



INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH: MIDDLE EASTERN POLICY

American attitudes about Israel/lobby programs



Surveys fielded through Google Analytics Solutions

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Introduction

Public opinion polling is important, but little of it accurately measures what the American public thinks about key Israel/lobby issues. This survey series begins to fill in that information deficit.

Focused, accurate polling should guide elected representatives, who can then act in the broader public interest. Polling about Israel lobby programs reveals a large gap between US government actions demanded by the lobby and policy outcomes the public prefers.

The Israel lobby's growth, size, composition and division of labor has become better understood since the disastrous US invasion of Iraq (which the lobby quietly supported) and the more recent battles over the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) signed by the Obama administration (which the lobby publicly, though unsuccessfully, opposed). This report uses the neologism "Israel/lobby" to express the oftentimes simultaneous public relations campaigns and lobbying programs pursued by the Israeli government in coordination with top advocacy organizations lobbying for Israel within the United States. Key US organizations include the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Hundreds more, including a small number of evangelical Christian organizations, play a role within a vast ecosystem that demands unconditional US support for Israel.

In the year 2012 the nonprofit wing of the Israel lobby raised \$3.7 billion in revenue. They are on track to reach \$6.3 billion by 2020. Collectively they employed 14,000 and claimed 350,000 volunteers. However outside data suggests an estimated active membership of only about 774,000.¹

This nonprofit foreign interest lobby, along with an overlapping political campaign contribution infrastructure not counted in the figures above, provides Israel with the US support among members of the Congress and other key influencers that purely American interests would not. This lobbying prowess goes on display as 15,000 AIPAC members gather at their annual policy conference every March, after which many visit their representatives on Capitol Hill to demand compliance with an increasingly costly legislative agenda.

What Americans think about the methods by which this is achieved, the enormous costs and the outcomes is the subject of this report.

¹ Grant F. Smith, *Big Israel: How Israel's Lobby Moves America*, IRmep, Washington, DC, 2016

Methodology

The questions were fielded individually using the most accurate survey technology in America today: Google Analytics Solutions. This platform was used to accurately forecast the 2012 presidential election winner's margin of victory at 2.3 percentage points. The actual margin was 2.6% based on tallied ballots. Google taps into an immense pool of adult internet users with known demographics. Google's vast representative sample has opened the world of accurate polling to a broader user base. Polling guru Nate Silver claims, "Perhaps it won't be long before Google, not Gallup, is the most trusted name in polling."²

Pollster Accuracy and Bias, 2012 Presidential Election

Likely Voters Polls in Last 21 Days of Campaign

Minimum 5 Polls

Pollster	# Polls	Avg. Error	Bias	Mode	Cell?
IBD / TIPP	11	0.9	R +0.1	Live Phone	Yes
Google Consumer Surveys	12	1.6	R +1.0	Internet	N/A
Mellman	9	1.6	R +0.0	Live Phone	Yes
RAND Corporation	17	1.8	D +1.5	Internet	N/A
CNN / Opinion Research	10	1.9	R +0.6	Live Phone	Yes
Ipsos / Reuters (online)	42	1.9	R +1.4	Internet	N/A
Angus Reid	11	1.9	R +0.8	Internet	N/A
CVOTER International / UPI	13	2.0	R +2.0	Live Phone	??
Grove Insight	18	2.0	R +0.1	Live Phone	Yes
SurveyUSA	17	2.2	R +0.5	Robodial	Yes
Quinnipiac	5	2.3	D +0.3	Live Phone	Yes
Marist	11	2.5	R +1.0	Live Phone	Yes
YouGov	30	2.6	R +1.1	Internet	N/A
We Ask America	9	2.6	D +0.1	Robodial	No
Public Policy Polling	71	2.7	R +1.6	Robodial	No
Gravis Marketing	16	2.7	R +2.7	Robodial	No
JZ Analytics*	17	2.8	R +0.1	Internet	N/A
Washington Post / ABC News	16	2.8	R +2.7	Live Phone	Yes
Pharos Research Group*	14	4.0	D +2.5	Live Phone	No
Rasmussen Reports	60	4.2	R +3.7	Robo + Internet	No
American Research Group	9	4.5	R +4.5	Live Phone	Yes
Mason-Dixon	8	5.4	R +2.2	Live Phone	Yes
Gallup	11	7.2	R +7.2	Live Phone	Yes

