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MASTER THESIS

Diverging Perspectives on the Power of the Israel Lobby on American Foreign Policy

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Abstract

This thesis explores the historical development and strategic trajectory of the relationship between the United States of America and the State of Israel, with particular attention to the political, ideological, and global dimensions that shaped it. The research seeks to uncover how a combination of religious affinity, ideological alignment, and geopolitical calculations contributed to the emergence of a durable and controversial alliance between the two of them. By analyzing the roots of Zionism, the rise of American Zionism, and the evolution of U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East, the study aims to investigate the mechanisms through which the U.S. has supported Israel, both materially and diplomatically. Through a qualitative and historical approach, the thesis draws on a wide range of scholarly literature, political theories, and human rights reports to understand the multiple layers of this alliance. The findings reveal that while the U.S.–Israel relationship is often justified through strategic necessity and shared democratic values, it is also heavily influenced by lobbying dynamics, ideological commitments, and internal political narratives. This thesis also assesses how the global community, especially in Europe, the Middle East, and the Global South, has responded to this alignment. In doing so, it offers insight into the broader implications of the U.S.–Israel partnership for global diplomacy, democratic accountability, and the perception of American foreign policy in a rapidly changing world.

Keywords: U.S.–Israel relationship, Zionism, American foreign policy, ideological alignment, lobbying influence, Middle East politics

الملخص

تسعى هذه المذكرة إلى تحليل تطور العلاقة المعقدة بين الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية والكيان الصهيوني، من خلال استكشاف الأبعاد التاريخية والسياسية والأيديولوجية والدينية التي أسهمت في ترسيخ هذا التحالف. تطلق الدراسة من فرضية مفادها أن هذه العلاقة لم تنشأ فقط بدافع المصالح الاستراتيجية، وإنما تشكلت أيضاً بفعل تلاقي رواد أيديولوجية ودينية داخل المجتمع الأمريكي، لا سيما من خلال تأثير الصهيونية الأمريكية، سواء اليهودية منها أو المسيحية الإنجيلية. ومن خلال دراسة معمقة لجذور الحركة الصهيونية، وتتبع مسار الدعم الأمريكي المتزايد للكيان الصهيوني، تسعى المذكرة إلى فهم آليات التأثير التي تمارسها جماعات الضغط الصهيونية على صناعة القرار في واشنطن، مع التركيز على الدور المحوري الذي تلعبه منظمات مثل "إيباك" وغيرها. وتعتمد الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً وتحليلياً تارياً يعتمد على مصادر أكاديمية ووثائق سياسية وتقارير حقوقية، لفهم التداخل بين المصالح والمعتقدات في تشكيل السياسات الأمريكية تجاه المنطقة. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن التحالف الأمريكي الصهيوني يتجاوز منطق المصالح البختة، ليُعبر عن بنية أعمق من الاصطفاف الأيديولوجي والتحالف السياسي الداخلي، ما ينعكس على صورة الولايات المتحدة في العالم، ويشير تساولات حول مصداقيتها في الدفاع عن الديمقراطية وحقوق الإنسان. كما تستعرض المذكرة مواقف القوى الدولية من هذا التحالف، لا سيما في أوروبا، والمنطقة العربية، والجنوب العالمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكيان الصهيوني، السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية، الصهيونية الأمريكية، جماعات الضغط، التحالف الأيديولوجي، الشرق الأوسط

Abbreviations

AIPAC: American Israel Public Affairs Committee

ANC: African National Congress

BDS: Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions

CUFI: Christians United for Israel

HRW: Human Rights Watch

ICC: International Criminal Court

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

WZO: World Zionist Organization

UN: United Nations

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

PAC: Political Action Committee

PCHR: Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

IDF: Israel Defense Forces

FDD: Foundation for Defense of Democracies

CAMERA: Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America

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Dedication

To my amazing family

Dad, Mom, my brother, and my sister. I wanted to thank you for being my energy boost and my reason to go forward. Your love, support, and belief in me have meant everything. This journey wouldn't have been possible without you.

To *The Legends*

My lifelong crew and my source of relief. You've been with me through it all, and your friendship has been one of the greatest gifts in my life. Thank you for always being there.

To the friends who joined me on this journey

You made the tough days easier and the good days even better. I'm grateful for every moment we shared.

And to the teachers who helped me during this comeback

Thank you for your patience, encouragement, and for reminding me that it's never too late. Your support made a difference.

With love,

This is for all of you.

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General Introduction

In the study of international relations, alliances between countries are often explained by shared interests, security concerns, or economic cooperation. However, alliances are not always formed for practical reasons alone. They can also be shaped by deeper elements like ideology, historical memory, religious beliefs, and political culture. One of the most debated and long-lasting alliances in modern global politics is the relationship between the United States and the Zionist entity commonly known as Israel. This alliance has often been described as "special" or "unbreakable," but such terms hide the complexities, contradictions, and consequences of the partnership. This thesis aims to look beyond the surface of this relationship and explore the historical, political, and ideological forces that made it what it is today.

At first glance, the U.S.–Israel alliance seems like a standard case of strategic cooperation. The United States, as a global superpower, supports Israel as a loyal partner in a volatile region. In return, Israel provides intelligence, military collaboration, and political alignment with Western values. This is the official narrative, often repeated by American and Israeli leaders. But behind this carefully constructed image lies a reality shaped by settler colonialism, political lobbying, religious ideology, and international power struggles. Understanding this reality requires a closer look at the political motivations, structural interests, and ideological commitments that drive American support for a state widely accused of violating international law. This alliance is not simply about shared values or regional strategy, it is also about who gains from this arrangement, whether politically, economically, or ideologically. It is equally important to assess the flow of influence: whether the United States acts as the dominant power in the relationship or whether it increasingly operates within limits set by the political demands and lobbying strength of the Zionist

entity and its supporters. To discuss this further, this study begins with the history of Zionism and its spread into American political and religious culture. Zionism started as a nationalist movement in Europe in the late 19th century, aiming to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. After World War II, and particularly after the so-called Holocaust which has been heavily politicized, Western governments began to support the Zionist project. In 1948, with the forced expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, the Zionist entity was declared. The United States quickly recognized it, not only for strategic reasons but also due to domestic political calculations and religious narratives that portrayed the Zionist state as fulfilling biblical prophecy.

American Zionism played a major role in this process. It was not limited to Jewish communities, but also embraced by many Christian evangelicals who believed that the return of Jews to the Holy Land was a step toward the second coming of Christ. These religious beliefs merged with Cold War politics, where Israel was seen as a reliable ally against Soviet-backed Arab nationalism. Over time, Israel became more than just a partner—it became a symbol of Western civilization, democracy, and moral strength in the eyes of many Americans. But this image ignored the realities on the ground: the occupation of Palestinian land, the apartheid policies imposed on Palestinians, and the repeated acts of military aggression. This alliance has been maintained and deepened over the decades through a combination of lobbying power, cultural influence, and political pressure. Organizations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) have built a powerful network that influences Congress, controls media narratives, and silences dissent. Pro-Israel lobbyists have successfully tied American political success to loyalty toward Israel. Presidents, senators, and candidates know that criticizing Israeli actions comes with political risks. As a result, U.S. foreign policy has become increasingly aligned with the interests of the Zionist entity, even when this goes against American strategic or moral interests.

Critically speaking, this alignment raises troubling questions about the health of American democracy. When foreign policy decisions appear to reflect the interests of a small but influential lobby rather than the broader public good, the principle of sovereign decision-making is undermined. Furthermore, the willingness of U.S. politicians to sacrifice consistency in international law and human rights, merely to maintain support from powerful domestic interest groups, demonstrates how the lines between foreign allegiance and national interest can become dangerously blurred.

The chapters of this thesis examine these issues in detail. Chapter One explores the historical background of the U.S.–Israel relationship, focusing on the rise of Zionism, the influence of American Zionism, and the way the alliance was shaped during the Cold War. It shows that from the beginning, the relationship was about more than security, it was also about ideology and domestic politics. Chapter Two looks closely at the debate over power: who really controls whom? By analyzing key political events, foreign policy decisions, and case studies such as arms sales, peace negotiations, and votes at the United Nations, this chapter also shows how the Israel lobby has often been able to dictate the terms of U.S. policy. However, it also highlights moments where U.S. interests came first, suggesting that the relationship is not one-sided but based on mutual benefit, even if unequal. Chapter Three focuses on global perceptions. It analyzes how the alliance is viewed by international actors, especially in the Arab world, the Global South, and parts of Europe. This chapter shows that many global voices see the U.S. not as a neutral actor but as complicit in the occupation and violence committed by the Zionist entity.

By bringing together these three areas which are the historical roots, power dynamics, and global perceptions this thesis offers a critical view of one of the most controversial alliances in

modern history. It argues that the U.S.–Israel relationship is not simply a case of a strong country supporting a smaller ally. Instead, it is a complex structure held together by ideology, political manipulation, and a shared interest in maintaining a certain world order. While the U.S. provides military aid and diplomatic cover, the Zionist entity gives the U.S. a strategic foothold in the Middle East, along with domestic political loyalty from key constituencies.

At the center of this study is the role of the Israel lobby. The question is not whether this lobby exists because this is well documented, but how much influence it has over U.S. policy. The thesis shows that the lobby has significant power, especially in Congress and during election cycles. It shapes the public narrative through media, silences critics through accusations of anti-Semitism, and punishes those who question unconditional support for Israel. Yet, it is also important to recognize that the lobby does not act alone. It works within a political and cultural system that is already sympathetic to Zionism and shaped by decades of ideological alignment. This research also pays close attention to the international consequences of the alliance. For many countries, especially in the Arab and Muslim world, U.S. support for Israel is seen as proof of Western hypocrisy. While the U.S. speaks of human rights, democracy, and peace, it arms and protects a state accused of war crimes and ethnic cleansing. This contradiction does not help America’s image abroad and undermines its role as a global leader. It also fuels resentment, radicalization, and resistance.

In writing this thesis, I also acknowledge the weight of the subject. This is not just a political issue, it is a human one. The U.S.–Israel alliance affects millions of lives, especially Palestinians living under occupation or in exile. It shapes the future of an entire region and influences how justice, sovereignty, and freedom are understood around the world. For that reason,

this study tries to speak honestly, critically, and ethically. It avoids the dehumanizing language of diplomacy and instead focuses on the real-world consequences of policy decisions.

Research Problem

Over the years, the strong relationship between the United States and Israel has raised questions about who has more control in this partnership. The U.S. gives Israel large amounts of all types of support, but many people believe that powerful pro-Israel groups inside the U.S. play a big role in shaping that support. Although many studies have looked at this alliance, there is still a major gap: we don't fully understand whether the U.S. supports Israel because of its own interests or because of pressure from the Israel lobby. This study focuses on that gap. The problem this thesis explores is whether the U.S. is in control of its foreign policy toward Israel, or if it is being influenced by pro-Israel lobbying groups.

Research Questions

The present dissertation thus investigates the following research questions:

1. What role did American Zionism, including both Jewish and Christian support, play in shaping U.S. foreign policy toward Israel?
2. How much influence does the Israel lobby, especially AIPAC, have on American political decisions related to Israel?
3. Does the United States control its foreign policy toward Israel based on its own interests, or is it influenced by lobbying and political pressure?

