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The Israel Lobby and US Policy in the Middle East: The Iraq War, The Egyptian Arab Spring, and Iran's Nuclear Program

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The influence of the so-called 'Israel Lobby', a diverse coalition of American organizations that aim to affect pro-Israel policy, has been hotly-debated for several decades, and descriptions of the lobby's importance to US foreign policy range from 'irrelevant' to 'axiomatic'. In an effort to understand the current debate, this project examines the relationship between the Israel Lobby and US foreign policy in three cases: the decision to invade Iraq in 2003, the legacy of the Arab Spring in post-Mubarak Egypt, and US-Israeli efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. Throughout the paper, I draw on primary and secondary historical resources and international relations theory in order to explore the US-Israel relationship through changing domestic and international circumstances and to better understand the implications of this relationship for the prospects of a more peaceful dynamic in the Middle East. I conclude that, while still a significant factor in American foreign policy, the influence of the Israel Lobby is transforming and, in some cases, stagnating as the United States moves toward a narrower, more pragmatic and therefore less ideological strategy in the Middle East.

Introduction

While it is clear that the United States and Israel have a special relationship, it is unclear to what degree this special relationship has influenced American foreign policy through pro-Israel special interest groups. The US-Israel relationship is further complicated by its long and varied history, religious, social, and cultural values all rooted in the core of the US political system and part of a larger framework of US strategic interests in the Middle East. This project aims to demystify the US-Israel relationship by

first offering more scientific explanations for the degree of the Lobby's influence on American foreign policy for the time period of 2000-2014 and then analyzing the effects of these policies on US-Israel relations and the politics of the Middle East. I will focus specifically on three historical examples in my analysis: The Iraq War, the Arab Spring in Egypt, and Iran's nuclear program. With this project, I hope to provide a more comprehensive portrayal of the Israel Lobby's influence on US policy during three important historical issues and throughout two presidential administrations in preparation for an analysis of the long-range impacts of the Lobby on US and Israeli affairs in the Middle East.

In this paper, I hope to answer two basic questions:

1. To what degree do pro-Israel special interests influence US policy in the Middle East?
2. What are the implications of such policies on the US-Israel relationship and the prospects for regional peace?

Background

Since 1967, and arguably before then, the US-Israel special relationship has been a salient feature of American foreign policy. US government assistance for Israel began in 1949 and has been increasing steadily ever since, with spikes of more significant funding increases occurring after continual Arab-Israeli wars. US aid to Israel has averaged over \$3 billion since 1971, most of which is directed toward military assistance. By 1974 Israel had become the recipient of the lion's share of US foreign

aid, and this status has been maintained.¹ This enormous aid package is rarely questioned in Congress by both liberals, who point to Israel's widespread human rights violations, and conservatives, who point to the United States' already-high deficits and question the motives of foreign aid on principle.² In an effort to understand this phenomenon, there have historically been two major, albeit also contested, explanations for the continuation and expansion of this special relationship. The first category consists of concerns associated with the Realist Theory of International Relations: geopolitical, strategic, and national security interests. The second category consists of concerns shared by the Liberal school of International Relations Theory: democratic values and the moral imperative. The strategic argument for the strong US-Israel partnership is as follows.

Strategic Interests

As a well-developed nation with a formidable military, Israel often cooperates with the United States in terms of intelligence-gathering, weapon research and development, and weapons testing. After Israel's victory in the June 1967 war, US aid increased by over 400%, and by 1974 Israel had become the United States' largest recipient of aid, a designation which has been maintained with exceptions for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.³ During the Cold War, Israel served as a covert channel of arms trading to anti-Soviet regimes and nationalist movements. As the United States' closest

¹ Jeremy Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel" *Congressional Research Service*. March 12, 2012, http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL33222_20120312.pdf, accessed April 27, 2014.

² Stephen Zunes, "Why the U.S. Supports Israel" *Foreign Policy in Focus*, May 1, 2002, http://fpif.org/why_the_us_supports_israel/, accessed April 27, 2014.

³ Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," *Congressional Research Service*, April 11, 2014, <http://www.fas.org/sqp/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf>, accessed April 27, 2014.

ally in the Middle East today, Israel occupies an important geopolitical position with regard to preventing radical movements from gaining power and destabilizing US interests in the Middle East.⁴ The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) has stated that the United States and Israel have a “deep strategic partnership aimed at confronting the common threats to both nations.”⁵ Supporters of the strategic argument differ in their explanations for historical US policy decisions; however, they generally agree that US foreign interests are driven primarily by strategic concerns, and that support for Israel has been and continues to be driven by these concerns.

The strategic motive for the US relationship with Israel has been contested by scholars like John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen J. Walt, among others. These scholars concede that Israel would be a strategic asset if it represented a cost-effective way to deal with actors hostile to the United States and if it meant that this relationship with Israel would make the United States more secure and provide benefits that outweighed political costs. However, they argue, these outcomes are not present in the contemporary period and never have been, even during the Cold War. Mearsheimer and Walt offer three reasons for their skepticism of the strategic argument. First, that Israel’s heavy hand in the Middle East during the era of Soviet influence only drove extremists closer to Moscow (against US interests). Second, that the tendency to view Middle East issues through the lens of the Cold War has inhibited progress towards peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Third, that US assistance to Israel only breeds Arab

⁴ Stephen Zunes, “Why the U.S. Supports Israel” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, May 1, 2002, http://fpif.org/why_the_us_supports_israel/; Martin Kramer, “The American Interest,” *Azure*, no. 26 (Fall 2006): 21-23, <http://www.martinkramer.org/sandbox/reader/archives/the-american-interest/>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁵ AIPAC. “The United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2013 (H.R. 938 and S. 462). March 2013, <http://www.aipac.org/~media/Publications/Policy%20and%20Politics/AIPAC%20Analyses/Bill%20Summaries/2013/Bill%20Summary%20Strategic%20Partnership%20Act.pdf>, accessed April 27, 2014.

animosity toward the United States to the detriment of both the United States and Israeli national security.⁶

Others assert that the US special relationship with Israel can sometimes, but not always, be predicated on the rationale of Israel as a strategic asset. For example, Abraham Ben Zvi explains that US definition of interactions with Israel as either a strategic asset or a strategic liability is dependent upon domestic support for the US-Israeli special relationship.⁷ Writing shortly after the end of the Cold War, Ben-Zvi recognized the incorporation of Israeli interests into America's national defense posture as a strategic factor but explained that, since the 1990s, this strategic rationale no longer holds significant power in explaining the alliance. This camp acknowledges Israel as a strategic asset in some cases but argues that the unlimited support given by the United States to Israel cannot be explained by its narrow strategic capabilities alone.

Shared Values and the Moral Imperative

The other dominant explanation is the notion of a moral imperative to support Israel and the shared values between Americans and Israelis, which are, in my review, related, and I will address them together. For hundreds of years prior to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the Jews have been subjugated, scapegoated, and persecuted, for no reason other than their Jewish identity. This history is universally acknowledged and documented. The legacy of the Holocaust, the most horrific and recent example of extreme suffering by the Jewish people, is still a prominent feature of

⁶ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

⁷ Abraham Ben-Zvi, *The United States and Israel: The Limits of the Special Relationship* (New York: Columbia University, 1993).

Jewish life in America, and even more prevalently in Israel. In 2004 former President George W. Bush, along with every president that has preceded or succeeded him, publicly stated that the U.S-Israel relationship stems from American-Israeli shared Judeo-Christian religious values, as well as our shared democratic values and political ideologies.⁸ These values and ideologies isolate Israel from its Middle Eastern neighbors and ultimately lead to violence which the United States must help combat. Other scholars like Abraham Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, also points to the moral imperative of supporting a Jewish state because of pervasive anti-Semitism throughout history, not only as a result of the Holocaust and its legacy, but also by more recent historical events like scapegoating of Jews in the US intervention in the Gulf War.⁹ Supporters of the shared values and moral imperative argument point to the consistently high support for Israel in US public opinion polls, the similarities in Jewish and American history, and levels of individual and economic freedom in both nations as motivations for the US-Israeli special relationship.

Others concede that the moral justification of support to Israel may have been justified when Jews were just recovering from the Holocaust and creating the democratic institutions and infrastructure to build their state but assert that levels of US support for Israel are no longer driven by these concerns.¹⁰ Objectors to the moral case

⁸ "U.S. Presidents and Israel: Quotes about Jewish Homeland and Israel." *American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise*. Updated 2013, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/presquote.html>, accessed April 27, 2014. George W. Bush. "President Bush's Address to the AIPAC Policy Conference" *The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise*. May 18, 2004, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/bushaipac2004.html>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁹ Abraham Foxman, *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control* (New York: Palgrave, 2007.)

¹⁰ Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and Palestinians* (Boston: South End Press, 1983.); Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *Israel and the American National Interest: A Critical Examination* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1986; Abraham Ben-Zvi, *The United States and Israel: The Limits of the Special Relationship* (New York: Columbia University, 1993).

for unwavering US support to Israel point to a century worth of human rights abuses enacted by the Israelis, first to acquire an Jewish state, and subsequently to maintain and expand the power of that state against its Palestinian population.¹¹ As far as secular democracy is concerned, Israel has neither a constitution nor a bill of rights, and there is significant censorship over electronic and print media — all hallmarks of democracy.¹² There are no domestic civil courts, and regarding ‘secularism’, Israel is governed by religious laws which deny citizenship to non-Jews. This view asserts that, while the view that shared values and the moral imperative are an important motive for the United States’ special relationship with Israel, these views are more often a reflexive response of the public or empty platitudes offered by elected political leaders than legitimate and significant rationales for the alliance. It is argued that, if supporting Israel is an obligation, then it would follow that it could also be described as a burden which would diminish that obligation as time passes.¹³ Objectors to the moral and value-based argument doubt the legitimacy of an argument built entirely on subjective abstract concepts and perceptions.

Literature Review

The Israel Lobby (or, the Lobby) is a diverse coalition of pro-Israel special interest groups which, through a variety of methods, attempt to influence policymakers to maintain and increase support for the State of Israel. The Israel Lobby is by no means a unified body attempting to affect legislation with the same tactics, or even with the same goals in mind. Although the Lobby is involved in influencing think tanks, the

¹¹ Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1988).

¹² Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *Israel and the American National Interest: A Critical Examination* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1986).

¹³ Martin Kramer, “The American Interest,” *Azure*, no. 26 (Fall 2006): 21-23, <http://www.martinkramer.org/sandbox/reader/archives/the-american-interest/>, accessed April 27, 2014.

media, and academia, informal lobbying efforts like grassroots organizations, and financial contributions, it is also heavily involved in more formal, direct lobbying of the US Congress and Executive, and it is the latter lobbying efforts on which this paper will be predominantly focused. The question of Israel Lobby influence on American foreign policy is a hotly-debated and well-documented topic of research. One end of the ideological spectrum claims that the Israel Lobby is the most formidable force in American foreign policy, and that Washington is basically held hostage by foreign interests that are often completely antithetical to the best interests of the United States. This extreme camp asserts that, rather than a strategic asset, the United States' relationship with Israel is a total liability that threatens US interests in the Middle East, as well as its domestic national security interests, by breeding Islamic extremist support for both the Palestinian cause and radical religious extremists throughout the Arab world. Opposition to the Israel Lobby points to the exorbitant and increasing amounts of aid provided to Israel as the result of Israel Lobby's bullying, bribing, and blackmailing of the US government and claims that the Israel Lobby is de facto agent of the Israeli government bent on maintaining absolute control through a terroristic agenda and inhumane subjugation of its people.¹⁴

The other side of the Israel Lobby debate argues that the Israel Lobby, although it attempts to champion the legitimate interests of American Jews and the US national interest, has little influence over the government, which employs policies favorable to Israel whenever it so desires and easily quashes the voices of the Lobby when it fails to codify national interests. This camp asserts that the Israel Lobby is merely one group in

¹⁴ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

a sea of even better-funded, more powerful lobbies, and that criticism of the Israel Lobby as somehow more powerful is merely another example of poorly-disguised scapegoating and anti-Semitism toward American Jews. These extremists tirelessly remind skeptics that Israel is a tiny, isolated island of democracy surrounded by a host of fundamentalist, terrorist states bent on its destruction, and not to shower it with money and support would be a death sentence, both for the State of Israel and for US national security.¹⁵

While these two ideological extremes offer little guidance for a comprehensive understanding the actual effect of the Israel Lobby on US foreign policy, there are several rational discussions in between these two ends of the spectrum which offer worthwhile explanations for better understanding the Israel Lobby and its influence on American foreign policy. I will briefly summarize the two major arguments concerning the influence of the Israel and their shortcomings in preparation for an introduction to the project at hand and how it hopes to contribute to the extant literature.

One major argument regarding the influence of the Israel Lobby is that it is effective in terms of lobbying Congress but has little impact on decisions made by the President. A study of this theory has been undertaken by Mitchell Bard who found, in his analysis of 782 policy decisions from 1945 to 1984, the Israel Lobby achieved its policy objective 60% of the time. However, he found that, in cases where the president supported the Lobby, it won 95% of the time. Bard concluded from this study that, while the Lobby has significant power in Congress, it has considerably less influence over Executive decisions and Legislative decisions concerning security and diplomacy, for

¹⁵ Abraham Foxman, *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control* (New York: Palgrave, 2007.)

which Congress often defers to the President.¹⁶ While Bard's study is important for helping us gain a more nuanced understanding of the Israel Lobby's influence, its explanatory ability is limited to 1984, after which the US-Israeli relationship, and consequently the Israel Lobby, has become stronger, a fact that Bard has himself acknowledged.¹⁷

Another major theory concerning the influence of the Israel Lobby posits that, insofar as the Israel Lobby's objectives are aligned with US strategic-geopolitical-economic interests, the two factors are exceedingly difficult to disentangle. This argument reminds us that, to unpack the true influence of the Israel Lobby, it is important that we investigate the policies being undertaken by the United States in other parts of the world during the time period of the Israel Lobby's perceived influence. By taking a more holistic approach, it is possible to begin to disentangle US strategic interests from the discrete objectives of the Israel Lobby. Although this recommendation is often suggested by scholars,¹⁸ and it is conceded that the strategic interests of the United States are not wholly explained by strategic interests,¹⁹ the attempt to unpack the relationship between the strategic interests of the United States in the Middle East

¹⁶ Mitchell Bard, "The Israeli and Arab Lobbies" *Jewish Virtual Lobby*. July 2012, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/lobby.html>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹⁷ Mitchell G. Bard and Daniel Pipes, "How Special is the U.S.-Israel Relationship?" *Middle East Quarterly*. June 1997, <http://www.danielpipes.org/282/how-special-is-the-us-israel-relationship>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹⁸ Noam Chomsky, "The Israel Lobby?" *ZNet*. March 28, 2006, <http://www.zcommunications.org/the-israel-lobby-by-noam-chomsky.html>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹⁹ According to a former Pentagon official, "Israel's strategic value to the United States was always grotesquely exaggerated. When we were drafting contingency plans for the Middle East in the 1980s, we found that the Israelis were of little value to us in 95% of the cases." Duncan L. Clarke, Daniel B. O'Connor, and Jason D. Ellis, *Send Guns and Money: Security Assistance and US Foreign Policy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997, 173).

and the policy objectives of the Israel Lobby has not been seriously attempted since Mitchell Bard's study of Israel Lobby influence between 1945 and 1984.²⁰

Explanatory Power

This project hopes to contribute to the current debate in two major ways. The first is by studying the Israel Lobby alongside the domestic politics of Israel in order to compare the political ideology and strategic interests of pro-Israel organizations to the Government of Israel from which they take orders. The second is by studying the influence of the Israel Lobby on US policies throughout three discrete cases, all of which are distinctly different from one another and span two ideologically-opposed presidential administrations.