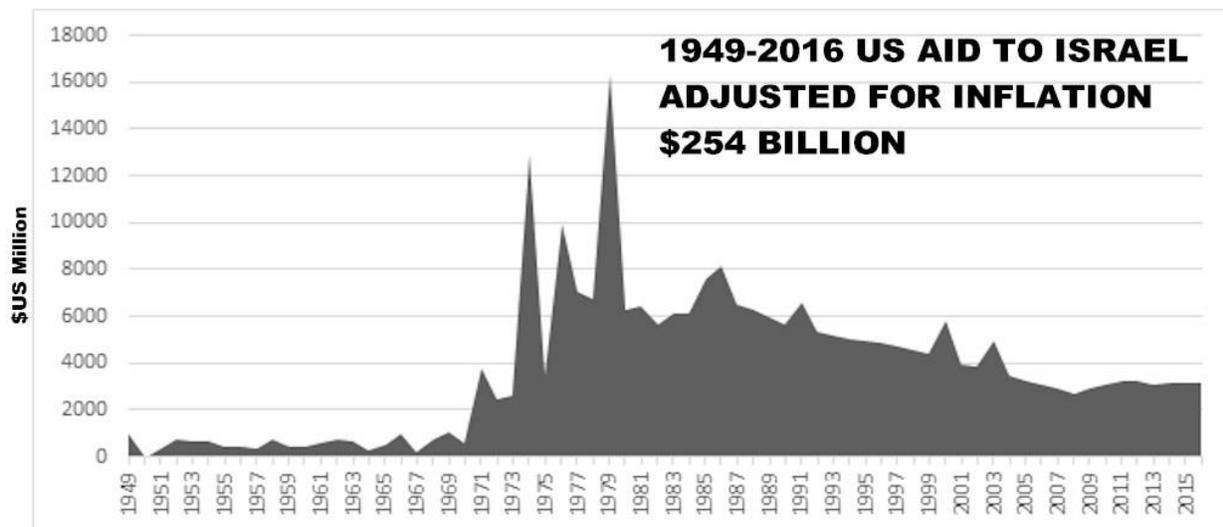
* Not used in FiveThirtyEight forecast.

The following survey questions were fielded on the cited date. Unlike most polls, anyone may visit the hyperlinks to Google Analytics Solutions to examine and download the raw response data.

² Nate Silver, "Which Polls Fared Best (and Worst) in the 2012 Presidential Race" FiveThirtyEight, November 10, 2012

What Americans Think about Israel/lobby Programs

The Israel/lobby's most important program is obtaining unconditional US foreign aid including advanced American weaponry and a hefty sum of cash for Israel's export-oriented military industry. This US support is packaged into 10-year "memoranda of understanding" or MOU's. However, the Israel/lobby asks for and usually gets additional ad hoc aid packages above guaranteed MOU sums. Passing annual aid legislation requires keeping the issue of Israel's nuclear weapons program off the table.