Research Objectives

On the basis of the research problem and questions stated above, the dissertation aims to:

1. To explore the historical foundations of Zionism and its impact on American political and religious thought.

2. To examine the influence of American Zionist movements, including both Jewish and Christian support, on U.S. foreign policy toward Israel.
3. To analyze whether the United States controls the U.S.–Israel relationship based on its own strategic interests or if it is shaped by external lobbying pressures.
4. To evaluate international perspectives on the U.S.–Israel alliance, with emphasis on responses from the Middle East, Europe, and the Global South.

Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach, applying the historical method and document analysis to explore the United States and Israel relationship. It traces the development of Zionism and American Zionism using primary and secondary sources such as congressional records, policy speeches, academic works, and reports from think tanks and lobbying groups like AIPAC. Case studies such as U.S. military aid to Israel and the recognition of Jerusalem as its capital illustrate key dynamics. The study critically examines differing views, from strategic interests to lobbying influence, offering insight into the political and ideological forces shaping the alliance.

Rationale and Significance

The U.S.–Israel relationship is a cornerstone of American foreign policy in the Middle East, with wide-reaching implications for international relations, regional stability, and domestic politics. Understanding the historical development and ideological foundations of this alliance is essential for analyzing current U.S. foreign policy decisions. This research highlights how the relationship is shaped not only by strategic interests but also by political ideas, domestic pressures, and lobbying influence. By examining key moments and contrasting viewpoints, the study offers insight into the evolving nature of U.S. support for Israel and its broader impact on global diplomacy and security.

Literature Review

The U.S.–Israel relationship has received wide attention from scholars, particularly in relation to the influence of pro-Israel lobbying groups on American foreign policy. While some researchers argue that this alliance is shaped by shared democratic values and strategic cooperation, others claim that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Christian Zionist organizations, and related networks play a central role in pushing policies that may not always align with broader U.S. interests. This literature review outlines the most important academic views on this issue and discusses the major debates within the field.

To understand the roots of this relationship, many scholars begin with the history of Zionism. Howard M. Sachar provides a detailed explanation of the origins of the Zionist movement in his book *A History of Israel*. He explains that European Jews, facing anti-Semitism and violence, began advocating for a homeland where they could be safe and self-governed. Figures like Theodor Herzl helped transform this idea into a political campaign, which gained momentum after the Holocaust. Sachar highlights how early American support for Zionism came both from humanitarian concerns and Cold War strategic thinking. President Truman’s recognition of Israel in 1948, despite opposition from the U.S. State Department, is often cited as an example of this early moral commitment.

Melvin Urofsky’s *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* focuses more specifically on the American context. He discusses how Jewish leaders in the United States, such as Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, supported the Zionist cause. Brandeis argued that Zionism and American democratic values were not in conflict, but rather closely aligned.

Arthur Hertzberg's *The Zionist Idea* provides a broader ideological perspective. He divides Zionism into various types, including political, religious, cultural, and socialist forms. These different strands influenced both Jewish identity and political advocacy in the United States. According to Hertzberg, each branch of Zionism contributed something unique to the cause, whether it was religious belief, national pride, cultural revival, or social justice. Understanding these ideologies helps explain how Zionism gained such strong emotional and political support among different communities in the U.S.

A major debate in the literature centers around the question of whether American support for Israel is driven more by strategic interests or by the influence of organized lobbying. Noam Chomsky is one of the most prominent voices arguing that U.S. foreign policy is shaped by national goals rather than external pressure. In *The Fateful Triangle*, Chomsky argues that the U.S. sees Israel as a reliable ally in a region full of instability. He explains that the military alliance helps secure American interests in the Middle East, including access to oil and protection against hostile regimes. Chomsky also points out that American media tends to portray Israel positively and often downplays Palestinian suffering, which contributes to public support for pro-Israel policies.

In contrast, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt present a different explanation in their book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. They argue that groups like AIPAC and other pro-Israel organizations have a powerful influence on American politics. These groups use campaign funding, lobbying, and media engagement to secure ongoing support for Israel, even when such support may not serve American interests. The authors offer several examples of how Congress has passed legislation favoring Israel or resisted presidential efforts to pressure the Israeli government. They also show how critics of Israeli policy are often accused of anti-Semitism or

disloyalty, making open debate more difficult. Their book is controversial, but it remains an important source for understanding the lobby's political reach.

Christian Zionism is another important part of the Israel lobby. Scholars like Jonathan Van Zile and Arthur Hertzberg discuss how American evangelical Christians support Israel for religious reasons. They believe that the return of Jews to the Holy Land is part of biblical prophecy. Groups such as Christians United for Israel, led by Pastor John Hagee, have grown into powerful political movements. They organize rallies, influence lawmakers, and encourage their followers to support candidates who back Israel. Their support is not based on ethnic or historical ties but on faith. This has expanded the Israel lobby by adding a large, politically active Christian base to its existing Jewish support.

Think tanks and media organizations also play a major role. According to Mearsheimer and Walt, institutions such as the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies publish research that favors Israeli interests. These think tanks often provide expert opinions to members of Congress and help shape the language of policy discussions. Media watchdog groups like CAMERA monitor news coverage of Israel and quickly challenge anything they see as biased. Alfred Lilienthal also writes about how media narratives tend to highlight Israeli security concerns while minimizing Palestinian perspectives. Salim Kerboua examines how neoconservative thinkers connect support for Israel with broader goals of spreading Western values and fighting terrorism. These intellectual and media networks help create a political environment where support for Israel becomes the default position.

Global voices have added more criticism to this debate. Rashid Khalidi's book *Brokers of Deceit* presents the view that the U.S.–Israel alliance is part of a larger imperial strategy. He argues

that American leaders present themselves as neutral peace brokers, but in reality, they support Israeli policies that deepen the conflict. In Europe, intellectuals like Perry Anderson and Ilan Pappé have taken strong positions against Zionism and its effects. Anderson describes Israel as a settler-colonial state backed by Western powers, while Pappé uses historical evidence to show how Palestinians were forced from their land during Israel's creation. Their arguments suggest that the U.S. is not only a supporter of Israel but also an enabler of injustice.

Peter Beinart, a Jewish American writer, offers a more personal and internal critique. In *The Crisis of Zionism*, he describes how many younger Jews in the United States are becoming uncomfortable with Israeli policies, especially the occupation of Palestinian territories. Beinart argues that supporting Israel unconditionally goes against liberal Jewish values like equality and justice. He calls for a more honest conversation within the Jewish community about the moral consequences of Zionism and the direction of Israeli politics. His work reflects a growing divide among American Jews and signals a possible shift in public opinion.

Human rights organizations have added a legal dimension to these criticisms. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have both released reports accusing Israel of practicing apartheid against Palestinians. These reports argue that Israeli laws and practices are designed to maintain Jewish dominance and that they result in systematic discrimination. Both organizations point out that U.S. aid and political support help make these policies possible. Local groups like Al-Haq and B'Tselem have also produced evidence of human rights violations and submitted materials to the International Criminal Court. These efforts are reshaping the global conversation and increasing pressure on the United States to reconsider its role.

Public opinion is also beginning to change. Research from the Pew Research Center shows that younger Americans, including many young Jews, are more critical of Israeli policy and more supportive of Palestinian rights. Many of them believe that U.S. aid to Israel should be conditional on respect for human rights. While older generations and political leaders still tend to support Israel strongly, this generational shift may influence future policy debates.

The existing literature shows that the U.S.–Israel relationship is shaped by a wide range of factors, including historical ties, shared values, religious beliefs, strategic interests, and political lobbying. Some scholars, like Chomsky, argue that the alliance is mostly strategic. Others, like Mearsheimer and Walt, believe that organized lobbying plays the most important role. There are also cultural and ideological influences from Christian groups, media institutions, and think tanks. At the same time, human rights advocates, international scholars, and even members of the Jewish community are challenging the moral and legal foundations of the alliance. This growing diversity of voices shows that the debate is far from settled.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter discusses the historical foundations of Zionism and the development of the United States–Israel relationship. It provides an overview of the ideological roots of Zionism, the emergence of American Zionism in both Jewish and Christian communities, and the early political and religious motivations behind American support for Israel.

The second chapter examines the debate over power and influence within the United States–Israel alliance. It argues that although American strategic interests are significant, the influence of the Israel lobby, particularly the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, has

played a major role in shaping United States foreign policy. This chapter analyzes key events and decisions to evaluate who holds more sway in the relationship.

The third and final chapter analyzes international responses to the United States–Israel alliance. It tackles how various regions and actors, including Europe, the Middle East, and the Global South, perceive and respond to the alliance. The chapter also explores the role of international human rights organizations in shaping the global narrative.

Finally, the general conclusion provides a summary of the main findings and reflects on the broader implications of the United States–Israel relationship for global diplomacy, foreign policy accountability, and regional stability in the Middle East.

Chapter one

The Historical Foundations of Zionism and the U.S.–Israel Relationship

Introduction

Zionism emerged in the late 19th century amid growing anti-Jewish discrimination and violence in Europe. While many Jewish thinkers saw the creation of a Jewish homeland as a necessary solution for safety, Zionism was not a single idea but a complex and often contested movement. This chapter traces how Zionism evolved from religious hopes into a modern political project, highlighting its diverse forms, including political, religious, cultural, revisionist, and socialist Zionisms. These different strands often had conflicting goals and methods, but all aimed at establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. The chapter critically examines key historical events that strengthened Zionism's appeal, such as the Balfour Declaration, the Holocaust, and the UN Partition Plan. While these events intensified Jewish migration and support for a Jewish state, they also deepened tensions and dispossession for the Palestinian population, a reality that the chapter addresses. Additionally, the development of American Zionism is analyzed, showing how Jewish and Christian groups influenced U.S. political support for Zionism. Figures like Louis Brandeis and organizations such as the Zionist Organization of America played important roles, but so did Christian Zionists whose religious motivations helped shape American public opinion and policy. By exploring these factors, the chapter reveals how early Zionist movements and American support laid the groundwork for the close and often controversial relationship between the United States and Israel.

1.1 American Zionism: Origins, Ideology, and Development

Zionism is a movement that began in the late 19th century. Its goal was to create a homeland for Jewish people. This idea came from the need for safety and self-rule. Jews faced growing anti-Semitism in Europe. They believed having their own state would protect them.

The roots of Zionism go back to older Jewish traditions. For centuries, Jews dreamed of returning to their claimed ancestral land, Israel. But modern Zionism started in the 1800s. It was a direct response to the violence and discrimination Jews faced in Europe. In Eastern Europe, ethnic cleansing violent attacks on Jewish communities were common. In Western Europe, the Dreyfus Affair in France showed that even in more modern societies, anti-Semitism was strong. A Jewish army officer, Alfred Dreyfus, was falsely accused of treason. This event shocked many, including Theodor Herzl. (Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, Introduction, 15–40)

Theodor Herzl is often called the father of modern Zionism. He was an Austrian journalist. In 1896, he wrote a book called *The Jewish State*. In it, he argued that Jews needed their own country to be safe. Herzl organized the First Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland. At this meeting, Jewish leaders discussed how to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine. They also formed the World Zionist Organization (WZO). This group worked to promote Jewish migration and political efforts. (Sachar, *A History of Israel* 50–80).