Much of the extant literature on the influence of the Israel Lobby has focused solely on United States politics and ignored the political atmospheres of the nations with which the United States is engaged in its foreign policy. In a departure from that methodology, this paper aims to discover the real influence of the Lobby by studying its relationship with the State of Israel, the domestic politics of the State of Israel, and the US relationship with Israel. It also analyzes US presidential ideology throughout both the Bush and Obama administrations and considers the interests of US policymakers in the Middle East. In doing so, one can begin to disentangle the various actors' interests from one another and gain a more realistic, comprehensive understanding of the factors at play in the US-Israel relationship.

²⁰ Mitchell Bard, "The Israeli and Arab Lobbies" *Jewish Virtual Lobby*. July 2012, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/lobby.html>, accessed April 27, 2014. This work examines the influence of the Israel lobby on US foreign policy between 1945 and 1984.

The other main contribution I hope to make with this paper stems from my wide purview of analysis, which studies not only the influence of the Israel Lobby on US foreign policy, but also the implications of US policy for the political debate in Israel throughout three discrete, recent foreign policy issues relevant to both the United States and Israel. Because it is recognized that the Israel Lobby has measurable (significant, albeit limited) influence on American foreign policy, this project seeks not merely to add to this debate, but instead, understand both the effects of the Lobby on US relations with Israel and the influence of American efforts on subsequent Israeli decisions. I have chosen to extend my research to the domestic political situation in Israel because, while much has been written on US support of Israel, the eventual manifestations of this support in Israel are less clearly articulated, and their implications much less obvious.

In an effort to represent the vast and varied nature of beliefs espoused by the American Jewry and the spectrum of pro-Israel organizations that claim to represent them, I will consider two very different Israel Lobby organizations, AIPAC and J Street that attempt to affect US policy toward Israel, albeit with very different goals in mind. Because J Street is a newer organization with a narrower agenda, it is not possible to compare the two organizations on every case; however, the last chapter does engage with both of the organizations in order to make comparisons and draw conclusions about the future of the Israel Lobby as a whole.

Method

Each historical case will be analyzed with regard to the two questions under consideration in this project.

Question 1: To what degree do pro-Israel special interests influence US policy in the Middle East?

IV₁: official statements, press releases, policy objectives of AIPAC and J Street

DV₁: U.S. foreign policy as measured by legislation, appropriations, official messages of Congress and/or the Executive

Question 2: What are the implications of such policies on the US-Israel relationship and the prospects for regional peace?

IV₂: U.S. foreign policy as measured by legislation, appropriations, official messages of Congress and/or the Executive

DV₂: Israeli domestic and regional foreign policies, official statements, media

Hypothesis

In this study, I hypothesize that 1) the Israel Lobby wields significant influence over US foreign policy with regard to the Middle East, and 2) U.S. foreign policy decisions influenced by the Lobby have implications for Middle Eastern affairs. Regarding hypothesis my first hypothesis, I identify two organizations as a proxy for the 'Israel Lobby'. AIPAC is the most famous and prominent pro-Israel lobbying organization in the United States. It is a private corporation, and its executive committee includes representatives from the fifty-or-so organizations that comprise the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. J Street, a political action committee (PAC), is not only a newer pro-Israel organization, but it also maintains a more liberal ideology and a more nuanced view of the US-Israeli relationship. Rather than advancing the status quo, J Street is focused on an arguably more peaceful negotiated outcome between Israel and the Palestinian territories and actively promotes

a two-state solution to the conflict. I will use these organizations' activities, official statements, and messages to both the Legislative and Executive branches, and then compare these statements and messages with official US policy outcomes, in order to measure the influence of the Lobby with regard to three historical issues: the Iraq War, the Arab Spring in Egypt, and Iran's nuclear program. Regarding my second hypothesis, I plan to analyze U.S. foreign policy on the three aforementioned historical issues in connection with the subsequent policy debates in Israel to understand the implications of U.S. policy for the State of Israel and its behavior toward its Arab neighbors.

Implications

Research on the Israel Lobby and American foreign policy in the Middle East, specifically Israel and the Palestinian territories, is important for several reasons. With respect to US politics, understanding the Israel Lobby helps us better understand the less visible forces at work within our political system and their influence on policy outcomes. Additionally, because Israel is such an important ally for the United States, it is important that we fully appreciate the implications of US foreign policy for the domestic politics of Israel in order to create policies in the best interests of both parties. Finally, the Middle East has been a region of tumult and source of anxiety for US policymakers for several decades, and it continues to undergo significant changes initiated by the Arab Spring. Because of this instability, it is ever important that the United States pursues not only sustainable, efficient policies that further American strategic interests and national security, but also a balanced reputation in the region in order to encourage its preferred outcomes in the region. It is undeniable that the United

States' position in the Middle East is vulnerable, and feelings toward the United States abroad continue to sour, especially with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which is considered a litmus test for alliances in the Middle East. The Arab-Israeli conflict is a violent, dismal struggle for all those afflicted by it, and a relentless, frustrating, and complicated debacle for all those who endeavor to solve it. However, it is one on which we must continue to research, reflect, and foster open, candid discussions for the sake of both US and Israeli interests and all those effected by our enduring relationship. One can only hope that, by understanding the mechanisms that underlie American behavior toward the region, we can realize our follies and begin to work toward more effective policies toward the region and more harmonious relationships with the peoples struggling to coexist there.

Chapter One: The Iraq War

Background

The US-led campaign against Iraq in the spring of 2003, decided amidst sharply divided public opinion and with ambiguous objectives in mind, has become a watershed event in the post-Cold War international order. As the United States' first preemptive war and first post-Cold War conflict, rationalized by ideology and legitimized almost solely by controversial intelligence reports, the nature of this “war on terror” and the Iraq War more specifically has had major long term consequences for Western power and the stability of the Middle East.²¹ Understanding the decision to invade Iraq is important for developing a fuller picture of American foreign policy during the Bush administration because the decision was so controversial – it was deemed illegitimate under international law and the UN Charter – and despite allied support, in the main it was a unilateral attack.²² While it may be impossible ever to fully understand the decision to start the war in Iraq, this chapter seeks to understand the prevailing motives and explanations for the war before attempting to understand what effect, if any, the Israel lobby had on its inception. In this chapter, I attempt to answer two questions:

1. To what degree did the Israel lobby influence US foreign policy toward regime change in Iraq?
2. What are the implications of this war for US foreign policy, the American-Israeli relationship, and the prospects for peace in the Middle East?

²¹ Rick Fawn, “The Iraq War: Unfolding and Unfinished” in *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006).

²² Stephen Zunes, “The United States: Belligerent Hegemon” in *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006).

I argue that, although neoconservatives in the Bush administration pushed for war independent of the Israel Lobby, their close ties to the Likud party and its AIPAC counterpart created ripe conditions for the Israel Lobby to exert disproportionate influence on George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq. The Iraq War provides insight into the disastrous consequences reaped by both Israel and the United States as a result of hubris and rhetoric and marks the end of an era where the ideological and strategic interests could be conceived as perfectly aligned.

The decision to invade Iraq was rationalized on the basis of the existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq and the terrorist connection between Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime and al Qaeda, the terrorist organization responsible for 9/11. In President George W. Bush's memoir *Decision Points*, he rationalizes US invasion and liberation of Iraq in terms of a misguided assumption that Saddam Hussein possessed WMD when he recalls that "the only logical conclusion was that [Saddam] had something to hide, something so important that he was willing to go to war for it."²³ However, this claim is unsubstantiated based on the 177 nuclear inspections by the IAEA which found no evidence of illegal activity,²⁴ as well as a January 2003 report by US Chief Weapons Inspector Hans Blix's report to the UN Security Council that there were no weapons of mass destruction to be found in Iraq.²⁵ In addition, the claim that Saddam had connections with the organization responsible for the September 2001 terrorist attack is disputed on several fronts, and even comprehensive reports by the

²³ George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown, 2010, 224).

²⁴ Mohamed El Baradei, "The Status of Nuclear Inspections in Iraq," *International Atomic Energy Agency*, February 14, 2003, <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/statements/2003/ebsp2003n005.shtml>, accessed April 27, 2014.

²⁵ Hans Blix, "Briefing the Security Council: Inspections in Iraq and a further assessment of Iraq's weapons declaration," *United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission*, January 9, http://www.un.org/depts/unmovic/new/pages/security_council_briefings.asp#3, accessed April 27, 2014.

CIA and US State Department prior to Bush's invasion admitted no direct links between al Qaeda and Iraq.²⁶ In his memoir, Bush even concedes that, in 2002, it was unknown whether Saddam even knew Al Qaeda affiliate Abu Musad al Zarqawi was operating in Iraq.²⁷ Despite the lack of an imminent threat, George W. Bush was able to garner enough support for the war to be authorized by the US Congress to initiate a preemptive strike against Iraq.

Explanations for the US invasion

Since neither the existence of WMD nor the prospective al Qaeda terrorist activity of Saddam hold much explanatory power, two popular explanations for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 have emerged. The first is the particular geo-strategic and military interests of George W. Bush's ruling coalition and his administration's power shift away from the Departments Commerce and the Treasury, Wall Street, and mainstream corporate power toward a narrower military-oil complex.²⁸ The second is the convergence and collaboration of extremist Zionist neoconservatives and the lobbies with which they were allied.²⁹

Strategic interests, namely the maintenance of an uninterrupted flow of fossil fuels and a regional balance of military power, have played a pivotal role in US foreign policy in the Middle East since World War II. While the Cold War years threatened US

²⁶ Rick Fawn, "The Iraq War: Unfolding and Unfinished" in *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006).

²⁷ Id. note 3, p. 236.

²⁸ Rick Fawn, "The Iraq War: Unfolding and Unfinished" in *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006).

²⁹ Andrew Flibbert, "The Road to Baghdad: Ideas and Intellectuals in Explanations of the Iraq War," *Security Studies* vol. 15, no. 2 (2006): 310-352, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09636410600829570#.U2WFcK1dWF4>, accessed May 3, 2014.

global power, the eventual triumph of neoliberalism over socialism gave the United States an opportunity to restore a liberal capitalist world order, a Pax America on its subjects.³⁰ This world hegemony manifested itself in the United States' behavior on the world stage and was underpinned by unchallenged access to Middle East oil. The end of the Cold War and beginning in the 1990s resulted in an uneasy relationship between the United States and the Middle East — US oil imports from the Gulf were increasing at alarming rate while support for the United States in the Arab World was declining steadily. Iraq under Saddam Hussein posed a particular challenge. An isolated and weakening regime, despite its huge oil resources, presided over by a rejectionist despot enacting increasingly erratic and incomprehensible energy policies, Saddam Hussein's Iraq presented the perfect laboratory for the United States to test its newly-acquired hegemony. Because of Iraq's weakness and corresponding lack of a threat to US national security, US policy was one of deterrence,³¹ that is, until the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, after which the Bush administration began to seriously consider the possibility of regime change in order to transfer control of Iraq's huge oil reserves to an Iraqi leader more sympathetic to Western oil companies and America's energy interests at large. While liberals who claimed the Iraq War was fought over oil were initially ridiculed and discredited, even top Republicans eventually acknowledged the role oil played in the Iraq war; former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan wrote in his memoir, "I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what

³⁰ Atif Kubursi, "Oil and the Global Economy" in *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006).

³¹ Condoleezza Rice, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest," in *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 1 (January/February 2000): 60-62, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/55630/condoleezza-rice/campaign-2000-promoting-the-national-interest?nocache=1>, accessed April 27, 2014.

everyone knows: the Iraq war is largely about oil."³² However, the quest for oil cannot be thought of as the sole argument for US invasion of Iraq,³³ and its strong ideological underpinnings suggest that the oil factor was more of a manifestation of ideology than an argument for the invasion of Iraq in and of itself.

The other major argument for the Iraq War was the victory and subsequent role of George W. Bush's brand of conservatism — Neoconservatism — over the "realist" conservative camp, the latter of which preferred the pursuance of only vital national interests, narrowly defined, and opposed the occupation of Iraq as a naive, hubristic endeavor with potentially tragic consequences.³⁴ In contrast, Neoconservatism as an ideology espouses the view that the United States, as the world's sole superpower, retains the responsibility to promote its values around the world based on the Democratic Peace Theory assumption that liberal democracies are incentivized against war with one another.³⁵ Neoconservatives assign great importance to ideology and the role of regime type in foreign policy, and are inclined toward unilateral action on the world stage because of their distrust of international institutions, which they see as constraints on US hegemonic power. President George W. Bush championed these views wholeheartedly and imbued his administration with them. In his introduction to the National Security Strategy in 2002, Bush claimed that the United States represents "a single sustainable model for national success" and claimed that "the United States is the

³² Adil E. Shamoo and Bonnie Bricker, "The Costs of War for Oil," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, October 19, 2007, http://fpif.org/the_costs_of_war_for_oil/, accessed April 27, 2014.

³³ Jim Lobe "On the 10th Anniversary of the Iraq War" *LobeLog*. March 18, 2013, <http://www.lobelog.com/on-the-10th-anniversary-of-the-iraq-war/>, accessed April 27, 2014.

³⁴ Max Boot, "What the Heck Is a 'Neocon'?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 30, 2002, <http://www.cfr.org/world/heck-neocon/p5343>, accessed April 27, 2014.

³⁵ Zeev Maoz and Nasrin Abdolali, "Regime Types and International Conflict, 1816-1976," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 33 no. 1 (March 1989) 3-35, <http://jcr.sagepub.com/content/33/1/3.abstract>.

beacon for freedom in the world.”³⁶ George W. Bush was very much dedicated to the ideological struggle of good versus evil on the world stage; his stated goal through the war on terror was regime change and the spread of liberal democracy, and the Iraq war served as testing grounds for this ideology. Bush began his announcement of the start of the war with, "My fellow citizens. At this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger." The president explicitly designated the US armed forces as Iraq's emancipator when he proclaimed, "the peace of a troubled world and the hopes of an oppressed people now depend on you."³⁷ Robert Kaufman, in his defense of the Bush doctrine, describes this foreign policy as conforming to what he terms 'moral democratic realism,' which recognizes the importance of power and geopolitics but is also squarely in the tradition of the democratic peace and heavily influenced by Judeo-Christian values and the good-evil binary.³⁸

Much has been written on the neoconservative advisers who filled positions at the Pentagon, the White House, and even the State Department after George Bush's famously-contested election in 2000 and subsequently played pivotal roles in his Iraqi adventure. President Bush himself cultivated an almost familial closeness to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon early in the first term of his presidency. Vice President Cheney was described to possess a "disquieting obsession" with the alleged threat of the Iraqi

³⁶ George W. Bush, "President George W. Bush's Farewell Address to the Nation" *The White House*. January 15, 2009, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/>, accessed April 27, 2014.

³⁷ "Full Text: George Bush's address at the start of the war," *The Guardian*, March 19, 2003 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/20/iraq.georgewbush>, accessed April 27, 2014.