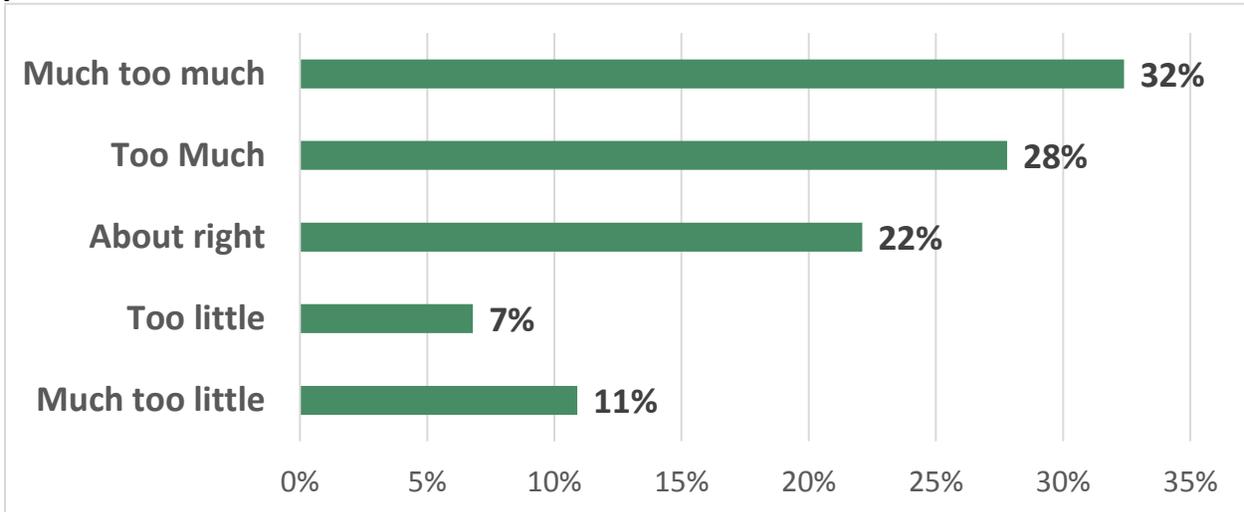
DATA FROM "US Foreign Aid to Israel" CRS, 12/22/2016 - Inflation adjusted by IRmep. Classified aid excluded.

The US has provided \$254 billion in known foreign aid to Israel, more than any other country. There have been recent attempts, most notably by Professor Hillel Frisch, to try to move the goal posts and claim that Japan, Germany and South Korea are, in fact, bigger recipients. But this argument is misleading. Japan, Germany and South Korea are in a different category: treaty-bound allies. The military alliance expenditures, with contributions by both sides, also carry mutual obligations. This makes such alliance expenditures, much in need of reassessment, not usefully comparable to US aid to Israel.³ The US has no treaties with Israel, which often takes actions the US opposes.

When informed of its relative size, 60% of Americans believe that US foreign aid to Israel is either "much too much, or too much." This has been consistent in recent years, with polls from 2014, 2015 and 2016 revealing similar levels of disapproval.

³ Grant F. Smith "\$254 Billion in Unconditional US Aid to Israel is Unique" Antiwar.com, February 23, 2017

Question: Israel & its US lobby demand & receive over \$3 billion annually (9% of the foreign aid budget and more than any other country) from Congress and the president. The amount is:



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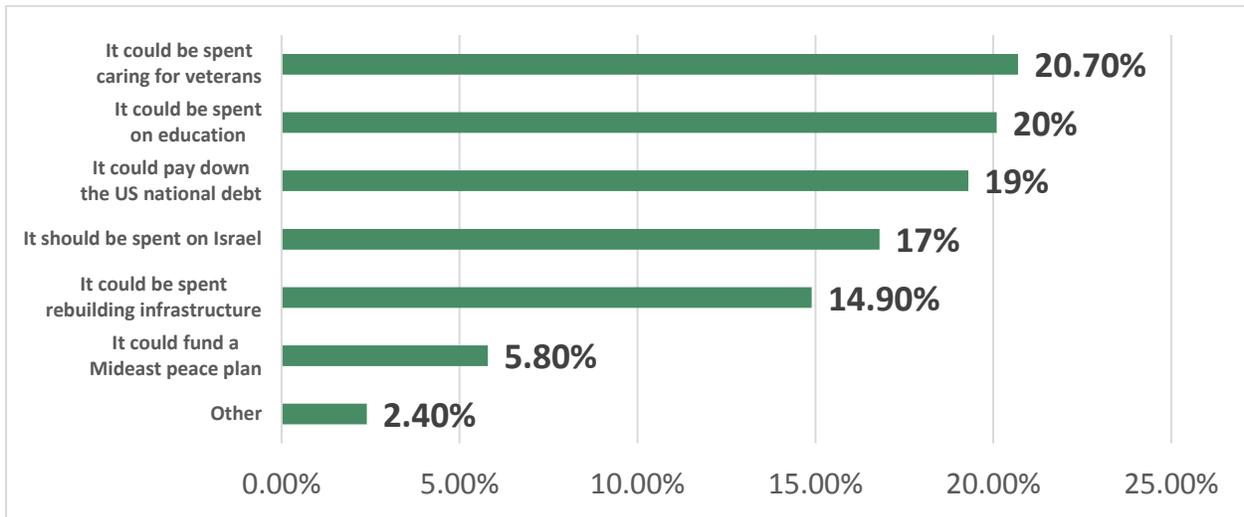
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Americans responding to this question were informed that aid has been approximately 9% of the total US foreign aid budget, but this question will have to change in future, since the Trump administration proposes cutting much of the State Department budget while leaving aid to Israel untouched.