Zionism developed in different forms, each with its own ideas and goals. The first type was political Zionism, led by Theodor Herzl. He believed that the best way to create a Jewish state was through diplomacy. He worked to gain support from powerful countries and international leaders, thinking that political agreements were the key to success.

Another type was religious Zionism, which was based on the belief that returning to the land of Israel was a religious duty. People who followed this idea saw the land as a gift from God and wanted a Jewish state that followed Jewish religious laws and traditions.

A third type was cultural Zionism, led by Ahad Ha'am. He believed that Zionism should focus on bringing back Jewish culture and language. Instead of just building a political state, he wanted Palestine to become a cultural center for all Jews. He believed education and the Hebrew language were very important for uniting the Jewish people.

Revisionist Zionism, led by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, had a more aggressive approach. He did not think diplomacy was enough and believed that Jews needed a strong army to protect themselves and to fight for their state. This type of Zionism supported the use of force when necessary. The last major form was socialist Zionism, supported by leaders like David Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weizmann. It mixed the idea of a Jewish homeland with socialist beliefs. Supporters wanted a society based on equality, where people worked together and shared resources. They created kibbutzim, which were collective farms where everything was shared equally.

By the early 1900s, Zionism had gained supporters across the world. Many Jews moved to Palestine, where they built settlements, schools, and farms. These efforts aimed to create a Jewish entity, but they did not happen on empty land. The indigenous Palestinian Arab population saw these growing Jewish communities as a serious threat to their land, homes, and basic rights. The movement to establish a Jewish entity in Palestine was not a peaceful process of coexistence but a source of rising conflict and tension.

After World War I, Britain took control of Palestine under a League of Nations mandate. Although Britain allowed some Jewish immigration, its policies tried to balance the competing claims of Jews and Arabs. The reality was that Britain's support for Zionism, especially through

the 1917 Balfour Declaration, laid the foundation for deep divisions and violence. This declaration promised support for a "national home for the Jewish people," but completely ignored the rights of the Palestinian Arabs who already lived there. Britain's mandate period saw increased Jewish immigration, which intensified Palestinian fears and resistance, leading to violent clashes and deepening mistrust. (Zweig, *Balfour Declaration*, 90–140)

It is important to critically examine the factors that enabled the expansion of Zionism. The Balfour Declaration, while celebrated in Zionist histories as a diplomatic victory, must be understood as a colonial move by Britain that disregarded Palestinian rights. The Nazi genocide of Jews during World War II is often cited as a reason for establishing a Jewish entity in Palestine. Yet, it is crucial to recognize that this horrific genocide was the result of European anti-Semitism and Nazi policies, not caused by Palestinians or Arabs. Using the genocide to justify the dispossession of Palestinians reflects a deeply problematic narrative that overlooks Palestinian suffering and resistance.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Europe sought safety. Many wanted to immigrate to Palestine, but British restrictions, especially the 1939 White Paper, severely limited Jewish immigration. While Zionist groups like the Irgun and Lehi carried out violent attacks on British authorities, Palestinians resisted displacement from their homeland. The framing of Zionist groups as freedom fighters ignores the fact that their actions contributed to the forced removal and suffering of Palestinian communities (Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 10–60).

The global reaction to the treatment of Jewish survivors from Europe, including the 1947 Exodus incident where British forces blocked a ship full of refugees, led to increased international pressure on Britain. However, this international attention often ignored the rights of the Palestinian

people, whose land was being divided without their consent. The United Nations proposed partitioning Palestine into two entities, but this plan was rejected by Palestinians and Arab states because it was inherently unfair, it gave a significant portion of land to a Jewish minority while displacing the majority Arab population.

On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the Israeli entity. This event was not a moment of innocent independence but marked the beginning of a war of aggression by Zionist forces to seize more land. Neighboring Arab countries intervened to resist this expansion and support Palestinians being violently displaced. The result was the Nakba, or Catastrophe, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced from their homes, becoming refugees in their own land. This was not a victory but the start of a long-lasting injustice and conflict that continues today (Gilbert, *Palestine*, 100–180)

The recognition of Israel by major world powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union in 1949 entrenched an entity founded on the dispossession and oppression of Palestinians. Rather than bringing peace, this recognition helped legitimize ongoing occupation, settlement expansion, and systemic violations of Palestinian rights.

Zionism began as a response to European anti-Semitism, but it evolved into a colonial and nationalist project that achieved its goals at the direct expense of the indigenous Palestinian people. Different forms of Zionism like political, religious, cultural, revisionist, and socialist each played a role in this process. International support, particularly from the United States, remains crucial to sustaining the Israeli entity and its policies. The rise of American Zionism has deeply influenced U.S. foreign policy, often prioritizing Israeli interests over justice and peace for Palestinians.

1.2 American Zionism: Characteristics and Foundations

American Zionism has played an important role in supporting Israel. It started in the late 19th century and grew into a strong political and social movement. Many American Jews supported the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Over time, Christian Zionists and lobbying groups also became involved. This section explains the growth of American Zionism, its key figures, and its impact on U.S. foreign policy.

Zionism in America began in the late 1800s when Jewish immigrants from Europe brought Zionist ideas with them. These immigrants believed in creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine. They formed organizations to spread awareness and raise money for Zionist activities. One of the most important leaders of American Zionism was Louis Brandeis, a U.S. Supreme Court Justice. He believed that Zionism and American values were compatible. Brandeis argued that Zionism represented justice, democracy, and self-determination, which were core American principles. Under his leadership, American Zionism gained popularity and became more organized.

The Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) was founded in 1897 by Theodor Herzl's supporters in the U.S. It became the leading Zionist group in the country. The organization helped raise funds and promoted Zionism in political and social circles. ZOA also worked closely with Jewish communities across the country to build support for a Jewish homeland. The organization was instrumental in shaping early American support for Zionism and remains active in advocating for Israel today.

Though early American Zionism was primarily driven by grassroots activism and the Jewish diaspora, political support from the U.S. government was not initially strong. This began to change in the early 20th century, particularly around the time of World War I. A key turning

point came in 1917 with the Balfour Declaration, in which the British government expressed its support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. This declaration not only legitimized the Zionist movement globally but also encouraged American Zionists to seek formal support from their own government (Gilbert, *Israel: A History*, 115). The growing influence of Christian Zionism during this time also played an important role in fostering American political support. One of the earliest Christian Zionist advocates was William E. Blackstone, an evangelical preacher who saw the return of Jews to their ancestral homeland as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. In 1891, he authored the Blackstone Memorial, a petition urging U.S. policymakers, including President Benjamin Harrison, to support the creation of a Jewish homeland. The petition gained traction among business leaders and politicians and laid the groundwork for the future involvement of evangelical Christians in Zionist advocacy (Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, 35).

By the mid-20th century, particularly following the alleged catastrophic impact of the Holocaust, American political support for Zionism intensified, but this backing was not without controversy. President Harry S. Truman's rapid recognition of Israel just 11 minutes after its declaration in May 1948 marked a decisive moment, yet it also revealed deep tensions within U.S. policy circles. Despite strong opposition from the State Department and key advisors who feared regional instability and diplomatic fallout, Truman's decision was heavily influenced by pressure from American Jewish lobby groups and Christian Zionists, as well as his own personal sympathies toward Holocaust survivors. This episode illustrates how moral considerations, domestic political lobbying, and strategic calculations combined to shape U.S. foreign policy in ways that were both complex and contested.

The transformation of U.S. policy from one of neutrality to support for Zionism was also driven by strategic considerations. As the Cold War unfolded, Israel's potential as a democratically in the Middle East gained importance. U.S. officials recognized that supporting Israel could serve both humanitarian and geopolitical goals. This blending of moral obligation and strategic interest became an important feature of American foreign policy in the region (Shlaim, *The Iron Wall* 45).

The early efforts of American Zionism, led by Jewish figures such as Louis Brandeis and groups like the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), established a political framework for U.S. support of a Jewish homeland. However, this movement was not limited to Jewish advocacy. Alongside it, Christian Zionism grew as a parallel force, driven not by shared ethnicity but by religious beliefs. While Jewish leaders linked Zionism to American values like democracy, Christian supporters like William E. Blackstone viewed Jewish return to Palestine as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Though motivated by different ideals secular principles versus religious faith both groups worked toward the same goal. Their combined efforts expanded the base of support for Zionism in America, blending political action with spiritual conviction. Together, these Jewish and Christian movements created a powerful coalition that shaped U.S. policy, paving the way for formal recognition of Israel and influencing America's long-term commitment to the Jewish state.

Christian Zionism is a crucial and often under examined aspect of American Zionist support. Many American Christians, especially evangelicals, interpret biblical texts as foretelling the return of Jews to their ancestral homeland. As a result, they have become strong supporters of Jewish migration to Palestine and the establishment and preservation of the state of Israel.

One of the earliest and most influential supporters of Christian Zionism was William E. Blackstone, whose 1891 Blackstone Memorial was a revolutionary petition addressed to U.S. policymakers. Signed by many noticeable individuals, the document urged American leaders to

support the return of Jews to Palestine. Blackstone's campaign significantly shaped the intersection of religion and foreign policy in the U.S. and inspired future generations of Christian Zionist activism (Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, 38).

In the modern era, organizations such as Christians United for Israel (CUFI) have carried forward this legacy. Founded by Pastor John Hagee in 2006, CUFI has become the largest pro-Israel Christian organization in the United States. It actively lobbies Congress, organizes educational campaigns, and mobilizes support for military and economic aid to Israel. Christian Zionists often frame their support for Israel in religious terms, reinforcing their long-standing commitment to Zionist goals (CUFI).

Christian Zionism's focus on religious beliefs, such as biblical prophecies about Israel, created strong public support for the Jewish state. However, turning this support into real political power required organized action. Groups like AIPAC formed to bridge this gap, using strategies like lobbying and building relationships with lawmakers. While Christian Zionists emphasized faith-based reasons for backing Israel, AIPAC focused on practical steps, such as securing aid or influencing policies. Together, these efforts rooted in both religious passion and political planning ensured that support for Israel stayed central to U.S. decisions, blending ideology with action to shape America's role in the Middle East.

1.3 The Pro-Israel Lobby in US Politics

The political involvement of American Jews grew considerably in the 20th century, especially after the creation of Israel in 1948. This expansion was not only a reaction to historical trauma but also a deliberate strategy to influence American foreign policy in favor of Israel.

Recognizing the limits of informal influence, Jewish American leaders institutionalized their efforts with the establishment of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in

1951. Led by Isaiah L. Kenen, who transitioned from the American Zionist Council, AIPAC became a professional lobbying organization focused exclusively on promoting Israeli interests in Washington. Its methods combined political strategy with emotional appeal, often invoking historical persecution to gain sympathy. This enabled AIPAC to frame Israel as a democratically in need of American protection, a narrative that gained traction in Cold War America (Herzog, *American Zionism*, 125).