³⁸ Mack McCormick, "A Conversation with Robert G. Kaufman," *In Defense of the Bush Doctrine*, April 6, 2007.

regime.³⁹ Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was vocally supportive of the war, and his deputy Paul Wolfowitz was highly influential to marketing it.⁴⁰ Douglas Feith was deputy secretary, third in command at the Pentagon, and supervised the Office of Special Plans (OSP), which was established by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld to interpret raw intelligence data solely for the purpose of legitimizing an Iraq invasion, despite CIA reports that consistently contradicted the OSP's findings.⁴¹ Richard Perle was the chairman of the highly influential Defense Policy Board (DPB) and is known for having enthusiastically supported regime change in Iraq.⁴² J. Lewis ('Scooter') Libby was chief of staff to Vice President Dick Cheney and believed to have repeatedly pressured CIA analysts to report the existence of WMD in Iraq.⁴³ The presence of hawkish neoconservative sentiment in the Bush administration is widely accepted and even more significant than the above summary reflects.⁴⁴

Beyond this cast of characters' ideological commitment to maintaining US hegemony in order to establish a liberal peace the world over, neoconservatives share a strong affinity for and unconditional commitment to the State of Israel. Douglas Feith and Richard Perle, both affiliated with the hawkish, pro-Iraq war Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), also helped co-author *Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm*, a document which provides guidelines for a re-making of the

³⁹ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004) 4.

⁴⁰ id. note 11

⁴¹ Julian Borger, "The spies who pushed for war," *The Guardian*, July 17, 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/17/iraq.usa>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁴² Robert Litwak, *Regime Change: U.S. Strategy through the Prism of 9/11* (Washington DC: Wilson Center, 2007) 138.

⁴³ Douglas Jehl, "Through Indictment, a Glimpse Into a Secretive and Influential White House Office," *The New York Times*, October 30, 2005, <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F70D1EFC345B0C738FDDA90994DD404482>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁴⁴ See note 103 in John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 403.

entire Middle East in the interests of the United States and Israel.⁴⁵ *Clean Break* was sponsored by a right-wing Israeli think tank and recommended that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu focus on removing Saddam Hussein, a goal which the United States would later pursue. Paul Wolfowitz was named JINSA's Henry M. Jackson Distinguished Service Award for promoting a strong relationship between the United States and Israel and "Man of the Year" by the Jerusalem Post.⁴⁶ Wolfowitz and Richard Perle have both shown significant support of Ariel Sharon and the Likud Party, and the Pentagon's OSP had a close partnership with a parallel Israeli organization in Ariel Sharon's office which issued decidedly more alarmist, ideological reports about the Iraqi threat than the Mossad was willing to publish. The connections between the Bush-led US government and the Sharon administration and their plans to remake the Middle East are vast and well-documented. Because of the US government's ideological alignment with Israel at this time, it is not self-evident that associated American pro-Israel organizations who supported the war in Iraq exercised undue influence over US foreign policy, and while lobby influence is difficult to disentangle from the stated goals of the administration, it is nonetheless important to try.

AIPAC's Role

While many pro-Israel Jewish, Christian, and secular organizations pushed for a war in Iraq, for the sake of simplicity and because it is the most visible organization in the Lobby, this chapter will focus solely on the activities of AIPAC during the period of the Bush administration leading up to the invasion in 2003. While AIPAC claims not to

⁴⁵ John Cooley, *An Alliance Against Babylon: The US, Israel, and Iraq* (London: Pluto, 2005)199.

⁴⁶ Bret Stephens, "Man of the [Jewish] Year," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 10, 2003, <http://www.fpp.co.uk/online/03/10/JerusPost021003.html>, accessed April 27, 2014.

have supported the invasion of Iraq, its activities leading up to Bush's decision prove otherwise. For example, Nathan Guttman, reporting on AIPAC's Annual Policy Conference in the Spring of 2003, wrote that AIPAC is unconditionally supportive of Israel, and Israel was supportive of the Iraq War; therefore the thousands of AIPAC members on Capitol Hill were committed to lobbying for the same goal.⁴⁷ Not only was AIPAC committed to reflexively supporting the State of Israel in its activities, but support for the Iraq War was a direct policy objective of the organization and was proclaimed at AIPAC's 2003 Policy Conference.⁴⁸ In a January 2003 statement to *The New York Sun* Howard Kohr, former executive director of AIPAC, acknowledged that "quietly lobbying Congress to approve the use of force in Iraq" was one of "AIPAC's successes over the past year."⁴⁹ Steven J. Rosen, policy director of AIPAC during the initial considerations of US led invasion of Iraq, flatly stated that "AIPAC lobbied Congress in favor of the Iraq War."⁵⁰ AIPAC's lobbying efforts concerning the Iraq War were not limited to the initiation of the war alone. In the fall of 2003, when the Bush administration was attempting to win approval for additional war funding and meeting resistance among Senate Democrats, Republicans asked AIPAC to lobby their democratic counterparts for approving the aid, and soon after the funding was approved.⁵¹

Despite repeated attempts by AIPAC to push the United States into and remain embroiled in a war with Iraq, arguments that AIPAC was the only influence in the Iraq

⁴⁷ Nathan Guttman, "Background: AIPAC and the Iraqi Opposition", Haaretz, April 7, 2003, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/background-aipac-and-the-iraqi-opposition-1.13740>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁴⁸ "Address by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Silvan Shalom at the AIPAC Policy Conference, Washington, D.C. - March 30, 2003," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, <http://archive.today/InWL#selection-691.0-713.33>, accessed May 3, 2014.

⁴⁹ David Twersky, "A Bittersweet Affair for AIPAC", *The New York Sun*, January 23, 2003.

⁵⁰ Jeffrey Goldberg "Real Insiders: A Pro-Israel Lobby and an FBI Sting" *The New Yorker*, July 4, 2005, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/07/04/050704fa_fact?currentPage=all, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁵¹ John Bresnahan "GOP Turns to Israeli Lobby to Boost Iraq Support" *Roll Call*, October 6, 2003.

invasion not only oversimplify the inter-workings of US political debate but also overestimate Israel lobby influence and serve to remove agency from independent American policymakers. It also ignores the already-existing neoconservative mission to maintain military presence and proximity to oil in the Middle East. The claim that the Iraq War would not have been initiated if not for the support of the Israel Lobby is simply not true, but it should be recognized that the Israel Lobby, with its unconditional support for Israel, neoconservative affiliates in the Bush administration, and its undisclosed pressure on policymakers, played a significant role in US led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and its continuation thereafter. During the pre-war phases, as a result of burgeoning neoconservative ideologies, conditions in the US political scene were ripe for persuasion by domestic interests. As is argued by scholars Raymond Hinnebusch and Rick Fawn, when systemic constraints like neorealist material constraints or security dilemmas cease to be an issue, and normative constraints like international law are the only obstacle to aggressive foreign policy, there is more maneuvering room for domestic determinants to drive policy.⁵² By calling for war based on ideological and moral grounds, President Bush was able to sell the war without proving that it was a wise decision, and AIPAC's constant pressure on US legislators made questioning his policies that much more unpopular.

Israel and the Iraq War

Israel has, since time immemorial, considered Iraq an enemy but did not perceive it as a direct threat until the mid-1970s when France agreed to support Saddam's

⁵² Rick Fawn and Raymond Hinesbusch "Lessons of the Iraq War" in *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006).

nuclear quest. Of course, Israel responded by destroying the French reactor before it became operational; however, Iraq continued working on its nuclear program since the 1981 setback (when Israel destroyed the reactor). Between 1991 and 1997 the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) carried out 30 inspections of Iraq's nuclear facilities, during which time it oversaw the destruction, disablement, and removal of all weapon-oriented nuclear sites and materials and placed materials of low enrichment under IAEA oversight. Despite absence of IAEA inspectors between 1999 and 2002, no credible evidence about the reconstitution of Iraq's nuclear program had emerged, and all was generally quiet on the Iraqi nuclear front.⁵³ Of course, Israel remained suspicious, and at any other time in Israel's history, the buildup to the Iraq war would have undoubtedly sparked political debate within the Israeli government. However, in 2003, Israel was fighting its own internal "war on terror." The little domestic political debate that did occur centered predominantly around George Bush's Performance-based Road Map to a Permanent Two-state Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Although planning for the Road Map began in 2002, it was not made public until the end of the first Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2003. In September 2002, when Israelis besieged Arafat's compound in Ramallah, the United States chose to abstain from, rather than veto, a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution to condemn the Israeli violence. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice reminded the Israeli government that continued violence in the West Bank was an obstacle to the US quest to garner support from the Arab World for the war in Iraq.⁵⁴ As a result of this explicit

⁵³ "Country Profile: Iraq Nuclear," *NTI*, Updated February 2013, <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/iraq/nuclear/>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁵⁴ Aluf Benn, "U.S. tells PM that Muqata siege undermining plans for Iraq," *Haaretz*, September 27, 2002,

linkage, many Middle East observers saw the Road Map as an attempt to placate and distract the Palestinians while the Bush administration prepared for the Iraq War.

Israel did not initially push for a war with Iraq, despite its opposition to Saddam, and many Israeli officials were decidedly more worried about Iran than Iraq — after all, the threat of Saddam’s nuclear program was removed after the Gulf War.⁵⁵ However, the idea of an American removal of Saddam and the potential of a new Arab World more amenable to Israel was an attractive one, and once support for war in Washington had reached a critical mass, Israel could voice its support without seeming to be pushing the United States to war for its own benefit. Indeed, in May 2002, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres appeared on CNN and stated both the danger of Saddam Hussein and the urgency of the war,⁵⁶ and in August, Prime Minister Sharon proclaimed to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of the Knesset that Iraq “is the greatest danger facing Israel.”⁵⁷ Afterward, news stories about chemical and biological weapons in Iraq abounded, and Israeli intelligence about WMD in Iraq followed. Sharon ramped up security forces on Israel’s northern border in the event that Lebanon-based Hezbollah decided to use the Iraq war to demonstrate its solidarity with the Arab cause. The Israeli administration also made clear to Bush that, should Israel be subjected to Iraqi attack, it would strike back with overwhelming force.⁵⁸ The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) also shared aspects of its military program, including tactics against the

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/u-s-tells-pm-that-muqata-siege-undermining-plans-for-iraq>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁵⁵ Seymour Hersh, “The Iran Game,” *The New Yorker*, December 3, 2001,

<http://archives.newyorker.com/?i=2001-12-03#folio=042>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁵⁶ Joyce Howard Price, “Peres encourages U.S. action on Iraq,” *The Washington Times*, May 12, 2002, <http://nonprofitnet.ca/wao/wao.php?show&986>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁵⁷ Nina Gilbert, “Iraq poses greatest threat,” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 13, 2002, <http://www.unitedjerusalem.org/index2.asp?id=130563&Date=8/11/2002>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁵⁸ Clive Jones, “Israel: Major Beneficiary,” in *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006) 189.

Palestinians, with its US counterparts, albeit to the moral discomfort of some intelligence officials in Washington. In fact, during and since the US led war in Iraq, Ariel Sharon has drawn parallels between the US war on terror and Israel's own 'war on terror' against its Palestinian population, and the Israel Lobby did not hesitate to leverage the notion of hypocrisy against US legislators supportive of the war in Iraq but opposed to Israel's domestic behavior. At the same time, Palestinians viewed Saddam Hussein as a hero for standing up to Israel, and the Iraqi response to US attacks became couched in terms of liberation from US hegemony and imperialism. While not in support of Saddam Hussein's domestic policies and widespread human rights violations, Palestinians saw Saddam as the only Arab leader ever to make good on his proclamations of support for the Palestinian cause, and Israel capitalized on this support of an undemocratic regime to gain support for Israel from Washington. Indeed, the Iraq war began being seen as a proxy for Israel to win support of Washington against Palestinians, and unfortunately their allegiance to the very leader Washington sought to depose only made demonizing the Palestinian cause easier.⁵⁹

Implications of the Iraq War for Israel

The Iraq War had significant implications for the State of Israel, both in terms of its perceived role in the international system, and in terms of others' perceptions of it. The Iraq War was seen by scholars as a "means by which the regional order could be recast to Israel's benefit."⁶⁰ American success in Iraq was declared by Israeli officials as

⁵⁹ Rex Brynen and David Romano, "Palestinians: Finding no Freedom in Liberation," in *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006) 163-171.

⁶⁰ Id. note 26

a necessity for preserving Israeli security.⁶¹ However, it is argued that Israel was placed into an increasingly vulnerable position after the war in Iraq, namely in terms of instability in Iraq, anti-Israel sentiment, and increased terrorist activity in the region. Justifications for the Iraq War based on claims of WMD which were subsequently delegitimized reflected poorly on the capabilities of Israeli intelligence agencies and caused skepticism on the part of Israelis about future intelligence reports and diminished Israel's ability to mobilize wide international support for its interests.⁶² Additionally, the fall of Saddam Hussein removed the strategic rationale by Israeli decision-makers that occupation of the West Bank was necessary to prevent Iraqi invasion of Israel through Jordan.

Implications of the Iraq War for the United States

The Iraq War, which began on March 19, 2003, incurred huge direct costs to the United States, over \$800 billion, nearly 4,500 American lives, and a host of less obvious yet equally disastrous indirect costs.⁶³ It totally discredited the theory of preventive war as a legitimate ideology and served as a humbling lesson to Bush doctrine proponents who espoused grandiose visions for a democratic Iraq without taking into consideration

⁶¹ Ehud Olmert, "AIPAC Policy Conference 2007" *AIPAC*, March 12, 2007, <http://www.aipac.org/~media/Publications-old/Policy%20and%20Politics/Speeches%20and%20Interviews/Speeches%20by%20Policymakers/2007/Olmert-PC-2007.pdf>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁶² Ori Nir, "Senate Report on Iraq Intelligence Points to Role of Jerusalem," *The Jewish Daily Forward*, July 16, 2004, <http://forward.com/articles/4999/senate-report-on-iraq-intel-points-to-role-of-jeru/>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁶³ The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," *Congressional Research Service*, March 29, 2001, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf>, accessed May 2, 2014; "Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) U.S. Casualty Status as of May 2, 2014," *US Department of Defense*, <http://www.defense.gov/news/casualty.pdf>, accessed May 3, 2014.

the difficulty of actually reconstructing its internal politics.⁶⁴ The Iraq preoccupation drew American attention away from the rest of the world, especially in more strategically-beneficial regions like East Asia. It tarnished the reputation of the US military which appeared to have failed its mission in Iraq and engendered suspicion about the efficacy and bipartisan nature of the CIA.⁶⁵ In a holistic sense, the protracted and ill-fated Iraq War resulted in a real hesitancy toward large-scale war and influenced the more narrowly-focused foreign policy that the Obama administration has adopted.

In terms of United States' reputation in the Middle East, the American invasion occupation of Iraq renewed Arab fears about American imperialist intentions in the Middle East and empowered those actors, like Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran who draw support to their cause based on opposition to the hegemonic interference of the United States in Arab politics. By prioritizing Israel's interests before and during the war, American policy shifted away from that of a regional balance in the Middle East toward an interest in encouraging US-Israeli preemptive military action backed by conventional and nuclear capabilities, resulting in the extreme discomfort and suspicion of the Arab states toward their 'special relationship.'