The most recent MOU signed on September 14, 2016 guarantees Israel \$38 billion over the next ten years, and even more in the event of armed conflict, which Israel could well be incentivized to start.⁴ The American public is often told that this aid guarantees Israel's "qualitative military edge" over rivals, through the Israel/lobby demands that Israel's nuclear weapons program never be included in this discussion.

⁴ Grant F. Smith "US Aid Package to Israel Incentivizes War" Antiwar.com, January 2, 2017

Question: The US just agreed to provide \$38 billion in military aid to Israel over the next ten years. In your opinion, how could this money be better spent?



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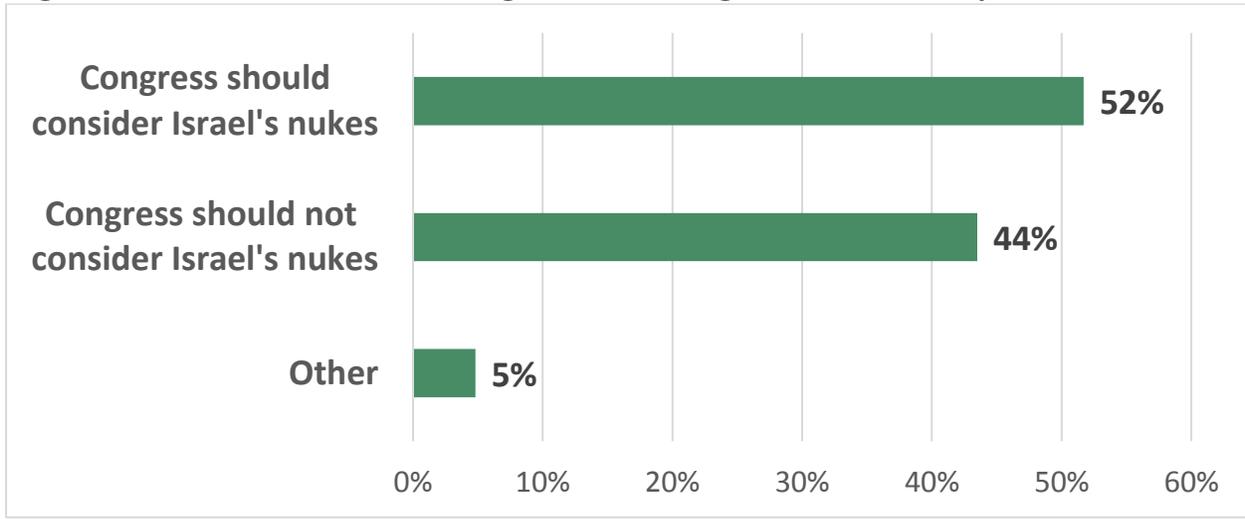
However, when asked the question presented above immediately after the last MOU was signed, 60% of Americans had higher priorities, including spending on care for US veterans, spending on education and paying down the national debt.

Only 17% thought the funds should be spent on Israel.

When Congress passes aid spending bills and presents them to the president, who signs them into law, both rely on the subterfuge that the US does not, and indeed cannot, know whether Israel has nuclear weapons. However, under the Arms Export Control Act, certain procedures must be followed whenever the US gives foreign aid to known nuclear weapons powers that have not signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. In 2012, under increasing pressure, the Obama administration passed a gag order⁵ that punishes any federal employee or contractor who speaks about what most people already know, that Israel has a clandestine nuclear weapons program.