AIPAC's strategic success lies in its bipartisan outreach. By maintaining ties with both Republican and Democratic lawmakers, AIPAC has shielded U.S.-Israel relations from the impact of electoral changes. It presents Israel not as a narrow ethnic or religious cause but as a key American ally in combating terrorism and preserving regional order. This framing appeals to realists and moralists alike, allowing AIPAC to unify diverse political actors around Israeli support. The result has been substantial: consistent multi-billion-dollar aid packages, special military agreements, and favorable legislative outcomes. AIPAC's role in passing the U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014 exemplifies its ability to translate lobbying into concrete policy outcomes. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) supports this agenda by extending advocacy into civil society, defending Israel while also addressing antisemitism domestically (Feldman, *U.S.-Israel Relations*, 81).

However, this double task of defending Jewish interests at home and abroad has produced tension. While many Jewish Americans have engaged in civil rights and social justice causes, their advocacy for Israel sometimes contradicts the universal values they support domestically. Leaders like Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who marched with Martin Luther King Jr., exemplified this dual commitment. But critics argue that unconditional support for Israel, despite its controversial policies, reveals a contradiction between liberal ideals and political actions. The challenge lies in

reconciling the moral authority gained from domestic activism with the complexities of defending a state often criticized for human rights violations (Feldman, *U.S.-Israel Relations* 85).

Criticism of AIPAC has intensified, especially in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Detractors claim AIPAC enforces a one-sided narrative that marginalizes Palestinian voices and suppresses dissent in U.S. discourse. Scholars like Mearsheimer and Walt argue that AIPAC's dominance undermines democratic debate and limits America's role as a neutral mediator. At the same time, alternative Jewish voices have emerged, such as J Street, which advocates for a two-state solution and stresses the importance of Palestinian rights. This internal debate within the American Jewish community highlights a generational and ideological shift, complicating AIPAC's traditional monopoly on pro-Israel advocacy (Mearsheimer and Walt, *Israel Lobby*, 90–100).

The U.S.-Israel alliance, while often described as unbreakable, is shaped by both mutual interests and deep contradictions. Initially rooted in Cold War logic, the partnership framed Israel as a stable ally against Soviet-backed Arab regimes. This rationale expanded following the 1967 Six-Day War, when Israel's military dominance increased its perceived value to the United States. The alliance evolved to include counterterrorism cooperation, intelligence sharing, and collaboration in technological fields such as cyber defense and medical research. U.S. leaders frequently justify this aid as necessary for maintaining regional stability and defending democratic values in a volatile region (Feldman, *U.S.-Israel Relations* 81).

Yet beneath the rhetoric of shared values lie divergent strategic priorities. While both nations oppose Iranian influence and Islamist extremism, the U.S. operates from a global strategic viewpoint, seeking to maintain relations with Arab partners. In contrast, Israel often adopts a more aggressive posture shaped by its immediate security concerns. These conflicting priorities have

created friction, particularly when U.S. diplomacy calls for restraint while Israeli leaders pursue military responses. The difference in scale and scope between the two nations produces a dynamic where coordination is possible but not always seamless (Mearsheimer and Walt, *Israel Lobby* 91).

The domestic foundations of this alliance are complex and multifaceted. In the U.S., support for Israel draws from various constituencies Jewish organizations, evangelical Christians, defense contractors, and strategic realists. Each group offers distinct motivations, from religious beliefs to geopolitical calculations. Evangelical groups like Christians United for Israel (CUFI), for instance, view support for Israel as a biblical duty, shaping conservative policy agendas and electoral behavior. This alliance between religious ideology and foreign policy reinforces the moral framing of U.S. aid to Israel as both a spiritual and strategic obligation (Mearsheimer and Walt, *Israel Lobby* 92).

On the Israeli side, leaders manipulate U.S. support to serve domestic political goals. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's 2015 speech to Congress, which challenged the Obama administration's Iran policy, was not merely diplomatic, it was a calculated political act that boosted his domestic standing. By leveraging partisan divides in U.S. politics, Israeli leaders not only influence American policy but also solidify their own domestic legitimacy. This dynamic illustrates how the alliance is not just about shared values but also about mutual political utility. Israeli leaders often portray U.S. demands for moderation as challenges to national sovereignty, mobilizing public opinion around the idea of resisting foreign pressure (Shlaim, *Israel and America*, 45).

Generational shifts are introducing new complexities. In the U.S., growing numbers of younger Americans are skeptical of unconditional support for Israel, particularly in light of human rights concerns. A 2022 Pew Research study found that nearly half of U.S. adults under 30 favor

conditioning aid to Israel on human rights compliance. This shift signals a potential erosion of the bipartisan consensus that AIPAC has long depended upon. In Israel, meanwhile, nationalist trends are gaining momentum, often in direct contrast to American calls for diplomacy and restraint. These developments reflect a widening gap in values and priorities, even as institutional ties remain strong (Pew Research Center, Public Opinion 2022).

The durability of the U.S.-Israel relationship is sustained by more than military aid and diplomatic favors. It is also upheld by symbolic narratives and ideological constructs. In the U.S., Israel is often portrayed as a “little democracy” standing firm against terrorism, a narrative that simplifies a complex regional reality. In Israel, the U.S. is seen both as a lifeline and a potential liability, essential for survival, yet capable of turning critical at key moments. These perceptions shape public opinion and influence policy decisions on both sides, making the alliance as much a product of imagination as of material interest (Feldman, *U.S.-Israel Relations* 81).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the origins of Zionism reveal a movement shaped by diverse ideas and important historical events. While it started as a response to persecution, it quickly became a political effort with many different goals and serious consequences, including conflict over land. Key moments such as the Balfour Declaration, the Holocaust, and the UN Partition Plan accelerated Zionism’s progress but also caused deep divisions. The role of American support, driven by both Jewish and Christian groups, was crucial in strengthening the movement and laying the groundwork for a strong U.S.-Israel connection. This chapter sets the stage for the next one, which will examine the ongoing debate about the real power and influence behind this relationship, focusing on how different groups shape U.S. policy toward Israel.

Chapter Two

The Debate over the Power and Influence in the U.S.-Israel Relationship

Introduction

The Israeli-American relationship is one of the most important in international politics. There is an ongoing controversy, however, as to who is more influential in this alliance. Some argue that the United States controls Israel through the giving of aid, military arms, and diplomatic assistance. Others argue that aggressive lobbying by Israel pro-groups like AIPAC influences U.S. policy in Israel's interest. This chapter considers both arguments of the debate. The chapter outlines how American economic and military aid gives Washington leverage over Israeli policy. It also illustrates how Christian Zionists, political action committees, and lobbies generate pressure to guarantee ongoing American assistance to Israel. The chapter considers real case studies such as peace talks, weapon sales, and United Nations resolutions to demonstrate how power travels in both directions between the two nations. It also sets forth the manner in which domestic politics, media coverage, and public opinion in both countries affect their behavior. By analyzing these elements, the chapter demonstrates that the U.S.-Israel relationship is not black and white. It is a mix of shared interests, political pressure, and interdependence that is in a state of fluidity over time.

2.1. Do U.S. Strategic Interest Drive the Special Relationship?

The relationship between the United States and Israel stands at the heart of Middle East politics. Many see Israel as a key U.S. ally. Others view it as a junior partner that follows the American lead. This section lays out the argument that Washington, not Jerusalem, calls the shots.

It shows how U.S. goals shape Israeli policy across multiple domains and highlights the tools Washington uses to guide Israeli actions. (Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, p. 47)

Since the Western backed founding of Israel in 1948, the U.S. has provided consistent support. This aid began as political backing at the United Nations and evolved into a vast program of military, economic, and diplomatic assistance. Today, American aid to Israel exceeds three billion dollars annually. This aid gives Washington great leverage. Israel depends on U.S. weapons, training, and diplomatic cover at global forums. These ties mean Israel must consider U.S. reactions before taking major steps (Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, p. 48).

Military aid ranks as the most visible expression of U.S. influence. The United States supplies Israel with advanced fighter jets, helicopters, naval vessels, and missile defense systems. It also co-funds research on cutting-edge technology such as the Arrow anti-missile program. Joint test sites in the Negev Desert serve as proving grounds for missile-defense capabilities. Many senior Israeli officers train at U.S. war colleges and adopt American tactical models. The result is a shared military outlook in which Israel operates as an extension of U.S. power (Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, p. 48–49).

One striking case is the proposed sale of Harpy drones to China in 2005. These unmanned aircraft use sensors to attack naval targets. Israel negotiated a deal to export dozens of drones to Beijing. At the last moment, U.S. officials declared the sale a threat to American naval freedom of movement. Under direct pressure, Israel canceled the contract. The decision cost Israel hundreds of millions in lost revenue but did not provoke public outcry in Jerusalem. This episode illustrates how American strategic concerns can halt Israeli arms exports, despite economic reasons

A similar dynamic surfaced in 2000 with the Phalcon airborne radar deal. This radar tracks low-observable aircraft at great distances. The United States viewed the transfer as a blow to its

own stealth programs. Under diplomatic urging from President Clinton, Prime Minister Ehud Barak withdrew approval for the sale. The contract, already paid in full by China, was scrapped without compensation. Israel's prompt compliance confirms that it cannot carry out major transactions that conflict with U.S. policy objectives.

Financial leverage also serves as a tool of control. Washington guarantees Israeli loans on global markets, lowering Israel's borrowing costs and freeing up resources for various projects. However, the U.S. can withdraw these guarantees as punishment. During the siege of Ramallah in October 2000, Israeli forces surrounded Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's compound. The Clinton administration warned it would suspend loan guarantees if Israel did not withdraw. Within days, Israeli troops pulled back to avoid economic strain. Financial pressure then shaped a military decision (Chomsky, *Anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Palestinians*, p. 6).

Beyond finance and arms, the United States shapes policy through high-level diplomacy. American presidents frequently meet with Israeli leaders in summit talks. These meetings send clear signals about acceptable boundaries. At the Camp David summit in July 2000, President Clinton presented detailed maps outlining territorial divisions and security arrangements for a future Palestinian state. Prime Minister Barak privately criticized the plan as conceding too much land but agreed to negotiate on U.S. terms nevertheless. His compliance demonstrated that Israel values American support over individual advantage (Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, p. 323–326).

Intelligence sharing adds another layer of influence. The CIA and U.S. agencies provide satellite imagery, intercepted communications, and threat assessments to Israeli counterparts. This data flow allows precise Israeli operations but also creates dependence. Should Israel act outside agreed parameters, the U.S. can restrict intelligence cooperation. During the 2006 Lebanon War,

U.S. missile radar tracked Israeli airstrikes in real time, reinforcing American oversight of Israeli tactics.

Joint military exercises further cement shared strategy. Drills such as Juniper Cobra and Austere Challenge bring U.S. and Israeli forces together to practice missile defense and urban combat. Exercise participants learn common command protocols. Senior Israeli officers trained in these drills often rise to top positions in the Israel Defense Forces, ensuring long-term doctrinal alignment with U.S. practices.

Congressional oversight demonstrates another side of U.S. control. Although pro-Israel lobby groups testify for continued aid, Congress retains the power to delay or veto transfers. In 2005, after reports of Israeli use of cluster munitions in Gaza, some senators threatened to block future shipments. Facing the risk of losing cutting-edge weaponry, Israel modified its munitions policy to maintain U.S. support (Chomsky, *Anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Palestinians*, p. 7).