Implications for the US-Israel Relationship

The failures of the Iraq War may provide insight regarding the future of the US-Israel relationship and the influence of the Israel Lobby in influencing US policy during the Obama administration and beyond. Unlike the attempted 'balancing act' of his successor Barack Obama, George W. Bush made no distinction between ideology and

⁶⁴ Howard LaFranchi, "How the Iraq war has changed America," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 10, 2011, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Foreign-Policy/2011/1210/How-the-Iraq-war-has-changed-America>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

strategy and even declared in his Second Inaugural Address that “American’s vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one.”⁶⁶ It would follow that an ideologically-driven presidential administration would engage with and support ideological organizations attempting to influence its policy. The ideological argument was essentially the Lobby’s only angle, and the United States made this so. The very nature of the US led invasion of Iraq in 2003 serves to discredit the strategic argument for US support of Israel. Aviad Kleinberg writes:

[The] threat [from Iraq] has been removed, more or less. However, the invasion of Iraq dramatically lowers Israel’s stock as a strategic asset.... Israel’s great strategic weight stemmed from its ability to act — or to constitute a potential threat— in a region in which the United States did not want to intervene directly. Israel was a regional mini-power through which it was possible to threaten the Soviet bloc and its satellites, or the Arab world. Israel preserved American interests. If American involvement becomes direct, there is no further need for mediators.⁶⁷

The decision to invade Iraq may have reflected the apex of power of the Israel Lobby’s influence on American foreign policy, its ideological alignment with Bush administration neoconservatives and impassioned persuasive tactics aimed at those in the United States hesitant about war but eager to prove their allegiance to America’s best friend in the region. However, as both the United States and Israel have acknowledged, the Iraq War was a decidedly more ideological than strategic battle and had repercussions for both nations. The major lesson of the Iraq War for Israel and its

⁶⁶ George W. Bush, “President Bush’s Second Inaugural Address,” *NPR*, January 20, 2005, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4460172>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁶⁷ Aviad Kleinberg, “The war’s implications for Israel,” *Haaretz*, April 11, 2003, <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/the-war-s-implications-for-israel-1.13180>, accessed April 27, 2014

lobby in the United States seems to be that, unless Israel can reinvigorate its designation as a legitimate strategic partner of the United States in foreign affairs, it will be relegated to the status of a mere beneficiary. It is not beyond conception that this reconstitution begins with a permanent solution to its biggest strategic liability — conflict with the Palestinians.

Chapter Two : Egypt and the Arab Spring

Background

The Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt surprised many casual observers who had long lauded the nation as a beacon of stability, despite its authoritarianism. Experts, however, had been following the regime's erosion since as far back as Gamal Abdel Nasser's state-centered economy and unfulfilled promises of public goods. Bolstered by US and multilateral support, Egypt managed to stabilize during the 1990s and through the mid-2000s; however, rising inflation, a growing income gap, and widespread corruption rendered the population increasingly disenchanted from its increasingly dysfunctional government. In 2010, these issues were exacerbated by rising food prices, an increasingly corrupt and selfish government, and increasingly strict censorship of the outlets through which the public could display their growing frustration. On January 25, 2011, the revolution was born, and it would become the largest of all uprisings among the Arab nations.⁶⁸

In order to understand the Egyptian story and measure the Israel Lobby's effectiveness in advancing Israel's interests on its North African neighbor's behalf, this chapter will analyze the major interpretations for US and Israeli behavior toward Egypt in the wake of the Arab Spring in preparation for an analysis of the effectiveness of AIPAC, the most prominent member of the Israel Lobby, in achieving its policy goals. In an effort to disentangle the United States' and Israel's respective national interests from the goals and missions of the Lobby and avoid any resultant misattribution of influence,

⁶⁸ Bruce K. Rutherford, "Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of the January 25 Uprising," in *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview, 2013) 39.

this chapter will begin with an analysis of the rhetoric and policies of both the United States and Israel before analyzing the Lobby's influence.

In this chapter, I attempt to answer two questions:

1. To what degree does the Israel lobby influence US foreign policy toward Egypt after the Arab Spring?
2. What are the implications of US foreign policy in Egypt for the US-Israel relationship and the prospects of peace in the Middle East?

I argue that, while influential in persuading legislators to support AIPAC's agenda (through campaign contributions of otherwise), the Israel Lobby is unable to assert its power on the Executive Branch which retains the last word on foreign policy issues. This notion is even heightened by the Obama administration's shift toward a more inclusive, dynamic foreign policy agenda and away from the regional status quo from which Israel is loath to diverge. The waning influence of the Israel Lobby reflects a growing tension in the US-Israel relationship and begs the question of whether Israel will consider reforming its policies or risk moving further away from its most important ally.

United States ideology on the Egyptian Arab Spring

President Obama was elected on a platform of opposition to the naïve ideological mission his predecessor George W. Bush attempted through the Iraq War. He committed himself to a more realistic assessment of "the sobering facts on the ground and our interests in the region" and entered the presidency with a plan to end the wars

in Iraq and Afghanistan and begin to rebalance US leadership on the world stage.⁶⁹ Even before his presidential campaign, the senator made a concerted effort to extricate himself from the age-old ideological battle between realism and idealism faced by American presidents.⁷⁰ At one campaign event, Senator Obama actually likened his foreign policy to that of George H.W. Bush, John F. Kennedy, and even Ronald Reagan. Once inaugurated, President Obama began to lean toward realism, and his first two years were spent drawing down the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and narrowing the focus of US Middle East policy while broadening America's national priorities; there was little overt effort to promote democracy or human rights.⁷¹ Obama displayed interest in promoting democratic reform; however, in order to disassociate himself from the sharp moral language of his predecessor, he defined US liberal and ideological interests in terms of realist concerns of political and economic stability. He expressed in a foreign policy speech to the State Department that:

Increased repression could threaten the political and economic stability of some of our allies, leave us with fewer capable, credible partners who can support our regional priorities, and further alienate citizens in the region....Moreover, our regional and international credibility will be undermined if we are seen or perceived

⁶⁹ Barack Obama, "A Way Forward in Iraq," *Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, September 20, 2006, <http://obamaspeeches.com/094-A-Way-Forward-in-Iraq-Obama-Speech.htm>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁷⁰ Ryan Lizza, "The Consequentialist: How the Arab Spring remade Obama's foreign policy," *The New Yorker*, May 2, 2011, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/05/02/110502fa_fact_lizza?currentPage=all, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

to be backing repressive regimes and ignoring the rights and aspirations of citizens.⁷²

In the initial stages of the Arab Spring, President Obama's foreign policy was deemed by many, even some in his administration, as confused, directionless, or inconsistent. However, to his closest advisors, his decisions made perfect sense: the president was attempting to balance US strategic and political goals in the Middle East with a more light-footed version of support for democratic American values in the Arab World. Indeed, the Arab Spring in Egypt emerged as a test for the Obama administration's balancing act and its ability to balance popular liberal goals of supporting the Egyptians' fight for freedom with the realist interest in maintaining the political and economic stability of one of its most important Arab allies.⁷³

United States Policy: Between Rhetoric and Action

The Obama administration began its behavior toward revolutionary Egypt by stating its commitment to supporting a people who were risking their lives for freedom. In an attempt to align himself on the side of freedom and democracy while avoiding the stigma of American interventionism, President Obama explained during a 2009 speech in Cairo: "America does not presume to know what is best for everyone, just as we would not presume to pick the outcome of a peaceful election. But I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed;...the freedom to live as you choose. Those

⁷² Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa," *The White House*, May 19, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-middle-east-and-north-africa%20>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁷³ *id.* at note 3

are not just American ideas, they are human rights, and that is why we will support them everywhere.”⁷⁴ In fact, in the two years following his speech in Cairo, faced with the reality of popular protests spreading all over the Middle East, President Obama began to adopt an even more ideologically supportive tone. In a May 2011 address to the State Department, he acknowledged this transformation:

We have the chance to show that America values the dignity of the street vendor in Tunisia more than the raw power of the dictator....Yes, there will be perils that accompany this moment of promise. But after decades of accepting the world as it is in the region, we have a chance to pursue the world as it should be.⁷⁵

In the same speech, the President proclaimed, “it will be the policy of the United States to promote reform across the region, and to support transitions to democracy....That effort begins in Egypt.” These unambiguous messages of support and commitment to the democratic principle of self-determination led some observers to believe his era of anti-ideology had ended and borne a tamer version of George W. Bush’s quest for global democracy.

However, as the initial hope of democratic revolution faded and the reality of a politically unstable, uncertain future in Egypt emerged, Obama’s stated commitments to democracy went unfulfilled. Rather than the ‘balancing act’ that White House officials proclaimed as the most fitting philosophy behind Obama’s foreign policy, it is more likely that this balancing act was not a balance between realist and liberal policies but rather

⁷⁴ Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on a New Beginning: Cairo University,” *The White House*, June 4, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁷⁵ Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa,” *The White House*, May 19, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-middle-east-and-north-africa%20>, accessed April 27, 2014.

between liberal statements and realist policy. Indeed, when the historical record of global US foreign policy, including Egypt, is considered, it would seem that the United States supports democratic revolutions in speech only — or only insofar as they produce governments amenable to extant US strategic geopolitical and economic interests. For example, Obama reneged on his plan to request that Mubarak step down after the State Department learned that his immediate removal would require a presidential election within 60 days, not nearly enough time for the perceived “moderate” parties to organize and defeat a Muslim Brotherhood candidate. A senior State Department official expressed a candid analysis of the events when he remarked to New Yorker reporter Ryan Lizza “I don’t think that because a group of young people get on the street that we are obliged to be for them.”⁷⁶

However, these liberal groups the State Department supported were widely seen as elitist and out of touch with the issues faced by average Egyptians, and despite Western-condemnations of the Muslim Brotherhood as a fundamentalist Islamic terrorist movement, since the January 25 revolution, the Brotherhood had begun to express support for democracy, separation of powers, protection of civil and political rights, equality for women and Copts, and a freely elected parliament.⁷⁷ Of course, FJP candidate Mohamed Morsi’s subsequent call for the implementation of sharia law and dialing back of women’s and Copt’s rights called into question the sincerity of commitments to democracy within the Egyptian political arena.⁷⁸ However, the United

⁷⁶ id. at note 3

⁷⁷ Bruce K. Rutherford, “Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of the January 25 Uprising,” in *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview, 2013) 48.

⁷⁸ For articles questioning the Muslim Brotherhood’s commitment to democracy, see Patrick Kingsley, “Muslim Brotherhood backlash against UN declaration on women rights,” *The Guardian*, March 15, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/15/muslim-brotherhood-backlash-un-womens-rights>, accessed May 3, 2014.; Kirsten Powers, “The Muslim Brotherhood’s War on Coptic Christians,” *The Daily*

States' blind support of unrepresentative political parties and out-of-hand rejection of the Muslim Brotherhood can be seen as an by the United States to maintain the status quo, despite evolving national interests in Egypt. Egyptian political parties are vast and varied, and yet they all have in common their interest in reducing Egypt's dependence on the United States.⁷⁹ Alternatively, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), a force with little interest in democratic change, in upholding civilian rights, or in subjecting itself to government scrutiny, is the only political actor in Egypt interested in maintaining a close relationship with the United States, and the feeling seems to be mutual.

Israeli Ideology on the Egyptian Arab Spring

Although the Arab Spring was initially viewed in detachment from any Israeli agenda, it gained significance with time and is now almost universally regarded by Israeli politicians and commentators with pessimism and anxiety. They fear the widespread protests invite long-term instability, encourage radical sociopolitical forces to emerge, and produce increased hostility toward Israel and its allies. One authoritative proponent of this view is Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, who sees the Arab Spring as having moved the Arabs “not forward, but backward” and fears as potentially hostile their “illiberal, anti-Western, anti-Israeli and anti-democratic” principles.⁸⁰ In fact, the ideology that the Arab world is inherently hostile to Israel is a fundamental tenet of the

Beast, August 22, 2013, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/08/22/the-muslim-brotherhood-s-war-on-coptic-christians.html>, accessed May 3, 2014.

⁷⁹Id. at p. 54

⁸⁰ Ian Peleg, “Israel and the Arab Spring: The Victory of Anxiety: in *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview, 2013) 174.

Israeli Right.⁸¹ The Israeli reaction to the Arab Spring is also political and accounts for perceived threats like: the danger that politically moderate nations, particularly Egypt and Jordan will break diplomatic ties with Israel as a result of internal upheaval; the possibility of a rise in Palestinian radicalism; increased pressure from the United States to contain political radicalization and Iran's nuclear threat; and the possibility that emergent Arab governments, independent from political pressure exercised from Washington, would adopt more anti-Israel policies than their fallen dictatorships.

While there have been a few specific assaults on Israeli national security that account for these perceived threats — namely increased violence from Hamas via the Sinai Peninsula — most of the vulnerability felt by Israelis stems from flawed reasoning, including the tendency to overstate the impact of Arab uprisings, and the unfortunate misconception that democracy and Islam are mutually exclusive philosophies. Unfortunately, these interpretations have persisted despite public opinion polls which revealed that over two-thirds of the Israeli population was not particularly worried about an Arab revolt, only a slight majority viewed the Arab Spring as negative for the Israeli-Palestinian peace,⁸² and the percentage of Jews who believed the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty would not be abrogated actually increased when Mohamed Morsi was elected.⁸³ Additionally, some members of the Israeli government, including President Shimon Peres and Israeli ambassador to Egypt Yitzhak Levanon have expressed optimism about the Egyptian Arab Spring and its implications for Israel, but such positivity has been drowned out by a chorus of apocalyptic rhetoric from Prime

⁸¹ id. at p. 181.

⁸² Ephraim Yarr and Tamar Hermann, "Peace Index - March 2011," *The Israel Democracy Institute*, March 2011, <http://en.idi.org.il/media/599578/Peace%20Index-March11-trans.pdf>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁸³ Yarr, Ephraim and Tamar Hermann. "Peace Index - June 2012." *The Israel Democracy Institute*, June 2012, <http://en.idi.org.il/media/602059/Peace%20Index-June%202012.pdf>, accessed April 27, 2014.

Minister Netanyahu's followers.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, the negative interpretations of the Arab Spring have been countered with a more optimistic perspective which asserts the following: more democratic regimes in the region will improve prospects for Middle East peace; Israel's peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan are in fact not in danger because they are in the long-term interests of all parties, regardless of the Arab Spring; not all Islamists are radical, and some of them are actually rather moderate and democratically-inclined; and post-Arab Spring governments will have too many internal problems to bother taking issue with Israel's domestic politics.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, this more reasoned perspective has been largely overshadowed by the distrust and pessimism of those bent on preserving the status quo.

Domestic Politics in Israel

It is yet to be determined whether the Arab Spring provided substantive, observable changes to Israel's domestic policy, and the Netanyahu government's official policy toward the Arab Spring is one of pessimism and passivity.⁸⁶ With regard to the Palestinians, the Arab Spring allows Netanyahu to dismiss agreements reached between the PLO and Hamas and disengage from the peace process entirely, citing regional instability as justifications for his inaction.⁸⁷ In terms of defense, despite

⁸⁴Lior Lehrs, "Egyptian Plague or Spring of Youth?: The Israeli Discourse regarding the Arab Spring" in *Israel and the Arab Spring: Opportunities for Change*, ed. Nimrod Goren and Jenia Yudkevich (Ramat Gan: Mitvim, 2012) 13-15, http://www.mitvim.org.il/images/Israel_and_the_Arab_Spring_-_Opportunities_in_Change_-_Mitvim-FES_e-book_2013.pdf, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁸⁵ id. note 12

⁸⁶ Elie Podeh and Nimrod Goren, "Israel in the Wake of the Arab Spring: Seizing Opportunities, Overcoming Challenges," *Israeli Presidential Conference*, May 2013, <http://2013.presidentconf.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Arab-Spring-Final.pdf>, accessed May 3, 2014.