⁵ "Guidance on Release of Information Relating to the Potential for an Israeli Nuclear Capability" Classification Bulletin WNP-136, September 6, 2012

Question: Israel & its US lobby want Congress to finance Israel's "Qualitative Military Edge" over rivals without considering Israel is the region's sole nuclear power.



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Most Americans would prefer an honest discussion about Israel's nuclear weapons, and 52% said Congress should take the nukes under consideration. Officially, Congress has said it does not take a position on this matter. But under pressure of recent legal action to block US aid to Israel over its nuclear weapons program, and dogged reporting, this could begin to change.⁶

In 1985, the Israel/lobby was the primary force behind providing preferential US market access to Israeli exporters. This was later rebranded as American's first "free trade" agreement. Because US industry and labor groups were united in opposition to the deal, an Israeli Embassy operative covertly obtained and passed a 300-page classified report compiled from proprietary industry data from the International Trade Commission to AIPAC to help it overcome organized opposition. This was investigated as a counter-espionage matter by the FBI, but was later dropped when the Israeli Embassy official, Dan Halpern, claimed diplomatic immunity.⁷

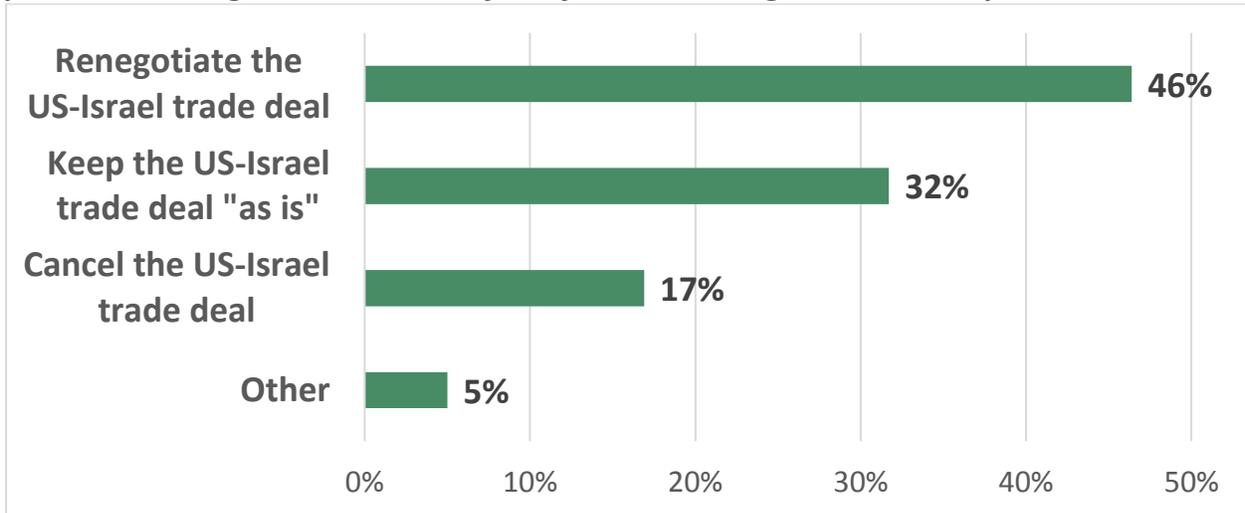
The trade preferences replaced a balanced trading relationship with a chronic deficit to the United States. On an inflation-adjusted basis, it is America's worst bilateral trade deal with a cumulative deficit of \$144 billion dollars.⁸

⁶ Britain Eakin, "On Eve of Aid Boost, Researcher Flags Israel's 'Clandestine' Nukes" Courthouse News Service, August 20, 2016

⁷ "FBI Investigates AIPAC for espionage and theft of government property in 1984" The Israel Lobby Archive, IRmep, Washington, DC <http://www.israellobby.org/economy/default.asp>

⁸ Grant F. Smith "bilateral US-Israel "free" trade agreement delivers \$144 billion deficit to US" Centre for Research on Globalisation, May 13, 2016

Question: Israel & its US lobby were key proponents of a 1985 free trade deal that produces the largest cumulative deficit of all bilateral agreements. The president should:



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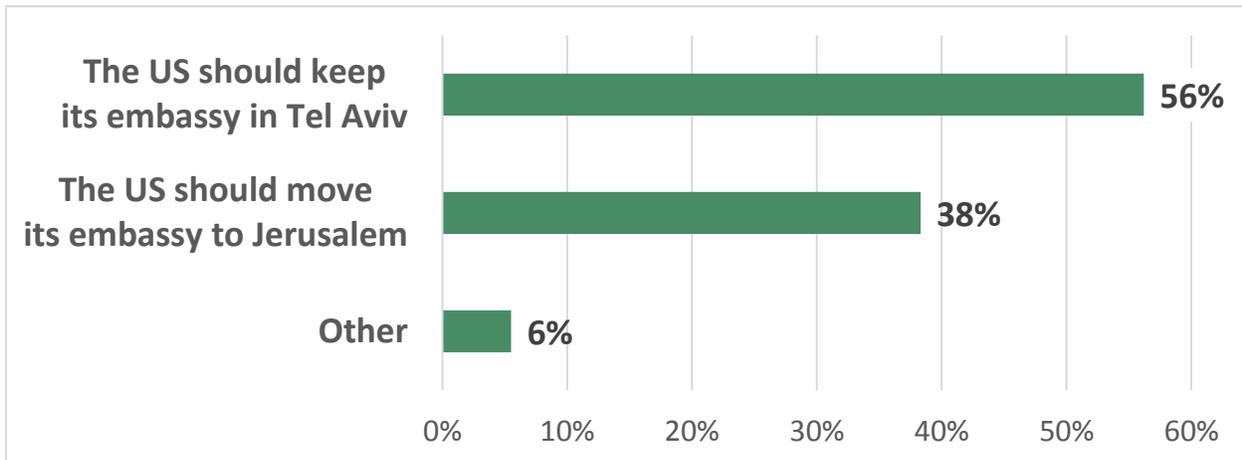
In this era of popular discontent with proposed trade deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and existing NAFTA, when informed of the poor performing US-Israel trade deal, 63% of Americans would either renegotiate or cancel it altogether.

Another long-term Israel/lobby initiative is moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem.⁹ Since 1948, Israel has been attempting to persuade foreign embassies to relocate to Jerusalem. The original partition agreement declared the city must be internationalized.

Leveraging Bob Dole's presidential aspirations, in 1995 ZOA and AIPAC championed a law that defunds U.S. State Department overseas construction budgets unless the U.S. Embassy is moved. Presidents have refused to do it by exercising waivers included in the law to overcome separation of powers issues. However, there are now many champions of the embassy move inside the Trump administration, which may refrain from exercising waivers to stop a move when the decision is due in June of 2017.

⁹ Grant F. Smith "Poll: Most Americans don't want US embassy moved to Jerusalem Candidates keep making the promise to get elected" IRmep, January 30, 2017

Question: Israel's US lobby wants the US Embassy in Israel moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. No other country, in accord with UN resolutions opposing such a move, has done this.