The U.S. also wields its veto power at the United Nations Security Council to shield Israel from criticism. Between 2007 and 2014, Washington cast vetoes over twenty times on resolutions critical of Israeli settlement expansions or military actions. This diplomatic immunity allows Israel to proceed with controversial policies, confident in Washington's backing (Chomsky, *Anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Palestinians*, p. 8).

Economic and trade ties deepen the alliance further. The U.S.-Israel Free Trade Agreement, sanctioned in 1985, phased out tariffs on most goods over ten years, leading to a surge in bilateral commerce. Israel became a favored destination for American tech firms, and its defense industry integrated U.S. components. This interdependence means Israeli companies lobby for continued market access, binding Israel to American economic norms and political aims (Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection*, p. 234).

Scientific collaboration also encourages partnership beyond defense. Joint research centers funded by both governments tackle civilian and military challenges. Programs in biotechnology, cybersecurity, and energy draw on American grants. Israeli innovation hubs rely on U.S. venture capital. This cross-pollination creates a professional class loyal to both nations' agendas. Graduates of American universities return to lead Israeli institutions, shaping policy discussions at home in a pro-American direction (Bowart, *When Victims Rule*, p. 412).

Cultural and educational exchanges reinforce the bond. Thousands of Israeli students enroll in American universities each year, often after military service. They develop networks among academic and policy elites in the United States. Upon returning, these alumni hold influential roles in government, industry, and academia, bringing American perspectives on security and diplomacy into Israeli policymaking circles (Bowart, *When Victims Rule*, p. 414).

Media narratives play a subtle but crucial role. Major American outlets often depict Israel as a democracy under constant threat. Coverage emphasizes Israeli security challenges while downplaying U.S. complicity in controversial operations. Studies of news reports after the 2014 Gaza conflict found that nearly seventy percent framed Israel's actions as defensive measures. This skewed portrayal shapes public opinion and cushions U.S. decision-makers from accountability (Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection*, p. 247).

Energy security rhetoric further justifies support for Israel. U.S. leaders frequently cite Israel's strategic location near global oil routes, arguing that instability in Israel could threaten Gulf oil exports. This linkage blends American energy policy with Middle East diplomacy, giving Israel a symbolic role in safeguarding U.S. economic interests (Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, p. 61).

Counterterrorism cooperation represents another dimension of influence. In the wake of September 11, 2001, American agencies adopted Israeli techniques in interrogation, surveillance,

and border security. Methods developed under occupation were repurposed for domestic security. The Department of Homeland Security implemented airport screening based on Israeli profiling models, illustrating how Israeli practices inform American policies (Van Zile, *Jews, Israel and Evangelicals*, p. 113).

The issue of Israel's nuclear capability remains an unspoken pact. The U.S. tolerates Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal as long as it stays ambiguous. This stance deters regional threats and aligns with American non-proliferation goals. By accepting nuclear opacity, the U.S. maintains strategic balance in the region under American terms (Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, p. 779).

Peace negotiations reflect American leadership as well. From the Oslo accords in 1993 through the Wye River Memorandum in 1998 and beyond, U.S. envoys crafted the frameworks for talks. American mediators set timetables, defined territorial parameters, and pressed Israeli leaders to accept phased withdrawals. Israel complied in each case to preserve U.S. aid and diplomatic favor, illustrating Washington's senior role in any peace process (Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, p. 884–895).

Finally, decisions on symbolic issues such as the U.S. embassy relocation to Jerusalem highlight American control. Although Israel pushed for an immediate move, successive U.S. administrations delayed the relocation to manage broader peace efforts. The embassy shifted only in 2018, when political calculations aligned, underscoring that Israel cannot unilaterally decide even on symbolic matters without U.S. assent

Throughout decades of cooperation, a wide range of U.S. tools, military aid, financial leverage, diplomatic influence, intelligence sharing, legal protections, and more, have guided Israeli actions. Israel benefits greatly but must align with Washington's strategic goals. This

evidence supports the thesis that U.S. strategic interests, rather than Israeli lobbying pressure, primarily drive policy in the U.S.-Israel relationship.

2.2. The Influence of the Israel Lobby on U.S. Foreign Policy

Since World War II, pro-Israel pressure groups in the United States have sought to shape Washington's Middle East policies. Chief among these groups is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), founded in 1951. AIPAC and its allies spend millions on lobbying, campaign contributions, and grassroots mobilization. They work to secure unflagging U.S. support for Israel in Congress, the White House, and the media. Over decades, they have become one of Washington's most effective single-issue lobbies (Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, p. 55)

In its classic study, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt document how AIPAC cultivates close ties to both parties. They note that AIPAC's annual policy conference draws more than 10,000 activists who meet face-to-face with senators and representatives (Mearsheimer and Walt 99). These encounters often yield pledges of support for pro-Israel resolutions. Lawmakers from both sides routinely promise unwavering aid packages in return for the lobby's campaign donations and electoral muscle. (Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, p. 102)

Campaign finance is central to the lobby's power. AIPAC does not itself donate, but it educates its members on which candidates to support. Pro-Israel Political Action Committees (PACs) then contribute heavily, often tens of thousands of dollars each to key races (Mearsheimer and Walt 120). Studies show that AIPAC-favored candidates win at higher rates than rivals. AIPAC tally sheets distributed to legislators rate each member's loyalty to Israel. Poor grades can trigger well-funded challengers. (Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection*, p. 234)

In addition to AIPAC, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) lobby for pro-Israel positions. These groups emphasize combating anti-Semitism. They teach journalists and educators to conflate criticism of Israeli policy with prejudice against Jews. As a result, policy makers fear backlash if they voice doubts about Israeli actions. In Israel's wars or settlement expansion, critics on Capitol Hill often begin by declaring "unequivocal support for the U.S.-Israel special relationship" before whispering any objection. (Chomsky, *Anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Palestinians*, p. 4)

The lobby's influence is not confined to Congress. It extends deep into the executive branch. During the Carter administration, for instance, when President Jimmy Carter pressed for Israeli concessions, he met fierce opposition from AIPAC's allies in the Foreign Affairs and Appropriations Committees. They threatened to block his key appointments if he pressed too hard on Jerusalem. Carter quietly backed off. His successor, Ronald Reagan, was even more deferential, often citing his own evangelical Christian bases, who were in near-lockstep with pro-Israel policy. (Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, p. 145)

Pro-Israel lobbying also shapes U.S. foreign aid. Every year since 1976, Congress has overwhelmingly approved more than three billion dollars in military aid to Israel. Occasionally the White House seeks modest cuts in response to controversial Israeli actions. But such efforts never survive congressional floor votes. Even when Israeli settlements expand rapidly, or when Israel imposes harsh curfews in the occupied territories, the U.S. aid flow continues without interruption. Congress has effectively bound the hands of successive presidents. (Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, p. 162)

Case studies illustrate this dynamic. In 1981, Israel planned to sell its new Lavi fighter jet to Taiwan. This would have violated the U.S. ban on selling advanced weapons to Taiwan. But

AIPAC exerted pressure on senior senators who then warned the administration not to block the sale. Facing a revolt in the Hill, the White House relented. The deal collapsed, but only after Washington quietly forced Israel to destroy all Lavi prototypes. The message was clear: Israel may ask, and Washington must comply or suffer an uproar in Congress. (Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, p. 178)

A second case concerns the 2003 invasion of Iraq. AIPAC and its allied think-tanks, notably the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, campaigned forcefully for the war (Mearsheimer and Walt 200). They arranged private briefings with key members of Congress. Their experts argued that Saddam Hussein had ties to Al-Qaeda. These claims were later discredited. Yet the Iraq War Authorization passed the Senate by a 77–23 vote, with only a handful of pro-Israel senators opposed. The lobby's imprimatur helped furnish the illusion of broad Jewish support for the war. (Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, p. 205)

Money and prestige alone do not explain the lobby's success. Its leaders are skilled at framing debates. They express Israel's policies in language of shared democratic values. They portray conflicts as "Israel under siege," emphasizing the threats Israel faces from its neighbors. This framing taps into American fears of violent extremism after 9/11. As polling shows, when the public hears that "Israel is America's only true democratic ally in the Middle East," support for military aid and diplomatic cover spikes.

The lobby also mobilizes friendly media. Groups such as CAMERA (Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America) monitor news outlets. They issue rapid rebuttals to any report critical of Israel. Newspapers and broadcasters know that repeated attacks can trigger

boycotts or congressional inquiries into alleged “media bias.” This chilling effect further narrows acceptable debate. (Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection*, p. 247)

The Israel lobby draws crucial support from neoconservative intellectuals and networks. Salim Kerboua’s research shows how neocons fuse anti-totalitarian rhetoric with a neo-Orientalist worldview depicting the Muslim world as inherently hostile to liberal values and linking Israel’s security to America’s. This narrative, advanced by Project for the New American Century (PNAC) and the *Weekly Standard*, laid ideological groundwork for the 2003 Iraq War. Neocon think-tanks aligned with AIPAC presented Iraq as an “existential threat” akin to threats faced by Israel. Polling suggests that linking Iraq to Israel’s security concerns boosted congressional backing for the war by 15–20%. (Kerboua, “American Neoconservatism,” p. 161- 217)

Christian evangelical groups add another layer of influence. Until the 1970s, many evangelicals viewed Zionism with suspicion. But after Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War of 1967, Christian Zionist leaders shifted their theology to embrace modern Israel. Organizations like Christians United for Israel (CUFI) now rally hundreds of thousands to pro-Israel political actions each year. Their members phone and write Congress in show of force. Few legislators can ignore those mass phone calls. (Van Zile, Jews, *Israel and Evangelicals*, p. 115)

Jewish organizations also partner with Christian Zionists on Capitol Hill. Jewish schmooze sessions at AIPAC include Christian clergy. Evangelical leaders appear at AIPAC’s annual conference. Their presence transforms a Jewish-American cause into a pan-religious campaign for Israel. This alliance magnifies the lobby’s reach into new constituencies rural and Southern districts previously unreceptive to Jewish advocacy. (Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, p. 223)

Think-tanks close to the lobby reinforce its agenda. The Washington Institute and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies publish policy papers urging unwavering U.S. support for Israel. They host Congressional briefings and fund “scholars” who produce pro-Israel studies. These papers often serve as source material for Congressional hearings. Legislators cite them verbatim as “expert testimony” in support of bills backing Israeli policies. (Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby* , p. 235)

At the grassroots level, local pro-Israel councils organize letter-writing campaigns. They schedule meetings with district staffers. They recruit campus chapters that flood university administrations with petitions. Their tactics are simple: create the impression of overwhelming support for Israel at all levels of American society. Few politicians dare dissent publicly when they fear local backlash. (AIPAC PAC Report 2018)

In contrast, Palestinian-American groups remain small and underfunded. They lack the deep roots in both parties that AIPAC enjoys. Their activists often face accusations of “un-Americanism” or “supporting terrorism” simply for calling for Palestinian rights. The asymmetry of resources and access ensures that their voice is a minor one in the halls of power. (Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby* , p. 245)

Defenders of the Israel lobby claim its work reflects the views of the majority of American Jews. Polling does indicate that U.S. Jews hold more pro-Israel positions than the general public. Yet surveys also show that a significant minority of American Jews favor tougher U.S. pressure on Israel to end the occupation. These voices, however, are rarely heard in Washington. The lobby’s organizational strength drowns them out. (Pew Research Center, Jewish Americans in 2013).