⁸⁷ Yossi Klein Halevi, "Israel's Neighborhood Watch: Egypt's Upheaval Means that Palestine Must Wait," *Foreign Affairs*, February 1, 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67344/yossi-klein-halevi/israels-neighborhood-watch>, accessed April 27, 2014.

pressure from the Israeli public, the Israeli government was able to maintain its defense budget by arguing the necessity of maintaining a powerful defense force against the possibility of Arab aggression. In terms of its Arab neighbors, Israel has maintained important alliances with Egypt and Jordan while detaching itself from the Syrian conflict, despite its historic hostility toward Bashar al Assad, all of which developments have strengthened the perception that Israel is more interested in maintaining the regional status quo than supporting democratic change. Although it is unclear whether the Israeli people initiated or merely accepted Netanyahu's do-nothing agenda, it has become clear that the situation in Egypt has emerged as the most important indicator of the nature of post-Arab Spring Islamist movements in the Arab World and their implications for Israel. Egypt will potentially play an important role, not only for Israel's regional relations, but also in its local negotiations with the Palestinians.

After the Arab Spring began, Israel was surprised and disheartened by US deviation from traditional status quo behavior toward a more nuanced approach to the region, most notably in Egypt, where the United States, to Israel's dissatisfaction, did not insist on keeping Mubarak in power.⁸⁸ The increasingly strained relationship between the United States and Israel reflects an emerging tension between Israel's narrow security interests and the United States' broadening ideological, political, and strategic global interests. While US officials explain the so-called Obama Doctrine as one of nuance, a balancing act between supporting democratic movements and maintaining political relationships, including its special relationship with Israel, the Israeli

⁸⁸ id. note 11 p. 188

perspective sees US foreign policy as timid, inconsistent, and as shifting away from a strategic perspective once more aligned to Israel's.⁸⁹

As explained, current United States policy seeks a balance between ideological and strategic interests that Israel sees as a threat to the US-Israeli special relationship. In terms of Egypt, the Obama administration hopes to gain favor in the Arab World by supporting democratic revolutions, while Israel has little to gain from any potential democratization since it would not change the negative sentiment toward Israel that pervades the Arab World.⁹⁰ The Egyptian case provides insight into the future of a US-Israeli relationship characterized less by tactical similarities and imbues the Israel Lobby with an unfamiliar feeling of uncertainty about their role in this relationship for the future.

Israeli Foreign Policy on Egypt

Tension between the United States and Israel and their increasingly divergent national interests and resultant strategic perspectives in the Middle East manifested itself in intense debates about whether to cut or suspend aid to the Egyptian military. As is widely known, Egypt receives the United States' second largest military aid package (after Israel), about \$1.3 billion annually.⁹¹ However, this constant flow of aid, uninterrupted since the Camp David Accords which resulted in an Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, became the subject of controversy as democratic progress in Egypt began to backslide. Throughout 2013, because the Egyptian military continued to use

⁸⁹ Haim Malka, *Crossroads: The Future of the U.S. - Israeli Strategic Partnership* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011),

http://csis.org/files/publication/110908_Malka_CrossroadsUSIsrael_Web.pdf, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁹⁰ Dov Waxman, "The Real Problem in U.S.- Israeli Relations," *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2012, <http://csis.org/files/publication/twg12springwaxman.pdf>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁹¹ Jeremy M. Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service*, January 14, 2014, <http://www.fas.org/sqp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>, accessed April 27, 2014.

US funded tanks and tear gas in a violent crackdown against anti-government protesters, the United States came under global scrutiny and debated punishing Egypt by cutting off military aid. Contrastingly, Israel has strongly opposed any freeze or cutback on aid to Egypt, its closest Middle East ally, since the fall of Mubarak. It provides a manifold explanation for why ceasing aid to Egypt is unwise, which AIPAC echoes in its lobbying efforts.⁹² The first stems from the 1979 Camp David Accords in which the United States negotiated a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, which resulted in monetary support from the United States that has continued since 1979. If US funding were to cease, the Camp David Accords would be essentially null and void because Egypt would have lost its incentive to maintain peace, and Israel would have lost its most reliable ally in the Middle East. The second is the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist anti-Israel political movement which Israel sees as a threat to its national security. The Israeli government's logic is that, if the United States were to stop funding the Egyptian military's crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, the Muslim Brotherhood would gain power and destabilize the relatively peaceful relationship between Israel and Egypt.

However, neither of these visions has materialized and both have come under scrutiny as a result. Paul Pillar of *The National Interest* explains that, in fact, reduced aid does not endanger Egyptian-Israeli peace because no Egyptian leader in his right mind would breach peace with a nation to which it has been militarily inferior since 1973. In response to the claim that stronger Egyptian military would better manage cross-border violence, Pillar writes that the opposite is more likely true: increased aggression from

⁹² Zvika Krieger, "Egypt vs. Israel: How Congress Weighs the Risks of Cutting our Aid to Cairo," in *The Atlantic*, February 16, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/02/egypt-vs-israel-how-congress-weighs-the-risks-of-cutting-our-aid-to-cairo/253193/>, accessed April 27, 2014.

the Egyptian military would only provoke more violence from Islamists. Either way, the Israeli government has been always vigilant about militant violence in its midst, regardless of Egyptian policies, and this case is probably no different, especially since Egypt shares Israel's deep concern for anarchy in the Sinai.⁹³ Alternatively, Paul Pillar writes, some members of the Israeli government may in fact be wary of emphasizing Camp David because of the agreements made there.⁹⁴ While huge US aid to Egypt was in part the price paid for Egypt's breaking Arab ranks and making a separate peace with Israel, even more significant aid to Israel has been maintained despite Israel's failure to fulfill its end of the bargain, namely peace with Palestinians within five years and a withdrawal from Palestinian territory. Paul Pillar writes that the Israeli Right, although loath to admit it publicly, is disconcerted by the idea that the United States would leverage its major aid relationship with a Middle Eastern country to encourage a government to amend its repressive policies.

The Israel Lobby versus Rand Paul

As Israel's de facto representative in Washington, AIPAC has strongly opposed cutting or suspending military aid to Egypt, aid which it argues is fundamental to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, securing the Sinai Peninsula, and maintaining the blockade of the Gaza Strip.⁹⁵ However, some members of Congress were not convinced, and a July 2013 initiative to stop the flow of military aid to Egypt until free

⁹³ id. note 11 p. 189

⁹⁴ Paul R. Pillar, "Don't Worry About the Peace Treaty," *The National Interest*, August 19, 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/dont-worry-about-the-peace-treaty-8919?page=1>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁹⁵ "Talking Points: Egypt and the Sinai" AIPAC, 2014, <http://www.aipac.org/learn/issues/issue-display?issueid={E491C400-58B9-4967-9CC9-9489F5935192}>, accessed April 27, 2014.

and fair elections were held was presented in an amendment sponsored by Senator Rand Paul, who argued that the removal of Mohamed Morsi evinced a coup d'état, which required that the United States, by law, to cut military aid.⁹⁶ AIPAC expressed public opposition to the bill. The group wrote a letter to Senators Robert Menendez, Senate Foreign Relations chair and Bob Corker, ranking member, warning that the amendment “could increase instability in Egypt and undermine important US interests and negatively impact our Israeli ally.”⁹⁷ The bill was defeated in an 86-13 vote and was opposed by leading Republicans like Senators Lindsey Graham and John McCain, who specifically cited AIPAC and Israel’s interests as a reason for his opposition.⁹⁸ However, both Lindsey Graham and John McCain, had initially supported cutting aid as a matter of principle. In fact, on July 12, 2013, they co-authored an op-ed in the Washington Post on the issue, stating, “We know that many of our friends in Egypt and the region do not want the United States to suspend assistance. But we are fully committed to encouraging the Egyptian people’s efforts to build an effective and enduring democracy.”⁹⁹ While it is impossible to claim with certainty that AIPAC prevented the Paul amendment from passing because Republicans and Democrats alike opposed it, the AIPAC letter expressing Israeli opposition to the amendment was read into the Congressional Record right before the Senate voted for it, and right before McCain and

⁹⁶Burgess Everett, “Senate Kills Rand Paul Attempt to Cut Egypt Aid” *Politico*, July 31, 2013, <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/07/egypt-aid-rand-paul-94980.html>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁹⁷“AIPAC Opposes Cuts in Egypt Aid,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, August 1, 2013, <http://www.jta.org/2013/08/01/news-opinion/politics/aipac-in-senate-letter-opposes-cuts-in-egypt-aid#ixzz2cHElxkoQ>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁹⁸Congressional Record — Senate,” *Government Printing Office*, July 31, 2013, S6092, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CREC-2013-07-31/pdf/CREC-2013-07-31-pt1-PgS6085-3.pdf#page=7>, accessed April 27, 2014.

⁹⁹John McCain and Lindsey Graham, “Cut Off Aid to Egypt, Senate Leaders Say” *The Washington Post*, July 12, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/john-mccain-and-lindsey-graham-cut-off-aid-to-egypt/2013/07/12/5850a1f4-eb19-11e2-a301-ea5a8116d211_story.html, accessed April 27, 2014.

Graham changed their minds.¹⁰⁰ Lobbying efforts with respect to Egypt have been increasingly private, since no government is interested in publicly supporting an oppressive regime. However, one AIPAC source, speaking on the condition of anonymity explained, “the primary criteria on how we evaluate this issue is if Egypt is adhering to the peace treaty.”¹⁰¹ Regardless of the publicity of AIPAC’s lobbying efforts, it remains clear that the organization made an impact on at least those members of Congress subject to persuasion.

The Israel Lobby versus President Obama

Although the failed Rand Paul amendment faded out of view, unrest in Egypt remained in full tilt, and by early August of 2013, President Obama’s advisors were urging him to respond to the military takeover in Egypt. Although the administration did not publicly announce that a coup had taken place, and therefore avoided having to cut all aid, it did send a political message to the Egyptian military government by undertaking a “recalibration,” thereby withholding the remainder of the 2013 Fiscal Year Budget, which included tank kits, fighter jets, helicopters, and harpoon missiles, as well as \$260 million for the general Egyptian budget.¹⁰² State Department spokeswoman Jen

¹⁰⁰“Congressional Record — Senate,” *Government Printing Office*, July 31, 2013, S6091, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CREC-2013-07-31/pdf/CREC-2013-07-31-pt1-PgS6085-3.pdf#page=7>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹⁰¹ John Hudson, “Egypt’s Rulers Have a New Friend in D.C.: The Israel Lobby,” *The Cable — Foreign Policy*, August 19, 2013, http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/08/19/egypts_rulers_have_a_new_friend_in_dc_the_israel_lobby, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹⁰² Michael R. Gordon and Mark Lander, “In Crackdown Response, U.S. Temporarily Freezes Some Military Aid to Egypt,” *The New York Times*, October 9, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/10/world/middleeast/obama-military-aid-to-egypt.html?pagewanted=1&ref=middleeast&r=1&>, accessed April 27, 2014.

Psaki announced the suspension was enacted “pending credible progress toward an inclusive, democratically elected civilian government through free and fair elections.”¹⁰³

This move was explained by officials in the White House as sending a strong message to Egypt that violent retaliation against peaceful protesters is unacceptable, and that their aid package is not unconditional. However, noting that much of Egypt’s FY 2013 aid had already been distributed, and that aid for military training, counterterrorism programs, and Sinai security had been continued, some members of Congress saw the aid suspension as more of a symbolic move meant to appease critics of US aid to Egypt than attempt to change the military’s behavior.¹⁰⁴ Senator Patrick Leahy, chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on State Department, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, remarked in an interview with the New York Times that “the administration is trying to have it both ways, by suspending some aid but continuing other aid....By doing that, the message is muddled.”¹⁰⁵ The next month, both Graham and McCain were chosen by the Obama administration to visit Cairo and warn the military government that the United States that opposed Senator Paul’s amendment but supported the Obama administration’s subsequent decision to stall aid. McCain remarked in a television interview that the “administration lost credibility when it did not cut off aid”¹⁰⁶ and Senator Graham explained, “somebody needs to look el-Sisi in the

¹⁰³ Spencer Ackerman and Ian Black, “U.S. trims aid to Egypt as part of a diplomatic ‘recalibration,’” *The Guardian*, October 9, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/09/obama-cuts-military-aid-egypt>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Louisa Loveluck, “US military aid freeze to Egypt is a symbol, not a blow,” *Global Post*, October 14, 2013, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/egypt/131013/us-military-aid-freeze-egypt-symbol-not-blow>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ *id.* note 30

¹⁰⁶ Mark Lander and Thom Shanker, “Leaving Military Aid Intact, U.S. Takes Steps to Halt Economic Help to Egypt,” *The New York Times*, August 18, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/19/world/middleeast/leaving-military-aid-intact-us-takes-steps-to-halt-economic-help-to-egypt.html?pagewanted=all>, accessed April 27, 2014.

eye and say, 'you're going to destroy Egypt, you're going to doom your country to a beggar state, you're going to create an insurgency for generations to come; turn around, General, before it's too late.'"¹⁰⁷

Explanations for the Variance

Although the Rand plan to cut aid to Egypt was defeated in the Senate, the Obama administration enacted a similar suspension two months later. The Israel lobby, represented throughout this issue by AIPAC, was indeed vocal. It lobbied substantially against the Rand amendment, and the floor debate regarding cuts to Egyptian aid reflects a significant consideration for Israeli interests and those of AIPAC by extension. It certainly appears that senators like Lindsey Graham and John McCain feared retribution from AIPAC or its supporters and so opposed the cuts. It is as if Graham and McCain could not oppose aid cuts to Egypt in the face of pressure by AIPAC, and their capitulation to the lobby was rewarded with political gain. Later, when asked by President Obama to visit Egypt and warn the military about possible aid suspension, McCain and Graham spoke out against the military's brutal crackdowns and paid lip service to the bravery of the protesters and their democratic values.

However, attributing the defeat of Rand's plan totally to the Israel Lobby and the broader interests of Israel would be an inappropriate oversimplification. As has been the historical precedent, Congress tends to defer to the president on matters of foreign policy; correspondingly, within the US-Israel relationship, the Lobby tends to exert more significant influence over Congress and tends to be trumped by Executive foreign policy

¹⁰⁷Lindsey Graham, "Transcript — the Situation in Egypt" *CBS: Face the Nation*, August 18, 2013, <http://votesmart.org/public-statement/804925/cbs-face-the-nation-transcript-situation-in-egypt#.UxJ0hPRdWF4>, accessed April 27, 2014.

decisions. This case of military aid to Egypt is no different. While AIPAC boasts of countless friends in Congress, the White House is essentially a free agent in terms of foreign relations, and even members of Congress were shocked when the Obama administration decided to suspend Egyptian aid without consulting anyone.¹⁰⁸

Another explanation that accounts for the variance in outcomes of the two aid suspension proposals lies in the purview of the respective proposals. While Rand Paul called for a redirection of Egypt's entire aid package to domestic infrastructural improvements through Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development, Obama's aid suspension only targeted certain areas of the aid package and was decidedly more symbolic than substantive. Of course it had little to no effect on the activities of the Egyptian military; however, this was by design. In the spirit of the Obama administration's balancing act between lofty rhetoric and decisive action, the aid suspension gave President Obama a brief respite from public scrutiny while sending a political message (however empty) that the United States is still a global authority. All of the aid appropriated for Egyptian-Israel joint security activities was maintained, so while AIPAC continued to complain, its efforts were more a matter of routine than one of urgency. Lastly, if the Muslim Brotherhood does come to overpower the military and take control, no one will be able to blame the United States for enacting a wholesale aid block that strengthened their presence. The Obama administration can continue to wax

¹⁰⁸ Julian Pecquet, "Aid cut to Egypt leaves lawmakers in the dark," *The Hill*, October 10, 2013, <http://thehill.com/policy/international/327675-obama-aid-cut-to-egypt-leaves-angry-lawmakers-in-the-dark>, accessed May 3, 2014.

humanitarian on the importance of the “right side of history”¹⁰⁹ but it is more beneficial to be on the victorious side, and the realist President Obama knows this.

