



The role of the Israeli lobby in the U.S. How the U.S working against its interest

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Abstract

The paper addresses the United States (US) -Israel alliance, the motivations for the US support for Israel, and Israel's lobby's ability to influence internal US decisions towards Israel's interest.

The paper also examines the position of the Israeli lobby in the US, as well as where it derives its influence.

Furthermore, this research looks at Mearsheimer and Walt's (2006;2007) study on the Israeli lobby in the US, as well as their key principle, which suggests that a country can act against its interests in a region through supporting ethnic and religious groups, or minorities in the same region.

This paper also tries to answer questions like is the US support for Israel working against the country's best interests? The paper argues that by supporting Israel, the US is not behaving against its interests. It is, on the contrary, a continuation of its regional hegemony by unwavering financial support for a strategic partner, even though this damages the US's credibility and raises anti-semitism in the region. The paper is based on Mearsheimer and Walt's (2006) analysis as well as many other international politics principles that have been extended to the global analysis of the Middle East.

Keywords: Israeli lobby, U.S working against, Mearsheimer and Walt's (2006)

Introduction

Interest groups, according to Robert Dahl (1981: 235) ^[1], are "a group of people who work together to pursue or protect shared objectives and interests in a broader context." Lobbies and Pressure groups are distinct phenomena of the American political system. These organizations play a critical role in shaping and exerting pressure on Washington's decision-making centers. This pressure is the product of certain advantages of power that allow this political or economic community to operate there, as well as political knowledge of rules, constitutions, and democracy. (Mohtasib, Nezam, 2006: 24-26) ^[7] In 2010, for example, the US Supreme Court ruled that lobbyists can engage in electoral campaigns up to 60 days before the election, strengthening interest groups' role in the political realm. (Mohtasib, Nezam, 2006: 24-26) ^[7] The Israeli lobby in the United States, as described by Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) ^[10], is a loose alliance of individuals and organizations actively working to shape American foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction. (Mearsheimer, J. & Walt, S, 2006: 1-12) ^[10] They also point out that the US Zionist lobby has a broad and powerful presence in the US-Middle East foreign policy, as US support for Israel has reached the point where it is threatening US strategic interests. The purpose of this paper is to highlight and evaluate the most significant results from the study conducted by Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) ^[10]. It also examines the roots of the Zionist lobby's influence in the United States. The article's main aim is to demonstrate that US support for Israel is not against the country's national interests, nor is it against the extension of its regional dominance, which prevents potential legitimate resolutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The Israeli lobby power resource

Israel and the United States have strong ties. The US support has been a crucial factor in Israel's militarization

since its establishment in 1948. Furthermore, it is the primary funding source for the Israeli army. According to a study released by the congressional research center, US assistance to Israel surpassed 121 billion dollars in December 2016, growing from 3 billion dollars in October 1973. (Sharbini, Suhair, 2018: 1-4)

The Zionist lobby in the United States employed two basic strategies: exerting pressure on the congress and the executive branch to support Israel, persuading others to support Israel's side, and pushing public discourse to portray Israel in a positive manner by spreading lies about it as a target by neighbors who threaten its existence.

In specific, the Zionist lobby employs two distinct tactics. First, gaining influence in Congress, where the Zionist lobby's weight is centralized in the American Israeli Public Relations Committee "AIPAC," which comprises approximately 4,500 senior Jewish representatives in American society. Second, the presidential election campaign control. The strength of Jewish voters' influence in presidential races gives them leverage over the executive branch. Despite their small number (only about 3% of the population), they fund roughly 60% of the electoral campaign costs for both candidates. The media's dominance and the involvement of studies and research institutions, also play a major role in shaping public opinion and imposing pressure on the US administration. (Sharbini, Suhair, 2018: 1-4) ^[8] The Israeli lobby's impact has grown significantly as a consequence of a variety of circumstances and factors. First, the position of the organizations and the people who make up this lobby. Second, the officially implemented US policy. (Mearsheimer, J. & Walt, S, 2006: 1-12) ^[10] In a nutshell, wealth, the ability to manipulate decision-making centers (the presidency and the Congress), and the ability to manipulate public opinion (the media and research centers) are the sources of power that the Israeli lobby possesses in the United States.

Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) ^[10] findings

One of the most controversial studies in recent years is "The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy 2006," written by John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen Walt M. of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. This article, which was first published in the London Review of Books in March 2006, sparked a wave of outrage and appreciation for raising a historically taboo topic in the United States: the impact of the Israeli lobby on American foreign policy. Both the University of Chicago and Harvard University disclaimed responsibility for the study's content and findings, stressing that it does not reflect anything besides the authors' point of view, and according to several researchers, the study authors received a flood of harsh criticism. (Mearsheimer, J. & Walt, S, 2006: 1-12) ^[10] The Middle East was selected as the most important area for the study because of the massive impact of US foreign policy and the current state of instability in the region. The study's key hypothesis is that "the primary objective of US foreign policy should be its national interest first and foremost," but "the priority of US policy in the Middle East over the past several decades has been its alliance with Israel, especially after the 1967 Six-Days War." (Mearsheimer, J. & Walt, S, 2006: 1-12) ^[10] Mearsheimer and Walt (2006: 1-12) ^[10] add that "Such situation is unprecedented in American political history," and that "shared strategic interests or compelling moral imperatives do not justify the extraordinary amount of financial and diplomatic support offered by the US to Israel". Furthermore, Mearsheimer and Walt also attributed the US domestic policy and the role of the Israeli lobby's efforts in persuading Americans that America's and Israel's interests are essentially the same. However, they point out that the strategic importance of Israel should not be exaggerated. For example, they assert that during the Cold War and when the Islamic revolution in Iran arose, Israel was unable to protect American interests there, as widely believed. Therefore, the US had to establish its alliances and form a quick intervention force to protect its interests in the region. The study also demonstrates that the shared terrorist threat toward Israel and the United States has an inverse causal link rather than the other way around; the United States is experiencing a terrorist crisis in part due to its strong links with Israel. For several factors, the researchers also reported that Israel cannot be an entirely trustworthy partner. Most notably, Israeli officials' persistent ignorance of US demands and violations of promises made to senior American leaders (such as vows not to create settlements or massacre Palestinians), as well as hacking and leaking sensitive technical knowledge to potential competitors such as China. (Mearsheimer, J. & Walt, S, 2006: 1-12) ^[10] According to the report, the Zionist lobby is no different from other lobbies in the United States, except that it is the most powerful and has unparalleled influence. The study also reveals that the lobby's position is enhanced as a result of two dimensions: the connections and capacities that these lobbies have, which Arab and non-Arab groups lack, and the Zionist lobby's political and economic capabilities, which it employs in both official and unofficial operations, as well as its perpetual reliance on the Jewish voice and resources, provide it with this foothold. The study also reports that fanatical Christians such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson are said to be among the lobby's founders. According to the report, special interest groups attempted to

manipulate foreign policy. But none of them got to the point where they were willing to replace US national interests with other state interests, just like what the Zionist lobby does. As a result, as long as the Zionist lobby's impact on foreign policy regarding the Palestinian issue persists, the US will be unable to perform an honest role that leads to a just and permanent solution.

Finally, Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) ^[10] argued that there are many reasons for US leaders to separate themselves from the lobby and pursue a Middle East strategy that is more aligned with broader American interests. The use of American influence to create a just peace between Israel and the Palestinians, in particular, will contribute to the larger objectives of fighting terrorism and fostering stability in the Middle East. (Mearsheimer, J. & Walt, S, 2006: 39- 40) ^[10]

The Middle East as a Project

The findings of both researchers are abstract facts based on the assumption that the United States should be a leader and a fair state, but the reality is slightly different. The United States has a different perspective on the Middle East, and the role it plays in the region and internationally is consistent with the role it has played in the region by supporting Israel and does not contradict its overall strategy. Historically, the United States' hegemony in the Middle East and North Africa has been illustrated by its ability to transform or create major regional crises, shaping regional states' actions, and reconfiguring the domestic balance of power between local Governments communities when required. (Yom, S, 2020: 1-5) The Middle Eastern countries have a colonial legacy that binds them to the Western world. The majority of the countries in this area emerged as a result of treaties signed by western countries after World War I ended and the Ottoman Empire collapsed. Some of these countries were part of the United Kingdom, while others were part of the French Republic. They were split into two categories: provisions and mandates. The situation remained unchanged until 1945, when the role of these powers started to upswing and the United States emerged as the region's dominant and controlling power. Edward Said argues that the European position of supremacy over the region and its people contributed further to the unequal relationship with Europe, which he called "Orientalism". (Said, E, 2006: 25-31) ^[4] The Middle East was a British-French cultural project until the end of World War II, and the rise of the United States' role in controlling the region is not different from Western civilization's tries to expand since ancient times. (Said, E, 2006: 25-31) ^[4] Edward Said viewed Orientalism as an authoritative use of knowledge of the East, to domesticating it in preparation for colonization and control it. (Said, E, 2006: 25-31) ^[4] The United States' supremacy continues to be unchallenged. The US demonstrates unwavering support for Israel to allow Israel to strike a balance against the Arabs and regional forces, and it becomes clear that there will be no reconciliation or mediation between Israel and the Palestinians. It could be claimed that the US' Middle East foreign policy seeks to retain US control over the global economy. However, the United States' Middle East foreign policy strategies have damaged the country's reputation and status as a powerful global force. (Rathnayake, R.M, 2016: 261)

As a result, the US role in the region is to sustain the supply of raw materials from the region to the rest of the world, and the US will go to any length to guarantee that this continues.

Perhaps the researchers' (Mearsheimer and Walt) point of view on the goal's peace and stability was on Israel's side. While this appears to be the case, fact suggests otherwise.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to discuss the influence of the Israeli lobby in the United States and to go over the results of the Mearsheimer and Walt report from 2006^[10]. The two researchers (Mearsheimer and Walt 2006)^[10] looked at the United States' strategic interests and how they intersected with long-term Israeli interests at a level that does not endanger the United States' interests and ensures its legitimacy as a global superpower. The researchers assumed an idealized picture of the United States of America (or what it should be as a world leader and pioneer), but the facts say otherwise. The United States' efforts in the Middle East since taking over as the world's leading force in 1948, following the end of WWII, have been to maintain influence and expand its power in the area for its gain. Israel benefited from the United States' policy in the region, which was reinforced by the active Israeli lobby.

Despite the fact that both researchers are intellectual members of the realist class, they attempted to correct the direction of US policy, which is in total conflict with the realist school. However, the US policies essentially do not care about the form of ruling regimes (whether democratic or not) in their collaboration with them, but rather focuses on interest, which is the main engine of international relations. This study also concludes that there will be no prospects for a resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or future regional stabilization if the US policy remains unchanged and the lobby preservation in its impact on foreign policy, and Zionist lobbies preserve their impact on the U.S foreign policy.

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