

Since at least the 1970s, Israel has been benefiting hugely from the so-called “special relationship” with the United States. The US provides the Jewish state with considerable financial aid which reached \$3 billion annually in the form of non-refundable grants in the 1990s. America also supplies Israel with modern military systems and American companies cooperate with their Israeli counterparts in developing new weapons, devices etc. US representatives also protect Israel from major diplomatic failures at the international forums like the UN.

Some people believe that the American support for Israel is driven by moral imperatives, as Israel constitutes a shelter for the minority which experienced hundreds-of-years lasting hatred, with its ultimate expression being the Holocaust. This argument further states that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East and therefore it presents a natural choice for an ally of the United States. Others argue that Israel is an indispensable strategic asset, necessary for maintaining the American presence and securing the American interests in the region.

However, all these points can be refuted. The often emphasized moral aspect omits the painful issue of Palestinian refugees forced out by Jewish forces in 1948–1949 and continued Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Israel is also not able to ensure the American access to Middle Eastern oil or safeguard the stability of regimes allied to the US. The logical conclusion is that the unprecedentedly intensive long-term American support for Israel is a result of the influence of pro-Israeli lobby.

The success of the lobby is caused by a number of factors. First, AIPAC, the major organization lobbying on Israel’s behalf, consists of a very dedicated membership and is highly effective in its activities, mainly in a close scrutiny of the voting behavior of the members of Congress. It subsequently shares these records with the network of pro-Israeli PACs which donate considerable financial means to selected politicians. Another factor enhancing the lobby’s clout is the demographics of the American-Jewish community. Although Jews constitute only slightly more than 2 % of the overall American population, they are concentrated in several key states and thus can become a decisive factor in the presidential elections. Besides, there is essentially no effective counterbalance to the pro-Israeli lobby activities, since the Arab-American interest groups, which would be a natural opponent to the Israeli ones, suffer from a lack of finances and meager membership. Moreover, the discourse in the United States is favorably inclined towards Israel rather than the Arabs who are usually depicted in negative light. The pro-Israeli lobby also skilfully uses tools enabling it to shape the public debate, namely the repeated remembrance of the

Holocaust and accusations of anti-Semitism. Finally, the lobby has an influential ally in the Christian Zionist movement which also seeks Israeli well-being (although for different reasons).

It is not possible to consider these factors as isolated phenomena, since the lobby's influence is a result of their intertwined, mutually-enhanced functioning. However, the main reason behind the lobby's success is the fundamental discrepancy between the capabilities and engagement of the Jewish community on the one hand and the Arab community on the other. Arab-Americans tend to be indifferent towards US foreign policy in the Middle East, their vote is in general not influenced by these factors and their ability to influence the public discourse is very limited. On the contrary, number of Jews donate money to the pro-Israeli organizations or become highly dedicated activists themselves, the Jewish community can (and sometimes does) pose as a swing vote in the presidential elections and its status in the American society is very high, especially when compared to Arab Americans.