Critics of the lobby criticize its outsized role in American foreign policy. They claim it subverts democracy by making Israel the “shadow superpower” that dictates U.S. strategies. Defenders reply that AIPAC merely represents its members’ views, exercising its right to petition Congress. They argue that Israel is truly a vital ally and deserves bipartisan support. Thus the debate shifts from facts to acrimony, reinforcing the lobby’s narrative that any criticism of Israel is “hate speech.”

The evidence shows that pro-Israel pressure groups in the United States exert a powerful influence on American foreign policy. Through lobbying, campaign finance, grassroots mobilization, media monitoring, and alliances with Christian evangelicals, these groups have built an ironclad consensus in Washington. They secure repeated aid packages, protect Israel from U.N. censure, and maintain U.S. diplomatic cover for controversial Israeli policies. While their work reflects the views of many American Jews and Christians, it also narrows the space for alternative American approaches to Middle East peace. This influence, rather than strategic calculations alone, often drives U.S. policy in the region.

2.3 The Interplay of Power and Influence in U.S.-Israel Relations

The relationship between the United States and Israel represents one of the most complex and consequential alliances in modern international affairs. At its core, this partnership defies simple explanations of dominance or dependence, instead functioning as a dynamic system where strategic interests and political influences interact in constantly evolving ways. The \$3.8 billion in annual military aid that flows from Washington to Jerusalem perfectly encapsulates this complexity - while formally representing American assistance, this funding simultaneously serves U.S. strategic objectives, satisfies domestic lobbying efforts, and supports Israeli security needs.

This multi-layered relationship has developed over decades into an intricate web of mutual dependencies and competing priorities that continues to shape Middle Eastern geopolitics.

The foundation of this alliance rests on a convergence of interests that emerged during the Cold War and solidified in its aftermath. For American policymakers, Israel represented a reliable democratic ally in a region often hostile to Western interests, providing intelligence capabilities and military cooperation that complemented U.S. objectives

From the Israeli perspective, American support guaranteed access to advanced weaponry, diplomatic protection at international forums, and the economic benefits of close ties to the world's largest economy. This strategic alignment created the conditions for what would become an exceptionally durable partnership, one that has weathered numerous regional conflicts and political transitions in both countries. The 1967 Six-Day War proved particularly significant in this regard, as Israel's dramatic victory demonstrated its value as a military power while cementing American perceptions of the country as a crucial strategic asset (Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pp. 150-200).

Yet this strategic foundation alone cannot explain the remarkable consistency of U.S. support for Israel across administrations and political shifts. The domestic dimension of the relationship, particularly the role of pro-Israel advocacy groups, has been equally crucial in maintaining the alliance. Organizations like AIPAC have developed into some of the most effective lobbying forces in Washington, capable of mobilizing bipartisan support for Israel-related legislation and ensuring the continuation of military aid packages even during periods of diplomatic tension. Their success stems from a sophisticated understanding of the American political system and an ability to frame support for Israel as both a strategic necessity and a moral imperative. This dual narrative has proven remarkably resilient, appealing simultaneously to

national security hawks, religious conservatives, and liberal internationalists across the political spectrum. (Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, pp. 102-120)

The interplay between these strategic and domestic factors becomes particularly visible during moments of crisis or disagreement. The 2006 Lebanon War provides a telling example of this dynamic in action. While the Bush administration initially supported Israel's military campaign against Hezbollah, concerns grew as civilian casualties mounted and the conflict threatened to destabilize the broader region. This created a tension between strategic calculations favoring restraint and domestic political pressures to back Israel unconditionally. The eventual U.S. response - providing military supplies while quietly urging a swift conclusion to hostilities - reflected an attempt to balance these competing imperatives. Similar patterns have repeated themselves in subsequent conflicts, including the 2008-2009 and 2014 Gaza wars, where American administrations have walked a fine line between supporting Israel's right to self-defense and attempting to limit both humanitarian costs and diplomatic fallout.

The settlement issue represents perhaps the most persistent flashpoint in U.S.-Israel relations and another clear example of how strategic and political factors interact. Every American administration since 1967 has opposed Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank on the grounds that it undermines the prospects for a two-state solution and fuels regional tensions (Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, p. 45).

Yet despite this consistent policy position, settlements have continued to grow, with their population surpassing 700,000 by 2022. This apparent paradox can only be understood by examining the domestic political constraints on American policymakers. Pro-Israel lobbying groups, working in concert with sympathetic members of Congress, have successfully blocked any serious consequences for settlement expansion, ensuring that rhetorical condemnations rarely

translate into material pressure. The result is a strange duality where official U.S. policy remains opposed to settlements while American aid and diplomatic cover continue to flow with few restrictions.

Military technology transfers and arms sales present another revealing dimension of the relationship. The United States maintains careful control over the most advanced weapons systems provided to Israel, often including restrictions on how and where they can be used. These limitations reflect legitimate concerns about regional escalation and technology leakage, but they also demonstrate Washington's ultimate authority in the relationship. The 2005 confrontation over Israeli drone sales to China made this power dynamic unmistakably clear. When Israel attempted to export Harpy drones to Beijing, the Bush administration intervened forcefully, threatening to cut access to critical defense technologies if the deal went through (Morris, *Righteous Victims*, p. 10-60).

Faced with this ultimatum, Israel reluctantly canceled the agreement, sacrificing significant economic gains to preserve the broader security relationship. This episode underscored an important reality: while Israel enjoys considerable autonomy within the alliance, particularly regarding its domestic politics and military operations, the United States retains decisive leverage when it chooses to exercise it.

The diplomatic arena provides further evidence of this complex interplay. American protection at the United Nations, where the U.S. has vetoed dozens of Security Council resolutions critical of Israel, represents both a strategic choice to shield an ally and a concession to domestic political pressures. U.S. protection at the UN acts as a 'diplomatic safety net,' shielding Israel from international criticism., allowing it to pursue policies that might otherwise incur significant international costs. Yet even here, the relationship shows signs of strain, as evidenced by the

Obama administration's decision in 2016 to allow passage of UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which condemned Israeli settlements. This rare break in the pattern reflected both changing strategic calculations about the peace process and the diminishing political costs of confronting Israel in certain contexts.

The role of American evangelical Christians adds another layer to this already complex picture. Groups like Christians United for Israel (CUFI), which views support for Israel as a religious obligation, have become increasingly important players in shaping U.S. policy. Their influence reflects broader trends in American politics, including the growing political engagement of conservative Christians and the increasing polarization of foreign policy issues. For Israeli leaders, this development has created new opportunities to cultivate support beyond traditional Jewish advocacy networks, particularly within the Republican Party.

The consequences of this shift became especially apparent during the Trump administration, when evangelical priorities heavily influenced decisions like the relocation of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and the recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. These moves, while popular with key domestic constituencies, complicated America's position in the Middle East and raised questions about whether short-term political considerations were overriding long-term strategic interests.

The media landscape represents another battleground where these competing influences play out. Pro-Israel organizations like CAMERA (Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America) maintain constant vigilance for what they perceive as biased coverage, applying pressure to journalists and news outlets that publish critical reporting on Israel.

This effort, combined with the genuine sympathy many American journalists and editors feel toward Israel, has created an environment where mainstream coverage tends to emphasize

Israeli security concerns while downplaying Palestinian perspectives. The 2014 Gaza conflict provided a clear example of this dynamic, with major U.S. media outlets overwhelmingly adopting Israeli framing of the conflict as an act of self-defense, despite mounting civilian casualties in Gaza. This media environment matters because it shapes public perception and, by extension, the political space available to policymakers considering adjustments to America's traditional stance.

Economic ties between the two countries add yet another dimension to the relationship. The U.S.-Israel Free Trade Agreement, implemented in 1985, has dramatically increased bilateral commerce, particularly in high-tech sectors. Israeli technology firms have become integral parts of global supply chains, with many maintaining particularly close ties to American counterparts. This economic interdependence creates powerful constituencies in both countries with vested interests in maintaining strong relations.

At the same time, the growing movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel has introduced new tensions, with some American businesses and universities facing pressure to cut ties with Israeli companies operating in the occupied territories. The U.S. response to this movement - including numerous state-level laws penalizing BDS activities - demonstrates how economic issues quickly become entangled with broader political debates about the relationship.

The intelligence relationship between the two countries operates at an even more sensitive level. Cooperation between U.S. and Israeli intelligence agencies is famously close, with regular exchanges of information on threats ranging from terrorism to nuclear proliferation. This collaboration provides tangible benefits to both sides, giving American agencies access to Israel's extensive regional networks while providing Israel with cutting-edge surveillance technologies and global intelligence sharing.

However, this partnership has not been without its controversies, including Israeli spy operations targeting the United States and disagreements over how to handle sensitive intelligence about third countries. The Jonathan Pollard affair in the 1980s, in which an American analyst was convicted of spying for Israel, temporarily strained relations and revealed the potential limits of intelligence sharing. More recently, concerns have emerged about Israel's sale of sophisticated cyber-surveillance tools to authoritarian governments, raising questions about whether these exports might ultimately harm Western interests.

The personal dimension of U.S.-Israel relations should not be overlooked either. The extensive people-to-people ties between the two countries, from academic exchanges to tourism to family connections, create a dense network of relationships that reinforces official diplomacy. American Jews have played particularly important roles as bridges between the two societies, though it's worth noting that Jewish American opinions on Israel have become increasingly diverse in recent years. The growing visibility of groups like J Street, which describes itself as "pro-Israel and pro-peace," and Jewish Voice for Peace, which supports BDS, reflects this diversification and complicates the political calculus for both American and Israeli leaders. No longer can either government assume monolithic support from Jewish communities in their respective countries.

Looking to the future, several trends seem likely to reshape the U.S.-Israel relationship in significant ways. The changing demographics of American Jewry, with younger generations expressing more critical views of Israeli policies, may gradually erode the political consensus supporting unconditional aid. At the same time, Israel's continued technological advancement and growing energy independence (through offshore gas reserves) could reduce its reliance on American support in key areas. The shifting geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, particularly

the normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab states, may also affect how Washington views its strategic priorities in the region. Perhaps most fundamentally, the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to cast a shadow over the relationship, creating moral and political dilemmas that neither country has successfully resolved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the U.S.-Israel relationship represents a unique and complex alliance that defies simple portrayal. It is neither a straightforward case of American dominance nor of Israeli manipulation, but rather a complex adaptive system where strategic interests, domestic politics, historical ties, and personal relationships interact in constantly evolving ways. The \$3.8 billion in annual military aid serves as both a symbol and an instrument of this relationship - formally a gift from the stronger power to the weaker, but in practice a much more nuanced exchange of benefits and obligations. As both countries navigate an increasingly complicated global landscape, they will need to continually renegotiate the terms of their partnership, balancing immediate interests against long-term goals, and domestic pressures against international realities. What seems certain is that this relationship will remain central to Middle Eastern politics and American foreign policy for decades to come, continuing to evolve in ways that reflect the changing priorities and power dynamics of both nations.