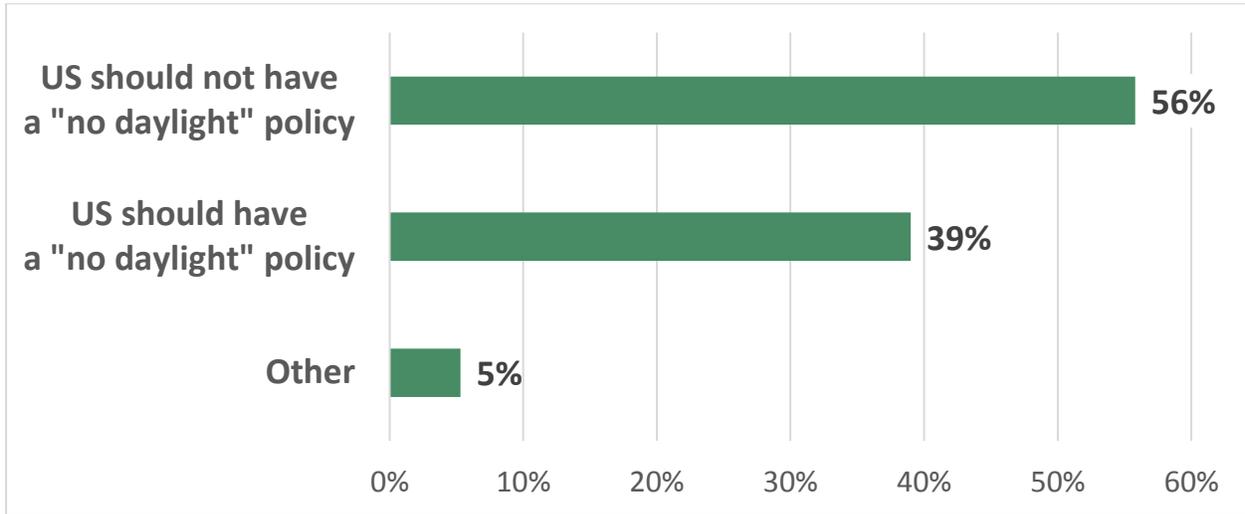
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Americans are not excited about the move. When informed, “Israel’s US lobby wants the US Embassy in Israel moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. No other country, in accord with UN resolutions opposing such a move, has done this,” 56% of Americans indicate the embassy should not move, while 38% say that it should.

There is also a renewed push to have a policy of “no daylight” between the US and Israel. This policy, particularly as championed by former Israeli ambassador to the US Michael Oren, means “the US and Israel can disagree, but not openly” since that “encourages common enemies” and “renders Israel vulnerable.”

Such a policy mainly benefits Israel, which then leverages the appearance of unconditional US support in its own foreign relations.

Question: Israel & its US lobby want a "no daylight" policy of the president never openly criticizing Israeli settlements, giving Israel billions in aid, & diplomatic support at the UN



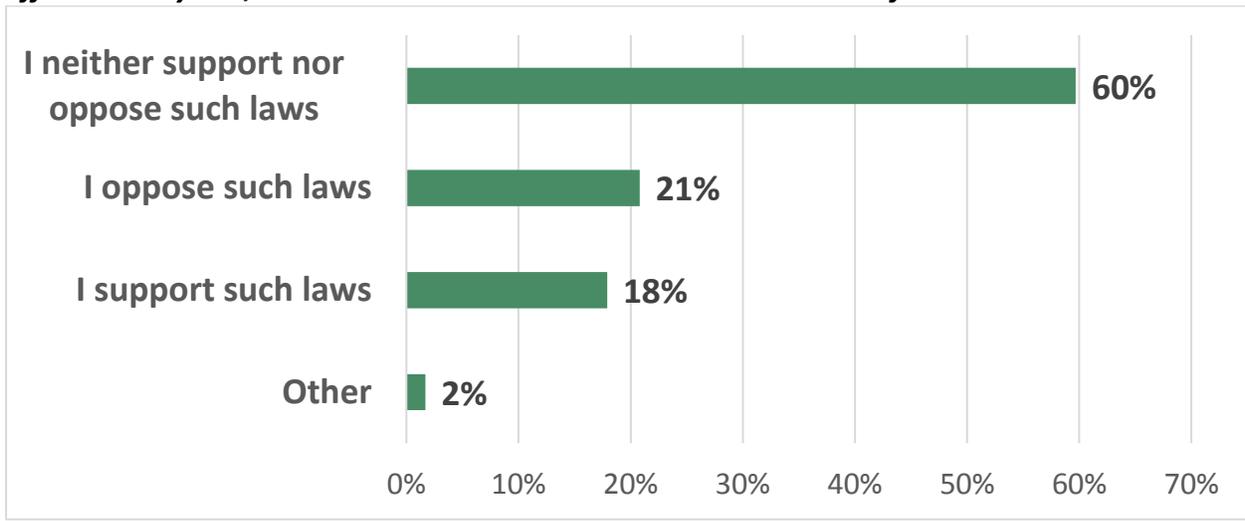
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Date: 3/10/2017

Israel and its US lobby are, once again, the only major parties making this demand, but 56% of Americans believe that their country should not have such a policy.