Implications for the United States and Israel

The Obama administration’s behavior in Egypt indicates an important shift in the power dynamics of US government, the fundamental ideology with which the United States interacts with Middle Eastern governments, and an emerging tension between the United States and Israel absent from the historical record. In terms of US governmental power dynamics, Congress seems to be emerging as an increasingly politicized body, vulnerable and sometimes unduly influenced by organizations like AIPAC that tirelessly work to make their voices heard. Alternatively, on matters of foreign policy, Congress is increasingly isolated from Executive decision-making, which is increasingly isolated from public accountability. This shift has been necessitated by a president whose foreign policy is based on events more than ideology. In order to achieve a narrowly-focused but broadly-prioritized, nuanced but inclusive foreign policy, President Obama needs room to maneuver the partisan politics so pervasive in his divided government. Fully understanding the fiscal and political limits of American power in Egypt, the Obama administration is both unwilling and unable to arrange political outcomes for the Egyptian people. As a result, Obama has shifted its strategies toward a more realistic assessment of the situation at hand which, to his credit, is exactly what he told the American people he would do.

¹⁰⁹ Barack Obama, “Press Conference by the President,” *The White House*, February 15, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/15/press-conference-president>, accessed April 27, 2014.

Unfortunately, this new strategic perspective is less popular among the Israeli government, and increasing tension in the US-Israel relationship has resulted from US dynamism and Israeli stagnation. While the United States and Israel have historically agreed — on matters of regional stability and security, support for pro-Western governments, and recently issues of terrorism and nuclear proliferation — US support for popular rule (however symbolic) in Egypt represents a surprising and unwelcome development for Israelis who supported the pro-Western authoritarian Hosni Mubarak unconditionally until the end. The US-Israel relationship has historically been a reciprocal security relationship, and Israel has continued to deliver on its security promises, but the more United States becomes increasingly interested in diplomacy and multilateral cooperation to guide its action, the less dependent it will be on the security production of Israel.¹¹⁰ Quite simply, Israel fears becoming irrelevant, and the Israeli government's automatic response to do nothing but prepare for the worst further alienates the nation from the United States, from its Middle East neighbors, and even from its own people.¹¹¹

Above all, the Arab Spring has made a peace between Israelis and Arabs ever more elusive. This development is not merely a result of the political difficulty of peace-making in an unstable region but more importantly the result of psychological factors. Israel, always the religious, political, and ideological black sheep of the Middle East and faced with new realities among its perceived hostile regional partners, is once again on the defense, but its predisposition for making fatalistic assumptions, coupled with its

¹¹⁰ id. note 17 p. 73.

¹¹¹ id. note 11 p. 183.

disinclination to revise the status quo, is an internal existential threat even more immediate than the one posed by its neighbors.

Chapter Three: Iran's Nuclear Program

Introduction

This chapter aims to answer the question of Israel Lobby influence on American policy in the Middle East by linking the two issues at the forefront of US-Israeli relations and the source of existential anxiety among Israelis not felt since the end of World War II: the Arab-Israeli conflict and Iran's nuclear program. While the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict is long and complex, and the history of the Iranian nuclear program is longer than is generally acknowledged, for the sake of simplicity and relevance, this chapter will restrict the historical period from 2008 to early 2014 to cover the Obama administration's relationship with Israel and Iran, especially since the Arab Spring. Although not explicitly impacted by the so-called 'Arab Spring', Iran has emerged as a central protagonist in the region's current and future transformation and the subject of intense discussion in both the United States and Israel. This chapter aims to answer two questions:

1. To what degree does the Israel Lobby influence US policy toward the Iranian Nuclear Program?
2. What is the relationship between Iranian Nuclear Program and the prospects for a negotiated two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict?

In order to examine the influence of the Israel Lobby, I will track the activities of two organizations on opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, AIPAC and J Street. I argue that the Israel Lobby, while not an omnipotent force in US foreign policy, does have significant implications for the way the Iranian threat is perceived and addressed, as well as for the Arab-Israeli conflict and the prospects for its negotiated solution. At the

same time, the influence attributed to the Israel Lobby is waning as the United States under President Obama recalibrates its presence in the Middle East.

Background of the Iranian Nuclear Program

Iran has been pursuing nuclear technology since the era of Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program in 1957 and was supplied with highly enriched uranium by the United States until US-Iran diplomatic ties were broken in 1979 as a result of the Islamic Revolution.¹¹² Afterward, Iran's nuclear program was temporarily halted but restarted as early as 1985, with the help of Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan.¹¹³ These clandestine activities continued in fits and starts until reports in 2002 and 2003 revealed research into fuel enrichment and conversion beyond the needs for peaceful purposes began to raise international anxiety about the motives of the Iranian nuclear program. A 2007 National Intelligence Estimate reported that Iran had halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003 but acknowledged the possibility of the program being reinstated by the end of 2007¹¹⁴. Indeed, a September 2009 report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) revealed the construction on a new facility in Fordow (Qom province) had been ongoing, albeit haltingly, since mid-2002, despite Iranian declarations that construction began in late 2007. Regardless, Iran's failure to notify the IAEA violated the safeguard agreements of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), of which Iran is a

¹¹² Shahram Chubin, "The Politics of Iran's Nuclear Program," *United States Institute of Peace*, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/politics-irans-nuclear-program>, accessed May 3, 2014.

¹¹³ Leonard S. Spector, "Iranian Nuclear Program Remains Major Threat Despite Partial Freeze of Weapons-Relevant Activities Described in New U.S. National Intelligence Estimate," *James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies*, December 6, 2007, <http://cns.miis.edu/stories/071206.htm>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹¹⁴ "Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities," National Intelligence Estimate, (November 2006): 6, http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/international/20071203_release.pdf, accessed April 27, 2014.

signatory.¹¹⁵ A February 2010 report signaled a shift in Iran's dealings with the IAEA -- which, up until then, had been somewhat tense but not flagrantly dishonest. This time, Iran refused to fully cooperate with IAEA inspectors and their requests to visit all areas of enrichment facilities and take samples of the materials produced there, and the report raised concerns about the possible existence of undisclosed enrichment for the purpose of weaponization.¹¹⁶

Although the United States has been imposing economic sanctions on Iran for 25 years, the international consensus against a nuclear Iran is more recent. The first United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution to impose export bans on the Iranian regime was enacted in 2006 and called on member states to work to prevent Iran from intelligence and materials necessary for nuclear enrichment.¹¹⁷ US and international sanctions imposed on Iran have been expanding since then but, in the spirit of 'Obama doctrine,' are increasingly specific and more narrowly conceived. Instead of broad sanctions which disproportionately impoverish Iranian citizens, the United States is increasingly targeting Iran's financial and energy sectors more relevant to the nuclear program. US officials reported in mid-2013 that sanctions have significantly impacted the Iranian economy;¹¹⁸ however, this topic is hotly debated, and the

¹¹⁵IAEA Board of Governors, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), and 1835 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *International Atomic Energy Agency*, November 16, 2009, http://www.isisnucleariran.org/assets/pdf/IAEA_Report_Iran_16November2009.pdf, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹¹⁶ IAEA Board of Governors, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), and 1835 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *International Atomic Energy Agency*, February 18, 2010, <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2010/gov2010-10.pdf>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹¹⁷ UNSC, "Resolution 1737," *United Nations Security Council*, December 27, 2006, http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iaeaairan/unsc_res1737-2006.pdf, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹¹⁸ "The Lengthening List of Iran Sanctions," *The Council on Foreign Relations*, Updated October 4, 2013, http://www.cfr.org/iran/lengthening-list-iran-sanctions/p20258?cid=rss-iran-the_lengthening_list_of_iran_s-043012, accessed April 27, 2014.

controversial question of whether the sanctions have been effective in deterring Iran's nuclear program is not the subject of this research.

American and Iranian ideology

Upon entering office in 2008, President Obama identified the prospect of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon as one of his top five foreign policy concerns, and understandably so, considering the volatility of a nuclear arms race in the most unstable region of the world.¹¹⁹ In a candid 2012 interview with Atlantic correspondent Jeffrey Goldberg, President Obama indicated with confidence the increasing weakness and isolation of the Iranian government in the region; in fact, he labeled the Arab Spring a “strategic defeat for Iran” whose continued censorship and violation of civil rights runs counter to regional movements toward freedom and self-determination.¹²⁰ Interestingly, the dominant Iranian reaction to the Arab Spring was, rather than a threat, seen as welcome challenge to the legacy of Western influence in the region and was actually encouraged.¹²¹ Of course, Iran remains acutely aware of its past and present strategic isolation as a majority Shiite, Persian state in a region dominated by Sunni Arabs. The Iranian nuclear program was born out of this atmosphere of simultaneous insecurity and obsession with self-sufficiency, and it has been able to slowly but steadily leverage the Arab Spring to achieve regional influence with its nuclear program.¹²² The Iranian

¹¹⁹ Kenneth Katzman, “Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses,” *Congressional Research Service*, March 5, 2014, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32048.pdf>, accessed May 3, 2014.

¹²⁰ Jeffrey Goldberg, “Obama to Iran and Israel: ‘As President of the United States, I Don’t Bluff,’” *The Atlantic*, March 2, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/obama-to-iran-and-israel-as-president-of-the-united-states-i-dont-bluff/253875/>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹²¹ Suzanne Maloney, “Iran: The Bogeyman,” in *The Arab Awakening: America and the Transformation of the Middle East*, ed. Kenneth M Pollack, et al. (Washington DC: Brookings, 2011) 258.

¹²² Reza Marashi and Trita Parsi, “The Gift and the Curse: Iran and the Arab Spring,” in *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview, 2013) 137.

government saw the upheaval as having changed the regional security arrangements in way that limits US flexibility and influence in the region while simultaneously offering Iran an opportunity to exploit increased regional instability for its own political ends in the long term. It recognizes that the United States is attempting to balance democratic values with security interests but is skeptical that President Obama is moving away from the status quo, especially considering the longstanding US alliance with status quo regional powers Saudi Arabia and Israel.¹²³

However, with respect to Iran's nuclear program, and in contrast to his behavior toward Egypt, President Obama has been more consistent in his statements and actions towards Iran's nuclear program and is making a concerted effort to convince the Iranians that US overtures are sincere. In his 2014 State of the Union Address, the president explicitly stated his plan to veto any new sanctions bill forwarded to him by Congress in an effort to "give diplomacy a chance to succeed,"¹²⁴ and he has kept his word. In a 2013 speech to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), President Obama, echoing the realist and more narrowly focused foreign policy agenda on which he campaigned, declared the United States' refusal to allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon but explicitly stated: We are not seeking regime change, and we respect the right of the Iranian people to access peaceful nuclear energy. Instead, we insist that the Iranian government meet its responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-proliferation treaty and U.N. Security Council resolutions."¹²⁵ By couching his claims against Iran in terms

¹²³ Id. note 10, p. 149.

¹²⁴ Office of the Press Secretary, "President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address," *The White House Government Printing Office*, January 28, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/28/president-barack-obamas-state-union-address>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹²⁵ Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly," *The White House Government Printing Office*, September 24, 2013,

of the requirements of an internationally-accepted organization, President Obama is attempting to sidestep the unilateral and hegemonic actions that so empower rejectionist states like Iran which thrive on anti-imperialist sentiment.

The Difference between Egypt and Iran

When faced with the disparity in Obama's responses to Egypt and Iran after the Arab Spring, the most plausible explanation seems to rest on American national security. President Obama has unambiguously identified the prospects of a nuclear Iran as "profoundly in the security interests of the United States".¹²⁶ Whereas President Obama would prefer a legacy of being on the 'right side of history' in terms of pro-democracy movements in Egypt, his support was more rhetorical than substantive because the US relationship with Egypt is not in severe danger of deterioration, regardless of the type of government that emerges. In the Iranian case, a nuclear Iran in a region with no shortage of hostility toward the United States is a national security threat on which President Obama cannot afford to waver. This behavior is fairly consistent with the so-called Obama doctrine: defer to international diplomacy and multilateralism unless security is in danger, in which case the threat of military force is employed.

In addition to the issue of national security, Egypt and Iran differ in terms of their pro-democracy movements. Whereas the pro-democracy in Egypt is extremely visible and has been well-publicized, the movement toward democracy in Iran is, despite its

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/24/remarks-president-obama-address-united-nations-general-assembly>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹²⁶ Id. note 9

long history, much more quiet and its repression of pro-democracy agitation much more subtle. For example, in comparing the Egyptian security forces with Iran's Revolutionary Guards, President Mubarak's 2011 ouster left approximately 850 dead as opposed to 100 (at most) following Iran's 2009 elections.¹²⁷ Of course, this body count does not reflect a heightened sense of humanity in the Rouhani administration as compared to Egypt, but rather a more efficient, selective, and multifaceted approach for dealing with its opposition. Simply put, President Obama was forced into his balancing act because of popular support for democracy in Egypt, whereas this movement in Iran has received less international attention, so he is able to act more consistently and decisively toward Iran than was ever possible with Egypt.

Israeli Perceptions

Because the focus of this paper is US-Israel relations, we must now turn to the Israeli perception of a nuclear Iran. Reflections on the Arab Spring for Israel are vast and vary from claims of 'historic opportunity' to 'impending doom' and every value in between them. In terms of Iran, however, the perception is decidedly skewed toward the negative and a reaction to both ideological and strategic hostility emanating from the Iranian government. Israel is extremely troubled by Iran's antipathy toward the Jewish state and its rhetorical refusal to accept Israel's right to exist on the land of historic Palestine. At the same time, Israel (and most other nations concerned with Middle East politics) understands the Islamic Republic's use of hyperbolic rhetoric for political posturing and is therefore decidedly more worried about Iran's tactical measures, including its endorsement of such Islamic extremist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas,

¹²⁷ Id. note 10 p.264

its championship of the Palestinian cause, and its intention of gaining Islamic Arab allies to establish itself as a regional hegemon against its Israeli enemy.

Israel's discomfort with Iran's nuclear ambitions can be traced to the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war, after which it began to refocus attention to the nuclear program. However, in a post-Arab Spring Middle East, Israel's anxiety about Iran's emergence as a significant regional player has transformed into an apocalyptic vision of Israel surrounded by nuclear-capable Islamic regimes opposed to the very existence of the Jewish state. Israel is highly uncomfortable with the United States' supposed shift away from the status quo because a changing US foreign policy agenda obscures and potentially threatens the US-Israel relationship. As a result of the developments in Iran and the United States' reactions to them, Israeli policymakers have become increasingly vocal about their hopes for the Obama administration and increasingly aggressive toward the Rouhani administration.