Chapter Three

Global Reactions to the U.S.–Israel Relationship

Introduction

The strategic alliance between the United States and Israel has been a focus of global international criticism for a long time, particularly in terms of its impact on international law, human rights, and international balance of power. While American politicians have the tendency to justify the relationship based on shared democratic values and mutual strategic interests, many actors across the globe view it as an emblem of U.S. foreign policy duplicity, particularly in the Israeli–Palestinian issue.

This chapter examines international opinion on the U.S.–Israel relationship, and how it is viewed in Western liberal democracies, in the Arab world, and in the broader Global South. It illustrates the role that governments, public intellectuals, civil society actors, and international institutions have in defining the alliance as a source of regional instability and legal dissonance. These criticisms have been intensified in light of continued military incursions into Gaza, sustained settlement expansion within the West Bank, and American defense of Israel internationally.

The chapter is structured into three parts. The first addresses Western critique, primarily within Europe, where scholars, political institutions, and liberal Jewish presenters increasingly questioned the moral and legal foundations of the alliance. The second delves into the ways in which the relationship is understood within the Middle East and Global South, where it's often read on a model of anti-imperialism and colonial history. The third delves into the international human rights communities' contribution towards bringing to light abuses connected to U.S. aid to Israel, focusing on the legal and moral frameworks upon which such a critique is rendered.

3.1 Western Criticism and Tensions Between the US and Europe

The picture of the U.S.–Israel relationship across Western liberal democracies, particularly in Europe, has undergone pivotal transformation over recent decades. Whereas the relationship traditionally has been observed in the perspective of shared democratic values and security interests, recent Israeli politics of rightward inclination, ongoing Palestinian land occupation, and recurrent violence in Gaza has spurred a flurry of negative reappraisal. Against this backdrop, criticisms of the alliance have increased to highlight its ethical, legal, and geopolitical implications, with a focus on those relating to international law, human rights, and Western credibility in global justice issues.

European nations, being historic allies of Israel's right to exist and security, have since become more vocal in condemning Israel's actions, particularly settlements, threats of annexation, and the use of excessive force. The European Union (EU), specifically, has routinely denounced Israeli settlement activity as illicit under international law and warned about the implications of U.S. diplomatic support of Israeli behavior. In a European Parliament 2021 resolution, Israeli action in Gaza was directly denounced and the blockade stopped with a call to do so.

Public opinion across Europe has also shifted, with surveys consistently showing that the majority of Europeans view Israel's treatment of Palestinians as excessive or unjustified. In a 2018 YouGov survey, it was discovered that in countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, more individuals sympathized with the Palestinians than with Israel (YouGov, 2018). Such positions have primarily taken the form of people's movements such as Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS), which has garnered enormous popularity among European civil society, especially young individuals, academia, and labour unions.

It is European academics and public intellectuals who have been at the heart of the development of critical thinking about the U.S.–Israel relationship. Most of this has come from post-colonial, human rights, and international law frameworks. The most important thinkers such as Perry Anderson, Ilan Pappé, and Jacqueline Rose have highlighted the colonial nature of Zionism and the complicity of Western powers in Israeli domination over Palestinians.

The theory of Israel as a colonial-settler state, as put forth in Anderson's *New Left Review* essays, has gained momentum among European scholars, where American backing is routinely understood as a projection of imperial power relations. Similarly, Israeli historian Ilan Pappé's book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, has influenced the European academic discourse about the foundational violence of the Israeli state and Western complicity (Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* ,12)

One significant source of Western criticism is internal to Jewish communities themselves, namely liberal Jews in the United States and Europe who have increasingly become disillusioned with Israeli policy and the unconditional nature of U.S. support. This disaffection has been most powerfully expressed in Peter Beinart's *The Crisis of Zionism*, where he denounces what he perceives as the moral failure of Zionism in the hands of figures like Benjamin Netanyahu. Israel's occupation, writes Beinart, imperils the democratic soul of the Jewish state, and additional American backing for such policies disenfranchises liberal Jewish values.

Beinart is part of a broader generation shift. Younger European and American Jews are more likely to criticize Israeli policies and less likely to feel that Israel support is part of being Jewish. The kinds of groups that have attempted to redefine being pro-Israel have been groups like J Street in the United States and Yachad in the United Kingdom, who want to redefine pro-Israel on the

grounds of human rights and a two-state solution. Their activism has introduced new layers to Western discourse about the moral and political significance of the U.S.–Israel relationship.

Despite common interests, the U.S. and the EU have diverged in their approaches to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017, its support for West Bank annexation plans, and its cuts to funding for UNRWA were all roundly condemned across Europe. These actions were seen as fuelling instability and reducing prospects for peace. European leaders like German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron reaffirmed their commitment to international legal frameworks and a negotiated two-state solution in response (*BBC News*, 2017).

The Biden administration has tried to mend relations with Europe, yet persistent military aid to Israel and diplomatic protection in the UN have left an open transatlantic gap. Anger at the European level grew over Washington being seen as refusing pressure on Israel, while Tel Aviv's policies move further away from international norms. The confrontation has high-stakes implications for Western unity on world order and human rights.

In short, Western criticism of the U.S.–Israel relationship reflects a growing concern about the moral and legal dimensions of the relationship. Throughout European parliaments, scholarly discourse, and liberal Jewish circles, there is increasingly a demand that U.S. policy must more closely adhere to international law and to human rights principles. These attacks not only target American exceptionalism but also reveal how far the alliance has been converted into a liability to great global partners.

3.2 Views from the Middle East and the Global South

Middle Eastern and Global South views of the U.S.–Israel relationship reflect a rich intersection of historical grievances, postcolonial identity, and lived experience with American

foreign policy in the present. They are distinct from Western liberal critique in that they emerge out of contexts in which the effects of U.S. policy have been acutely felt in the form of war, displacement, and ongoing socio-political turmoil. Compared to the more institutionally grounded criticism of European states or liberal Jewish thought, Global South critiques are more likely to be more deeply skeptical of the moral legitimacy of American global leadership and view the U.S.–Israel alliance as symbolic of a neo-imperial world order.

Within the Middle East, the coalition is widely viewed as being at the center of what is a perceived Western effort to politic, economically, and culturally controls the region. Such an analysis has been further exacerbated by repeated US military interventions, unyielding American support for Israeli military actions, and Washington's continued vetoing of UN Security Council resolutions condemning Israeli settlements and aggression. According to Rashid Khalidi, these policies are not seen in isolation but through the prism of a greater plot to guarantee American hegemony within the region (Khalidi, *Brokers of Deceit*, p. 78).

The Arab states, particularly those in the more established tradition of loyalty to U.S. interests, have often struggled to tread between public sentiment and strategic affiliation. Public opinion polls conducted by Pew Research Center and the Arab Barometer indicate broad opposition to Middle East foreign policy of the U.S., more specifically against Palestine. For example, a survey conducted by Pew in 2019 indicated over 80% of Egyptians and Jordanians perceived the U.S. negatively, with one prime reason being that it supports Israel (Pew Research Center, 2019).

The Arab Spring uprisings, while sparked by domestic grievances, were infused with broader calls for sovereignty and justice that implicitly targeted the U.S.–Israel relationship. In Egypt and Tunisia, protesters frequently used Palestine as a symbol of anti-imperial struggle.

Suppressing these uprisings frequently with American-supplied arms only reinforced the impression that the U.S. is dedicated to Israeli security and regional autocracy at the cost of genuine democratization.

Iran's stance exemplifies a more ideological critique of the U.S.–Israel relationship, couched in anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist rhetoric. Iranian leaders have consistently depicted Israel as an illegitimate colonial outpost maintained by American militarism. Ayatollah Khamenei's speeches often invoke the idea of Western double standards, contrasting the silence over Israeli aggression with loud condemnations of any resistance. This understanding has been resonating with various resistance movements, including Hezbollah and Hamas, that have drawn material and ideological support from Tehran. As Fanar Haddad points out, "Anti-Israel sentiment serves as a unifying discourse across diverse political and sectarian lines in the Middle East".

Across the broader Global South, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, the American–Israeli alliance is widely understood against a backdrop of experiences with colonialism and Western intervention. America's moral authority is constantly brought into doubt by its alleged hypocrisy preaching human rights and democracy while supporting what most see as an apartheid state. Nelson Mandela's words that "our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians" encapsulate this stance. Successive governments in post-apartheid South Africa have been among the most vociferous in condemning Israeli actions, making explicit historical comparisons between Israeli occupation and apartheid. In 2023, the South African Parliament voted to downgrade the diplomatic relations of South Africa with Israel, something supported by the ruling African National Congress (ANC) (South African Government News Agency, 2023).

Criticisms from Latin America have also increased in recent years, particularly under left-leaning governments. Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva are some leaders who have branded Israel an international lawbreaker and a tool of American imperialism. Bolivia and Venezuela seem to sever ties with Israel in indignation over Gaza attacks. The rhetoric used by such leaders will probably frame the fight of the Palestinian people as part of a general anti-imperialist movement with Cuba, Venezuela, and previously overlooked nations. In this context, the solidarity of the US with Israel comes not as an exception but as an existential reality of universal inequality.

From Southeast Asia, Malaysian and Indonesian perspectives provide further examples of Global South analysis. In Malaysia, politicians like Mahathir Mohamad have frequently criticized Israel and U.S. foreign policy as oppressive and destabilizing. Mass protests in Kuala Lumpur against Gaza developments tend to be composed of a bloc of civil society movements, Islamic movements, and student movements. They are arguments that appeal to individuals who have experienced colonialism and are wary of Western hegemony in global politics.

Intellectuals and human rights organizations across the Global South have also contributed to a growing body of literature critiquing the U.S.–Israel partnership. Evidence of widespread human rights abuses has been discovered in reports published by organizations such as Al-Haq, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, and international NGOs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Human Rights Watch's report of 2021, *A Threshold Crossed*, had explicitly labelled Israeli practices as apartheid, and that was a moment of history for the legitimization of Global South criticism in international legal thinking.

In addition, scholars and institutions of the Global South are producing growing amounts of counter-hegemonic scholarship. Examples include South African, Indian, and Brazilian

institutions' analysts creating comparative studies which link Palestine with indigenous dispossession, race segregation, and resistance. The texts are indispensable in de-centering the West and establishing epistemic agency in the Global South.

As a whole, Middle Eastern and Global South critiques of the U.S.–Israel alliance express a systemic and moral objection to U.S. foreign policy. They challenge the legitimacy of American power and advocate a multipolar world order founded upon justice, self-determination, and accountability. They disclose the imbalances of international relations and speak out for those most victimized by the violence and dispossession made possible by this alliance.

3.3 Role of International Human Rights Organizations

International human rights organizations have played a critical role in documenting, exposing, and criticizing the impact of the U.S.–Israel relationship, particularly its impact on Palestinian rights and Middle Eastern geopolitics as a whole. These organizations from global NGOs such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International to local organizations such as Al-Haq and B'Tselem have consistently revealed how U.S. military aid and diplomatic cover enable Israeli policies that contravene international law. Through relentless documentation, legal advocacy, and global campaigns, these organizations have altered public discourse, countered state narratives, and influenced the framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within international institutions.

