Interest group politics involves the influence of organized groups on policy decisions.

AIPAC is a well-organized and well-funded lobbying organization that has a significant amount of influence over American politicians. Its influence is based on its ability to provide campaign contributions, mobilize voters, and provide expertise on issues related to Israel. Overall, the influence of the Israeli lobby through AIPAC on American policy towards Israel can be seen as a combination of legal-rational authority and interest group politics. AIPAC operates within the legal framework of the American political system, which allows for interest groups to influence policy through lobbying efforts. Its influence is also supported by the strategic importance of Israel as a key ally of the United States in the Middle East.

The American foreign policy influenced by AIPAC and the benefits of AIPAC lobby for America and Israel

As previously explained, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is a lobbying group in the United States that advocates for pro-Israel policies to Congress and the executive branch. The influence of AIPAC on American foreign policy has been a topic of debate among scholars and policymakers, with some arguing that AIPAC has a significant impact on shaping US policy towards Israel and the Middle East. Several examples of US foreign policy influenced by AIPAC can be observed, including:

- Foreign aid to Israel: AIPAC has been instrumental in securing U.S. aid to Israel, which currently amounts to around \$3.8 billion per year. AIPAC has successfully advocated for continued U.S. funding of Israel's military and defense programs, as well as economic assistance (Brookings Institution, 2006).

- Support for Israeli settlements: AIPAC has advocated for U.S. support of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, which are considered illegal under international law. The U.S. has historically opposed settlement expansion, but the Trump administration adopted a more pro-settlement stance with AIPAC's support (Al Jazeera, 2018).
- Opposition to the Iran nuclear deal: AIPAC has long been a vocal opponent of the Iran nuclear deal, which aimed to curb Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. AIPAC argued that the deal did not do enough to address Iran's support for terrorism and regional destabilization, and successfully lobbied Congress to pass legislation imposing new sanctions on Iran (Politico, 2016).

The impact of AIPAC's influence on American foreign policy is a matter of debate. Some argue that AIPAC's advocacy has led to a more one-sided U.S. approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that the U.S.'s close relationship with Israel has harmed its standing in the region. Others argue that U.S. support for Israel is strategically important and that AIPAC's lobbying efforts are simply a reflection of the strong ties between the two countries.

In the case of AIPAC's influence on American policy towards Israel, the benefits derived for both countries can be analyzed through Lovell's framework. From an American perspective, the benefits of AIPAC's lobbying efforts can be seen in terms of national interests. Israel is a key ally of the United States in the Middle East, and American support for Israel serves to maintain regional stability and advance American strategic interests. Additionally, the strong relationship between the United States and Israel has economic benefits, including increased trade and investment between the two countries.

However, Lovell's framework also emphasizes the importance of balancing national interests with values. In this regard, the benefits of AIPAC's lobbying efforts for the United States are not without controversy. Critics argue that AIPAC's influence has led to a one-sided approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the United States often seen as overly supportive of Israel at the expense of Palestinian interests.

This has raised questions about American commitment to human rights and international law. From an Israeli perspective, the benefits of AIPAC's lobbying efforts are more straightforward. AIPAC's support for Israel helps to ensure American political and economic backing for the country. This is particularly important given Israel's strategic location in a volatile region and its ongoing conflict with the Palestinians. The United States provides military and economic aid to Israel, which is seen as crucial for Israel's security and survival.

However, Lovell's framework also highlights the importance of balancing national interests and values in foreign policy decision-making. In the case of Israel, this has led to criticism of Israeli policies towards the Palestinians, particularly in regards to settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. Some argue that Israel's actions violate international law and human rights norms, and that American support for Israel undermines American credibility on these issues.

Overall, the benefits derived from AIPAC's lobby for America and Israel can be seen through John Lovell's foreign policy concept as a balancing act between national interests and values. While American support for Israel has strategic and economic benefits, it also raises questions about American commitment to human rights and international law. Similarly, while AIPAC's influence helps to ensure American political and economic backing for Israel, it also raises questions about Israeli policies towards the Palestinians.

Conclusion. The conclusion that can be drawn is that through the historical closeness between America and Israel, as well as the lobbying strategy undertaken by AIPAC through funding, grassroots movements, and controlling public opinion, it has succeeded in becoming a strong and influential lobbying organization. The success of its lobbying is evidenced by the foreign aid given by the United States government to Israel amounting to **\$3.8** billion annually. AIPAC has also successfully advocated for US government support for Israeli settlements in the West Bank. In addition, AIPAC has succeeded in passing laws that have implications for the nuclear agreement with Iran. From the many successes achieved by AIPAC, we can see how its lobbying strategy has been able to advocate for and influence the US Congress, and has direct implications for the policies issued by the United States.

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