Lobby Influence

In an attempt to represent the spectrum of pro-Israel lobbying organizations considered members of the so-called 'Israel lobby', this section will analyze the influence of two organizations with different ideologies and methodologies for enacting change: J Street and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). J Street is a pro-peace, pro-Israel political organization committed to a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and often thought of as AIPAC's liberal counterpart. J Street is also a political action committee (PAC) registered with the United States Federal Election Commission. AIPAC, on the other hand, is a pro-Israel lobbying organization

dedicated to strengthening the US-Israel relationship and promoting Israel's security interests. Unlike J Street, AIPAC is not a PAC, and it does not explicitly contribute to congressional campaigns. Instead, AIPAC lobbies Congress, raises money and contributes funds it to the loosely affiliated group of pro-Israel organizations for spending on issues about which Israel is concerned. For example, of the \$3,815,744 spent on pro-Israel lobbying in 2013, AIPAC accounted for almost \$3 million of that amount (its highest fundraising to date).¹²⁸ The complete list of PACs which receive monetary 'conduit contributions' from AIPAC is undisclosed, since AIPAC maintains that it is not affiliated with any of the 31 pro-Israel PACs. Both AIPAC and J Street are members of the coalition of nine organizations lobbying on behalf of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013 (S.1881),¹²⁹ although J Street has since reversed course and is now lobbying against S.1881.¹³⁰

AIPAC's talking points on Iran states its unequivocal demand that Iran end its nuclear program and that the United States play an instrumental role in the achievement of this end. Their website states, "American policy must unabashedly seek to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear weapons capability. A nuclear-armed Iran is an existential threat to Israel and would arm the world's leading sponsor of terrorism with the ultimate weapon."¹³¹ AIPAC specifically calls on the United States Congress to carry out what it deems necessary steps in the prevention of Iran's nuclear weaponization. In a policy

¹²⁸ "Annual Lobbying for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee," *The Center for Responsive Politics*, January 27, 2014, <http://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/clientsum.php?id=D000046963&year=2013>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹²⁹ "Clients Lobbying on S.1881: Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013," *The Center for Responsive Politics*, <http://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/billsum.php?id=s1881-113>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹³⁰ J Street, "Tell your senators you oppose the Menendez-Kirk Iran sanctions bill (S. 1881)," *J Street*, http://act.jstreet.org/sign/oppose_1881_nsc/, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹³¹ "Iran: Talking Points," *AIPAC*, <http://www.aipac.org/learn/issues/issue-display?issueid={1A989C8D-72FF-41B7-9A4B-02067A73CAD3}>, accessed April 27, 2014.

memo on the interim agreement between Iran and the P5+1, AIPAC laid out specific steps which it expected from Congress, including strict oversight of Iranian compliance, the terms of a final agreement that would end Iran's nuclear weapons pursuit, and potential consequences if Iran violates the agreement.¹³² AIPAC has also been an explicit and vocal advocate of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013 (S.1881) which calls for additional sanctions on Iran to be implemented within 90 days if the President is unable to certify a long list of—in the eyes of its opponents—unreasonable claims. The bill, coauthored by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL), two of the biggest recipients of campaign funding from pro-Israel political action committees (PACs) implicitly associated with AIPAC,¹³³ has sparked controversy on Capitol Hill, especially since Iran's ultimatum that it would leave the negotiating table if the bill were to pass.

Proponents of the bill charge that Iran is bluffing about leaving the talks, while the opposition worries that, if the talks fail, the US Congress will be blamed, and the prospect of international support for action against Iran will be pushed irretrievably out of reach.¹³⁴ Additionally, the bill names Congress as constitutionally responsible for diplomatically, economically, and militarily supporting the Government of Israel if it is “compelled to take military action in legitimate self-defense against Iran's nuclear

¹³² AIPAC Memo, “Congress Must Act to Ensure Iranian Compliance,” *AIPAC*, January 14, 2014, <http://www.aipac.org/~media/Publications/Policy%20and%20Politics/AIPAC%20Analyses/Issue%20Memos/2014/AIPAC%20Memo%20-%20Congress%20Must%20Act%20to%20Ensure%20Iranian%20Compliance.pdf>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹³³ “Pro-Israel: Money to Congress,” *The Center for Responsive Politics*, March 10, 2014, <http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/summary.php?ind=Q05&cycle=All&recipdetail=S&sortorder=N&mem=Y>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹³⁴ Steven L. Spiegel, “Congress, don't pass the Nuclear Weapons Free Iran Act,” *The Hill*, January 23, 2014, <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/196154-congress-dont-pass-the-nuclear-weapons-free-iran-act>, accessed April 27, 2014.

weapon program.”¹³⁵ President Obama and his White House officials have clearly expressed his opposition to the bill, which they sees as an obstacle to the success of the current negotiations. Although the President will veto the bill if it passes in the House and Senate, a two-thirds majority in both houses could undermine it; indeed, the notion of 59 cosponsors is not insignificant.¹³⁶ Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), who outlines the Senate’s agenda, has consistently left the new sanctions bill off the table, thereby almost single-handedly preventing the bill from coming to a vote. Because there is surprisingly bipartisan support for the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013, Reid is not currently in a popular position in Congress but is supported by the White House and especially President Obama. Although AIPAC’s efforts have been temporarily thwarted, its lobbyists remain standing by, waiting for the negotiations for a final agreement to collapse so they can reinvigorate efforts to punish the Iranian regime.¹³⁷

It would be misguided to attribute the bipartisan Congressional support of increased sanctions entirely to the lobbying efforts of AIPAC, and it is possible that pro-Israel lobbying on this issue is merely a representation of Congressional opinion that Obama has not been harsh enough on Rouhani. It is more likely that pro-Israel lobby campaign contributions have incentivized members of Congress to adopt an increased loyalty to or even simply a more sympathetic view of Israel’s agenda. Indeed all 59

¹³⁵ Senator Robert Menendez, “Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013,” *The United States Senate*, December 19, 2013, <http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Nuclear%20Weapon%20Free%20Iran%20Act.pdf>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹³⁶ Library of Congress, “Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013,” *113th Congress*, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d113:s.1881;> accessed April 27, 2014.

¹³⁷ Tim Starks, “Fate of Iran Sanctions Bill Rests Largely with Reid,” *Roll Call*, January 28, 2014, http://www.rollcall.com/news/fate_of_iran_sanctions_bill_rests_largely_with_reid-230448-1.html?pg=3, accessed April 27, 2014.

backers of the latest Iran sanctions bill are recipients of campaign contributions from pro-Israel PACs,¹³⁸ and 17 of the cosponsors were listed in the top 20 highest contributions in either the 2012¹³⁹ or 2014¹⁴⁰ congressional elections.

J Street is a new organization, and it is often viewed as AIPAC's much smaller, less influential counterpart. However, J Street has undeniably become a strong force for the Israel Lobby, so strong that its affiliated PACs accounted for the second highest total contribution by pro-Israel PACs to 2012 congressional candidates.¹⁴¹ Not surprisingly, none of the Senate cosponsors of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013 received campaign contributions from J Street PAC individuals and affiliated PACs for any of the past three congressional elections (2010, 2012, and 2014).¹⁴² With regard to Iran, J Street placed itself squarely on the side of the White House when it called on Americans to voice their opposition to the latest Iran sanctions bill by signing their petition which condemned S.1881 as a threat to the diplomatic process.¹⁴³ J Street is even credited by some news sources as being responsible for stalling the new

¹³⁸ See "Pro-Israel: Money to Congress," *The Center for Responsive Politics*, March 10, 2014, <http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/summary.php?ind=Q05&cycle=All&recipdetail=S&sortorder=N&mm=Y>, accessed April 27, 2014; "S.1881 - Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013," *Congress.gov*, <http://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/1881/cosponsors?pageSort=alpha>, accessed May 3, 2014.

¹³⁹ "Pro-Israel: Money to Congress — Top 20 Members (2012)," *The Center for Responsive Politics*, March 25, 2013, <http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/summary.php?ind=Q05&recipdetail=M&sortorder=U&cycle=2012>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹⁴⁰ "Pro-Israel: Money to Congress — Top 20 Members (2014)," *The Center for Responsive Politics*, March 10, 2014, <http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/summary.php?ind=Q05&cycle=2014&recipdetail=M&sortorder=U>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹⁴¹ <https://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/industry.php?txt=Q05&cycle=2012>

¹⁴² "J Street PAC: Recipients," *The Center for Responsive Politics*, February 4, 2013, <https://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/pacgot.php?cmte=C00441949&cycle=2010>; "J Street PAC: Recipients," *The Center for Responsive Politics*, March 25, 2013, <https://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/pacgot.php?cmte=C00441949&cycle=2012>; "J Street PAC: Recipients," *The Center for Responsive Politics*, April 20, 2014, <https://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/pacgot.php?cycle=2014&cmte=C00441949>, accessed May 3, 2014.

¹⁴³ *Id.* note 17

sanctions bill, and while this is an exaggeration, it does speak to the organization's increasing influence. J Street's argument to current cosponsors and fence-sitters was twofold. First, that the bill was simply bad policy, and second, that opposing the bill would not be a political mistake.¹⁴⁴ J Street lobbyists also encourage senators to actually read the bill because many of the original cosponsors had assumed that sanctions would be renewed only if it was determined that Iran was not negotiating in good faith, which was, as explained above, not the case.

Premature analysis would conclude that AIPAC's efforts at passing the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013 have essentially failed to convince the Obama administration to veer off the track of diplomacy and multilateralism in favor of a policy favorable to Israel but unhelpful for the United States. This is not to say the Israel Lobby has been rendered impotent by the so-called Obama doctrine but rather speaks to a shift from the hegemony of AIPAC to a newly-conceived, more balanced representation of American pro-Israel views, and this is a natural development when one considers the shift in American foreign policy. J Street will not singlehandedly alter President Obama's policy toward Iran, and it does not espouse unprecedented ideas for peace in the Middle East; however, as US-Israel tensions rise and AIPAC falls out of favor with the Obama administration, J Street is able to maneuver itself into a political space that was inaccessible before.

Implications for Arab-Israeli Peace

¹⁴⁴ David Weigel, "How Hubris and J Street Stalled the Iran Sanctions Bill," *Slate*, January 29, 2014, http://www.slate.com/blogs/weigel/2014/01/29/how_hubris_and_j_street_stalled_the_iran_sanctions_bill.html, accessed April 27, 2014.

Iran's nuclear program and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been linked by not only scholars and analysts but also by the United States President himself, who explained that the potential realignment of regional interests toward a common enemy in Iran has not yet been achieved because of Israeli-Palestinian conflict¹⁴⁵. In light of that linkage, the second part of this chapter aims to understand that linkage by posing the following question: what is the relationship between Iran's nuclear program and the prospects for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the realization of Middle East peace more broadly? It is difficult if not impossible to provide a fail-safe causal relationship between the three factors (the US-Israeli partnership, Iran's nuclear program, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) or predict the order of events (regional security before Iran's containment, or Iran's containment before regional security). That being said, I argue that the relationship between the United States and Israel and their resultant approach toward Iran's nuclear program has significant implications for the success of current and future negotiations for a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

However, before discussing the future of Iran's nuclear program and the prospects for peace, or at least security, in the Middle East, it is important to remember Iran's political strategy and *modus operandi* in its nuclear quest because simply labeling the Iranian Republic as a radical regime and writing it off as irrational not only lacks factual basis but, more importantly, it does not bring us any closer to a negotiated solution. Most importantly, the Iranian government is not, contrary to popular belief, most concerned with military superiority. Rather, it seeks to maintain power by offering

¹⁴⁵ Jeffrey Goldberg, "Obama to Israel — Time is Running Out," *Bloomberg View*, March 2, 2014, <http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-03-02/obama-to-israel-time-is-running-out>, accessed April 27, 2014.

political and financial support to regional opposition movements, like that of the Palestinians. In other words, by championing the causes the United States opposes or only symbolically supports, Iran has positioned itself in such a way that increased hostility from the United States only strengthens its regional legitimacy.

While many policymakers in the United States and Israel base their perception of the threat of Iran's nuclear program on the prospect of proliferation of nuclear aspirations all over the Middle East, this claim is not self-evident. Israel has possessed nuclear weapons since 1967¹⁴⁶, and none of its Arab neighbors followed suit.¹⁴⁷ Additionally, in terms of the threat of the actual use of such destructive weapons, Iran already possesses long-range-ballistic missiles powerful enough to inflict heavy damage on Israel's major cities, the capability to launch cruise missiles at Israel's coast from the Mediterranean, and close ties to militant groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, which have been known to wreak havoc all over the Middle East for decades.¹⁴⁸ The charge that Iran is suddenly more inclined to violence does not follow directly from Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, especially when one considers Israel's proclivity toward disproportionate retaliation. Of course, there are numerous differences between the Israeli and Iranian nuclear programs that explain the discrepancies in threat perception, and heightened anxiety about a nuclear Iran is not unfounded. The point here is, one cannot feign incredulity at Iranian charges that the United States caters to the interests of Israel over the rest of the Middle East, or claim militant Israeli responses toward Iran

¹⁴⁶ William E. Burrows and Robert, *Critical Mass: The Dangerous Race for Superweapons in a Fragmenting World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 282-283.

¹⁴⁷ Joseph Longa, "Then and Now: Arab Reactions to the Israeli and Iranian Nuclear Programs," *The Center for Strategic and International Studies*, November 21, 2011, https://csis.org/images/stories/poni/110921_Longa.pdf, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹⁴⁸ Robert Freedman and Steven R. David, "Existential Threats to Israel," in *Contemporary Israel: Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Security Challenges* (Boulder, Westview, 2009), 312.

are in the name of “self-defense” when it is, in fact, Israel that possesses the most lethal nuclear arsenal in the region.

US-Israel Relationship

Of course, the Arab states, Israel, and the United States all have an interest in preventing Iran from becoming the nuclear hegemon of the Persian Gulf and taking actions that enhance the prospect for regional security. However, what these actions entail, and what regional security actually means differs between the three actors. For the Arab states, regional security does, of course, mean the prevention of regional nuclearization; however, most of Israel’s Arab neighbors are decidedly more concerned about the prospect of getting caught in the middle of a war between one nation with growing nuclear capacity and two with established nuclear capacity – that is, between Iran, the United States, and Israel.¹⁴⁹ For Israel, regional security means security for Israel, and the Israeli government will take whatever action it deems necessary to engender such security. For the United States, regional security also means security for Israel, but it also means the prevention of the proliferation of terrorism, uninterrupted access to Middle East oil, and, to an extent, the promotion of national governments amenable to US interests.