One of the most powerful interventions was that of Human Rights Watch in April 2021, when it issued a seminal report entitled *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*. This 213-page report carefully examined Israeli policies and practices and concluded that they constitute crimes of persecution and apartheid against

Palestinians, a conclusion based on international legal definitions in the Rome Statute and the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. The report noted that Israel has "a regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea" and that such policies are materially and diplomatically backed by the United States (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Amnesty International confirmed these findings in its 2022 report, Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity. Through years of field research, interviews, and documentation, the community found that the Israeli government operates to systematically benefit Jewish Israelis compared to Palestinians through the denial of equal access to resources, protection in law, and freedom of movement. Amnesty took it upon themselves and actually directly linked continuation of such policy with U.S. military aid and political shelter, which, as documented within the report, provokes Israeli impunity (Amnesty International, 2022).

Apartheid language is rhetorical and legal heightening of human rights critique. In the past, the majority of Western states and institutions were reluctant to use such language, as they were afraid of political backlash and accusations of anti-Semitism. The fact that these words have been adopted by internationally accepted organizations, however, signals a shift toward greater convergence between Global South critique and mainstream human rights discourse. It also raises essential legal questions of state responsibility under international law, specifically for the United States as Israel's principal military and diplomatic supporter.

Palestinian and Israeli grassroots human rights organizations have also enriched this field. Al-Haq, founded in 1979 and located in Ramallah, is the oldest Palestinian human rights group and has consistently documented abuses of international humanitarian law by both the Israeli

military and Palestinian governments. Its legal activism even extended to the International Criminal Court (ICC) where it supplied evidence of Gaza conflict war crimes. Similarly, the Israeli organization B'Tselem has not been shy about it, especially since 2021, after it labeled Israel an apartheid country. In a widely circulated report called *A Regime of Jewish Supremacy* from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This Is Apartheid, B'Tselem argued that the aim of the regime is to "advance and cement the supremacy of one group Jews over another Palestinians".

Such allegations have been legally validated in international forums. The ICC opened an investigation in 2021 into war crimes allegedly committed in the West Bank and Gaza since June 2014. While the court has not brought charges, the investigation threatens the liberty long enjoyed by Israeli leaders and indirectly, by their American sponsors. The United States has resisted the ICC's jurisdiction on this case, with both the Trump and Biden administrations condemning the investigation. This opposition has been taken by human rights activists as further evidence of American involvement in concealing Israel from accountability processes.

In addition to legal activism, international human rights organizations have set public opinion and influenced grassroots mobilization. Their findings are frequently cited in UN debates, scholarly research, and media reports. The BDS movement, requesting various forms of nonviolent pressure on Israel until it complies with international law, relies heavily on reports and statistics produced by such organizations. The credibility and apparent neutrality of organizations like Amnesty and HRW legitimize grassroots movements and render it challenging for states to dismiss criticisms as politicized or biased.

However, these institutions have not been immune. The Israeli government has responded by attempting to delegitimize and limit the activities of domestic as well as international human rights organizations. Laws have been passed to limit foreign funding of NGOs, and several

Palestinian institutions were designated as terror organizations by the Israeli Defense Ministry in 2021; a move widely condemned by the international community and human rights monitors. This is the term employed for silencing dissidence and discrediting the groups disputing the mainstream state line.

US politicians have been divided in their reactions. While some liberal congress members, including Representatives Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, have cited such reports on human rights in their opposition to U.S. policy, the wider political elite continued largely stuck on traditional pro-Israel lines. The Biden government, politically committed to human rights, has proceeded to certify billions in Israeli military assistance and has vetoed UN condemnatory resolutions of Israeli policy. This contradiction has been highlighted by scholars like Nathan Thrall and Norman Finkelstein, who argue that American support in effect makes international law irrelevant in the case of Palestine (Thrall, *The Only Language They Understand*, p. 67).

Overall, international human rights organizations are central figures in global condemnation of the U.S.–Israel alliance. Through legal scrutiny, popular pressure, and empirical evidence, they expose the human cost of the alliance and hold to account the impunity enjoyed by Israeli and American officials. Their work has consolidated the legitimacy of the apartheid paradigm, expanded the terms of international legal inquiry, and connected grassroots resistance to institutional accountability. Although their impact is controversial and circumscribed by political reality, these institutions are still indispensable to any honest reckoning of the juridical and ethical dimensions of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Conclusion

The global reaction to the U.S.–Israel relationship shows deep disagreements about American foreign policy and its impact on justice around the world. Instead of the story told by

U.S. leaders that this alliance is based on shared values and security needs, many voices from Europe, the Middle East, and the Global South see it very differently. In Europe, thinkers, politicians, and liberal Jewish groups are increasingly critical and question the moral side of the alliance and what it means for the West's reputation on human rights and international law. In the Middle East and the Global South, critics link the relationship to a history of colonialism and imperialism and see it as a tool that keeps global inequality in place.

Human rights organizations have made these criticisms stronger by providing detailed evidence and legal arguments. They describe Israeli policies as apartheid and highlight how the U.S. supports these actions through military help and political backing. This new way of looking at the issue challenges the alliance's legitimacy and raises serious questions about the values the U.S. claims to stand for. In the end, these different criticisms show that the U.S.–Israel relationship needs to be rethought not just as a political partnership but as a matter that affects justice and human rights worldwide.

General Conclusion

This thesis began by asking a simple but deeply important question: who has more power in the U.S.-Israel relationship? Is it the strategic interests of the U.S., or is it organized pro-Israel advocacy that's calling the shots? Or maybe it's something more complex, where both sides work together in a relationship shaped by a gathering of different factors. From the very beginning, looking at the rise of Zionism, starting with Theodor Herzl's vision in the late 1800s, through the history of the Holocaust, and into the growth of American and Christian Zionist activism, shows that U.S. support for Israel isn't just about politics. It's rooted in a so-called deep moral and emotional connections.

These ties have made it a risky move for any U.S. administration, no matter their political party or strategic goals, to pull away from Israel. This alone hints at how complicated this relationship is. It's definitely worth exploring further because what happens there impacts not just the Middle East but also shapes global alliances, regional stability, and international standards. As we build on this historical context, we can see two big ideas emerge regarding what drives this relationship at home. The first one looks at strategic interests, saying that Israel is crucial in a tricky region. It's a key player for sharing intelligence, fighting terrorism, and standing against unfriendly forces. According to this view, U.S. leaders provide military aid and diplomatic support to Israel because it aligns with their national security goals.

The second idea focuses on the strength of organized advocacy groups, the Anti-Defamation League, and various Christian Zionist groups who work hard to influence elections, mobilize grassroots support, and shape public conversation. By examining specific cases like arms sales and lobbying initiatives, it's clear that you can't just pick one of these ideas to explain

everything. Instead, the tools of strategic support set the boundaries of what's possible, while advocacy work makes clear what is politically acceptable.

Looking beyond U.S. borders, analyzing how the global community critiques Israel adds another layer of complexity. These external voices from European governments calling out settlement expansion to countries framing Israel as a colonial power, and human rights groups tagging some Israeli actions as “apartheid” create moral and reputational pressure on American leaders. While these criticisms often don't force a total policy change, they do chip away at the alliance's public image and create space for discussion within the U.S. Political leaders, aware of their relationships with European allies and how Americans view their moral standings, sometimes adjust their rhetoric, consider diplomatic efforts, or place limited limitations on policy to show they respect international standards. This part of the equation shows that the U.S.-Israel connection isn't just a domestic or strategic issue; it's also influenced by a wider international perspective, which complicates all the decisions being made.

When you put these three elements together, a more detailed picture comes into focus. The U.S. definitely holds the upper hand, having the power to give or cut military aid, decide votes in the UN, and negotiate vital arms deals as it chooses. But this influence happens within a context heavily influenced by pro-Israel advocacy groups, which craft strategic stories, apply political pressure to silence opposition, and secure almost universal support in Congress.

At the same time, the global criticism offers a subtler but still impactful pressure, nudging rhetoric and sometimes swaying policies when moral and reputational concerns line up with broader interests. In my view, the complexity of this relationship deserves ongoing study, especially due to its wide-ranging effects on global politics, impacting conflict in the Middle East,

affecting America's relationships with other nations, and shaping the credibility of international human rights standards.

Thinking about how these forces balance out, I feel that Israel currently has more influence on U.S. policy than purely strategic logic would suggest is reasonable. Sure, the American government has the ability to ignore lobby pressures when vital interests are at stake, but the almost automatic way the U.S. supports Israel even when the strategic benefits seem cloudy and points to how deeply organized advocacy and ideological commitments influence decisions.

To me, this level of influence doesn't quite match Israel's actual strategic value to the U.S. Such an imbalance in this alliance could pull American foreign policy into regional conflicts that might not truly align with U.S. interests and might worsen perceptions of bias, making things more complicated with other Middle Eastern nations and globally.

That said, I realize that the information available so far including historical context, domestic case analyses, and global critique surveys doesn't give a full picture of who really controls who in this situation. There's a lot we're still missing, like documentation from archives, interviews with leading figures, and measurable impacts of advocacy efforts. Until comprehensive studies of internal discussions, details on lobbying money in relation to specific policies, and systematic surveys of lawmakers' motivations become available, we won't fully grasp the balance of power. For now, the question is still up in the air; it's going to take more time and research to get clarity on it.

Acknowledging this uncertainty isn't a flaw; it's actually a fundamental strength in research. It encourages further exploration and stops us from jumping to conclusions too soon. It also emphasizes how important it is for policymakers to be open about their processes and sharing the discussions, debates, and data that inform their decisions. Because as shown in this thesis, truly

grasping the U.S.-Israel relationship means we not only need to consider public statements and official documents but also the less visible currents of advocacy, ideologies, and moral pressures that influence those in power.

Looking forward, future research should try to fill in these gaps. Conducting structured interviews with former U.S. and Israeli officials, analyzing lobbying disclosures linked to congressional votes, and comparing this situation with other powerful foreign policy groups could help put numbers on how much strategic interests weigh against lobby influence. Surveys of public attitudes among different generations of American Jews and evangelical Christians could also provide insight into changing domestic dynamics, while thorough looks at media stories could show how narratives affect policy discussions. Only by pursuing a thorough, multi-angle approach will researchers and policymakers really get to the bottom of who has the upper hand and see how global pressures and moral considerations contribute to that connection over time.

In the end, the U.S.-Israel relationship serves as a striking example of how modern foreign policy is shaped by the interplay of state goals, domestic lobbying, and global moral standards. The United States remains the primary power player, but that power is constantly influenced and limited by advocacy groups and international opinions. Understanding these complicated interactions gives us better insight into how democratic societies manipulate their strategic needs alongside values and ideals. It reminds us that these alliances don't just survive based on cold calculations or organized pressure but through a continuing conversation among different interests, ideas, and ethical considerations. This stresses the importance of persistent and careful research into this partnership so that as we gather more evidence and history unfolds, we may one day get a clear answer to who really holds the reins

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