When Iran’s nuclear program gained ‘threat’ status, the United States initially took a hard line on Iran by imposing harsh sanctions and passing resolutions that attempted to isolate Iran from the global market. This placated Israel, to an extent, but the Israeli perception that US actions toward Iran were ineffective compelled the Israeli government and, by extent, the Israel lobby to push the United States toward more

¹⁴⁹ Richard L. Russell, “Arab Security Responses to a Nuclear-Ready Iran,” *NPolicy*, <http://www.npolicy.org/userfiles/file/Getting%20Ready-Arab%20Security%20Responses%20to%20a%20Nuclear-Ready%20Iran.pdf>, accessed April 27, 2014.

aggressive policy. However, the Obama administration to Israel's horror, is increasingly favoring diplomacy with Iran over the uniformly rejectionist stance Israel has adopted on the issue, and it is even beginning to pressure Israel to end its unpopular habit of assassinating Iranian nuclear scientists.¹⁵⁰ Obama's engagement with the Iranian regime reflect his stated goals of diplomacy and multilateralism as well as his nuanced approach to foreign policy, one which appreciates the difference between religiously- or ideologically-motivated rhetoric and the rational, strategic politics at which Iran is so skilled. After all, the balancing act between ideology and pragmatism is one with which President Obama is well-acquainted.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is frustrated by what he sees as an overly conciliatory approach taken by the international community toward Iran, and in response to what it deems weakness on the part of American policy, the Israeli government has produced rhetoric about the possibility of an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. Such statements have been uttered before, to little effect, but the rhetoric has been reinvigorated with a heightened attitude of aggression after a period of relative passivity since the P5+1 began negotiations with Iran in November 2013.¹⁵¹ The notion of an Israeli attack threatens to derail any positive outcome of the negotiations with Iran, with blame being laid on the Obama administration, and the attack itself would likely bring retaliation from Iran against Israel and its US ally. Such warmongering inevitably breeds increased extremism in AIPAC's lobbying of Congress. Perhaps the biggest

¹⁵⁰Dan Raviv, "U.S. pushing Israel to stop assassinating Iranian nuclear scientists," *CBS News*, March 1, 2014, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-pushing-israel-to-stop-assassinating-iranian-nuclear-scientists/>, accessed April 27, 2014.

¹⁵¹Tia Goldenberg, "Israel threatens to strike Iran's nuclear facilities in attempt to ratchet up international pressure on Tehran," *The Associated Press*, March 21, 2014, <http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/03/21/israel-threatens-to-strike-irans-nuclear-facilities-in-attempt-to-ratchet-up-international-pressure-on-tehran/>, accessed April 27, 2014.

influence of the AIPAC's lobbying for increasingly hostile US policy toward Iran is simply the exaggeration of the Iranian threat, as influenced by fatalist Israeli policymakers and their insecurity about the future of the US-Israeli relationship. The Lobby's confrontational attitude toward Iran is strategically unwise and only further encourages the Rouhani administration to flout the West and continue its nuclear program. If anything, AIPAC has pushed fence-sitters into the welcoming arms of J Street, which implicitly defines itself as all which AIPAC is not. In forcing a semblance of accountability from AIPAC which has never before been required, J Street is able, not necessarily to influence policy, but rather to more closely align pro-Israel interests with those of the commander-in-chief.

Prospects for Peace

In an interview with Israeli scholar Ari Shavit, Amos Yadlin, one of the eight pilots responsible for the 1981 bombing of the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq, Yadlin reflected on the notion that Iran maintains an attitude of rage toward past American and British behavior toward Iran and Zionist behavior in Palestine and sees the current Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory as a modern form of colonialism which it seeks to destroy.¹⁵² Keeping in mind Iran's contrarian attitude and views on historically expansionist policy by the West, it is not hard to see how the Iranian government relates opposition to its nuclear program and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since Iran's exclusion from the Oslo peace process in 1991, it has supported extremist Palestinian

¹⁵² Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York: Random House, 2013), 378.

groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad in an effort create a coalition of opponents to what it deemed biased Western interference into Middle East politics.

Martin Indyk, current US Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations and former US ambassador to Israeli recalled that Iran “had an incentive to do us in on the peace process in order to defeat our policy of containment and isolation. And therefore, they took aim at the peace process.”¹⁵³ J Street, despite its fears of a nuclear Iran, wrote in the security chapter of its series on the two-state solution ‘Is Peace Possible’ that, “the persistence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict emboldens extremists across the region and undermines Palestinian moderates. The conflict inhibits countries in the region from cooperating with Israel even on mutual security concerns, such as Iran’s nuclear program.” These linkages are not a new phenomenon and have been invoked since the Iranian threat emerged. For example, one of the most important factors that influenced Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to renew the Arab-Israeli peace process in late 2006 was Saudi Arabia’s argument that sound policy on Iran could not be achieved with Washington as long as there was so much distrust and anger in the Arab world toward the United States over what it deemed one-sided behavior toward the Palestinian issue.¹⁵⁴

Of course, there is the argument that Israel is rendered unable to end its occupation until regional security is achieved. Ari Shavit concedes that the occupation of the West Bank and Jerusalem has amplified animosity toward Israel but continues that, “it is Israel’s very existence as a sovereign non-Islamic entity in a land sacred to

¹⁵³Trita Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama’s Diplomacy with Iran* (New Haven: Yale, 2013), 24.

¹⁵⁴ Scott MacLeod, “Saudis Leave Rice Stranded,” *TIME Magazine*, March 30, 2007, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1605010,00.html>, accessed April 27, 2014.

Islam and surrounded by Islam that creates the inherent tension between the tiny Jewish nation and the vast Islamic world.”¹⁵⁵ Shavit writes that, in the past, Israel was able to form strategic alliances with moderate Islamic states and foster arrangements based on mutual interests, but that over the years Israel began to lose Islamist allies to sweeping radical fundamentalism throughout the region. This argument assumes that radical Islamic regimes are both incapable of maintaining strategic alliances and have, all of a sudden, changed their perceptions of Israel, which, to take the example of Iran is not true. Iran possesses longstanding opposition to Israel, and its nuclear ambitions are based not on religious fanaticism but on strategic geo-political posturing widely accepted as rational policy.

Israel faces an increasingly protracted dilemma: ending its occupation of the Palestinian territories will increase its political position but potentially create vulnerabilities in its national security. At the same time, as it stands today, Israel faces both of these issues, and it seems plausible that by removing the political and moral dilemma of occupation, Israel can remove itself as exactly that which most encourages Iranian hostility. Only by encouraging such behavior can the United States prove its commitment to the safety and security of its closest ally in the Middle East. The question of whether Israel will end its occupation or whether the occupation will end Israel is ever more relevant now.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ id. note 36, p. 406

¹⁵⁶ Id. note 36, p. 398

Conclusion

The Israel Lobby, a loose coalition of American organizations attempting to influence pro-Israel policies, boasts a long and complex history and various relationships with the US government, and its influence has been studied since its inception. The primary purpose of this paper was to demystify the inner-workings of the lobby in order to analyze what effect, if any, the Israel Lobby has on American policy, specifically in the Middle East. In a departure from other research on the topic, I analyzed the influence of the lobby on three discrete issues: the Iraq War; the Egyptian

Arab Spring; and Iran's Nuclear Program; and related its influence to the foreign policy doctrines of the American presidents responsible for policymaking on the aforementioned issues. By doing this, I hoped to begin to disentangle the real influence of the lobby's interests from perceived influence, which is merely a codification of the Executive's interests.

Summary

In chapter one, I sought to answer the questions of Israel Lobby influence on the US decision to invade Iraq and what implications this war had for the US-Israel relationship and US policy more broadly. I chose the topic of the Iraq War because it serves as a near-perfect distillation of Bush Doctrine and the foreign policy environment in the United States at the time. As what can be called a preemptive conflict, the Iraq War has become a watershed event in the post-Cold War international order and provides lessons from which scholars and policymakers can continue to benefit. In the Iraq War chapter, I argued that the Israel Lobby was able to exert disproportionate influence on Bush's decision to invade Iraq because of the close ties between the neoconservatives in his administration and the ideologically similar Likud party members in the Israeli government. Because of this alignment, it cannot be said that the Israel Lobby pushed the United States into a war against its will. However, by valuing ideology over strategy and creating an environment where opposition to war was met with intense pressure from AIPAC and its affiliates, one can argue that Bush was able to put troops on the ground without even having to listen to those on Capitol Hill skeptical about regime change in Iraq.

I concluded that, contrary to Israeli claims about the strategic nature of the US-Israel relationship, the Iraq War cannot be explained through strategic explanations, and that the weak moral, ideological argument for the decision to invade had severe repercussions for both the United States and Israel. The failures of the war forced US decision-makers to reconsider the permitted influence of the Israel Lobby and the prioritization of Israeli interests and ended an era of blind faith that the ideological and strategic interests of the United States and Israel were one and the same.

In chapter two, I asked the following questions: what was the influence of the Israel lobby in affecting policy toward post-Arab Spring Egypt, specifically with regard to the suspension of military aid; additionally, what are the implications of this policy for the US-Israel relationship and the prospects for a more peaceful dynamic in the Middle East? I used Egypt as a test case for US policy with respect to the Arab Spring not only because Egypt has, since 1979, remained the United States' most stable and important ally in the politics of the Levant, but also because the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt were the largest and most visible and have produced the most complex and problematic results. In the Egypt chapter, I argued that, while influential toward legislators — especially those ideologically supportive of the State of Israel — the Israel Lobby was unable to meaningfully affect the Obama administration's policies concerning aid to Egypt. This lack of influence is a departure from the Lobby's status during the Bush administration and can be attributed largely to the Obama administration's shift away from unilateral behavior and mere ideology toward a more balanced, multilateral foreign policy doctrine that still values Israel as a strategic ally but is more hesitant to invariably

prioritize Israel's interests over those of the Arab states purely for the sake of the 'moral argument' for the US-Israel special relationship.

I concluded that the waning influence of the Israel Lobby in the Obama administration, as measured by its influence toward US policy in Egypt, reflects a growing tension in the US-Israel relationship. As the United States moves toward a broader, more balanced aspiration of ideological, political, and strategic international interests, Israel will be forced to decide between maintaining the status quo — thereby drifting away from its largest benefactor — and updating its security interests toward a more fruitful relationship with the United States and possibly a more peaceful relationship with the rest of the Middle East.

In the third chapter, I was interested in understanding what influence the Israel Lobby holds in terms of US policy toward Iran's nuclear program. Correspondingly, I hoped to understand the implications of the Iranian issue for the prospects of peace in the Middle East, particularly with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The issue of Iran's nuclear program is perhaps the starkest example of the growing tension between the strategic tactics of the United States and Israel. By studying the Israeli government's perception of Iran's nuclear program and Israel Lobby's behavior on Capitol Hill, it is possible to unpack the US-Israel relationship as it oscillates between harmony and discord. This chapter, in contrast to the first two, focused on both AIPAC and J Street, two pro-Israel organizations with opposing ideologies and policy goals for US policy in the Middle East. By studying the influence of J Street alongside that of AIPAC, it is possible to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the range of opinions on the prospect of a nuclear Iran and the spectrum of views harbored by both American and

Israeli Jews. In this section, I argued that the Israel Lobby does influence the way the Iranian threat is perceived and marketed to the legislature; at the same time, the influence exerted by the Lobby is waning as President Obama recalibrates the United States' presence in the Middle East, or it is at least being transformed by the advent of J Street and its more liberal views.

I concluded that AIPAC's confrontational attitude toward Iran is becoming increasingly unpopular, especially as J Street fills the political space sought after by those made uncomfortable by AIPAC's alarmist rhetoric. In defining itself as everything that AIPAC is not, J Street is able to define itself as a pro-Israel organization more in tune with those of the Obama administration and may threaten AIPAC just enough to make its views more reasonable. The emerging influence of J Street, when considered alongside the waning influence of AIPAC illuminates a trend in both the US polity and political government toward a more balanced, lighter footprint in the Middle East.

Trends

Based on the research and conclusions made in this paper, several trends seem to be at play. First, the Israel Lobby, whether AIPAC or J Street, seems more powerful in its attempt to impact pro-Israel legislation and increased aid than it is on matters of national security or foreign policy issues with which it is at odds with the presidential administration. This trend seems obvious and has been identified before; however, it seems to have become more ingrained and universal as President Obama increasingly looks toward his closest advisors, rather than the House and Senate, for foreign policy advice.

The second trend reflected in the analysis of the Israel Lobby is the shift in American policy from one based primarily on emotion and ideology to another which retains ideological underpinnings but is decidedly more pragmatic, strategic, and realistic. While George W. Bush espoused a flatter, more reactionary, and surface-level appreciation of foreign policy, President Obama, understanding the lack of sustainability promised by the Bush Doctrine, adopted a more dynamic, consequentialist approach which values underlie but do not dictate.

The third trend is the changing influence of the Israel lobby as a result of the change in American foreign policy. It would appear that Israel Lobby influence is declining; however, it is more likely that AIPAC, the dominant organization, is losing its monopoly on influences as J Street emerges with a view more aligned with the Obama administration.

The last trend, which can only be proven or disproven as time passes, is the ebb and flow of the lobby's influence based on its alignment with the current administration's interests. Of course, the lobby does not create radical decisions but rather pushes influence on controversial issues where there are diverging views and moderates capable of being persuaded. However, as this ideology strays too far from that of the presidential administration, it creates a rift which manifests itself in the relationship between the governments of the United States and Israel. When this happens, the Lobby and the Government of Israel, by extension, are forced to decide whether to tone down its extremist rhetoric or risk straying too far from the strategic interests of its largest benefactor.

Implications

Each of the three cases analyzed in this paper have implications for the US-Israel relationship and the future of the Middle East. The Iraq War taught both Americans and Israelis about the enormity of pursuing regime change in the Middle East and warned of the consequences of allowing ideological concerns to trump those of security, strategy, and realism. In order to reconstitute itself as a strategic asset to the United States, the onus is on Israel to negotiate a permanent solution to the strategic liability posed by its ongoing conflict with the Palestinians. The Arab Spring in Egypt and nation's continued political turmoil served as a wake-up call to the ever-stable Jewish state and its prevailing refusal to adapt to the regional changes with which it is surrounded. As US policy develops under the Obama administration, Israel will be increasingly challenged to support democratic values and self-determination or risk facing retribution from the same ally responsible for securing its stability. The Egyptian case is similar to the Iranian case in this regard. By maintaining the threat of military force and attempting to derail nuclear weapon negotiations between the United States and Iran, Israel only strengthens Iran's perception of Israel as an enemy and its resignation that peace with the West is anathema to its national aspirations. If Israel can negotiate a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for which Iran perceives it as responsible, it can remove a declared rationale for Iran's continued support of resistance movements like Hamas, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad which are, rather than Iran, the real threats to its security.

Of course, the Israel-Palestinian conflict, now over half a century old, is at this point a deeply ingrained, protracted, emotional, and psychological conflict with high

stakes for all parties involved. Reaching a negotiated solution that guarantees both Israelis and Palestinians the freedoms and securities they both desperately desire and deserve will require difficult decisions and compromises on both sides. The Palestinian leadership must break from old habits and present a unified government the Israelis can trust as a credible partner for peace. Even more importantly, this leadership must take greater control and gain greater credibility from its own population so as to delegitimize and disincentivize extremist actors bent on derailing the peace process. However, Israel, the alleged beacon of stability and democracy and dominant actor in the relationship with its Palestinian population, retains a greater responsibility to work toward meaningful progress on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. As the United States disengages from the Middle East and the Arab Spring produces new circumstances in the region, Israel has an opportunity to engage with its neighbors and redefine itself as the democracy it so claims. Otherwise, it risks increased isolation in a region of continued uncertainty, hardly an attractive combination for a nation already insecure.

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