There is also an intense Israel lobby campaign to make the work of American Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) supporters unlawful in the US. The BDS movement works to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians and pressure Israel to comply with international law. Tactics include persuading high profile entertainers and others to cancel participation in events held in Israel/occupied territories, declarations of solidarity with Palestinians, and academic, cultural and business boycotts. Israel/lobby organizations accuse BDS activists of anti-Semitism, and work to pass state and federal anti-BDS laws. The Israel/lobby also appears to engage in joint private corporation/front group Israeli intelligence-agency "dirty tricks" to stop BDS.¹⁰

¹⁰ Al Jazeera Investigations, "The Lobby" <http://www.aljazeera.com/investigations/thelobby/>

Question: Israel & its US lobby support federal and state laws opposing US grassroots efforts to boycott, divest and sanction Israel over its treatment of Palestinians.



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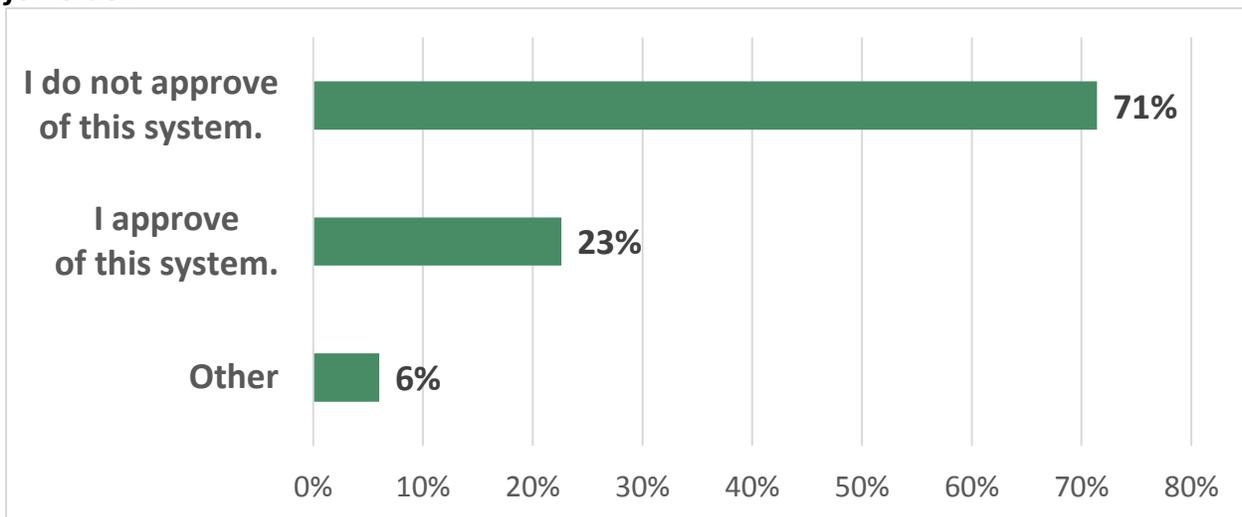
60% of Americans neither support nor oppose such laws, with 21% opposing them and 18% supporting anti-BDS laws.

Most Americans strongly oppose the tactic of single-issue lobbying on behalf of a foreign country. This is perhaps the most important survey series finding, because it gets to the heart of the current means by which the Israel/lobby has accumulated influence: coordinated campaign contributions.

The system ranges from seed-funding political candidates and campaigns, candidate funding through coordinated stealth Political Action Committees (PACs),¹¹ bundled campaign contributions, and huge sums injected into races by pro-Israel mega donors.

¹¹ Richard H. Curtiss "Stealth PACs: Lobbying Congress for Control of U.S. Middle East Policy" American Educational Trust, Washington, DC, 1991

Question: Many US lobbyists, nonprofit organizations & individuals steer campaign contributions to incumbents & sitting members of Congress solely on the basis of support for Israel.



<https://surveys.google.com/view?survey=geviobsuwb5ezqy6o7mmcawhou&question=1&filter=&rw=1&org=>
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A strong majority, 71% of Americans, do not approve of this system. They are likely unaware, however, about why lobbyists and supporters of Israel now publicly talk about supporting the “US special relationship with Israel” rather than Israel itself. There are legal reasons.

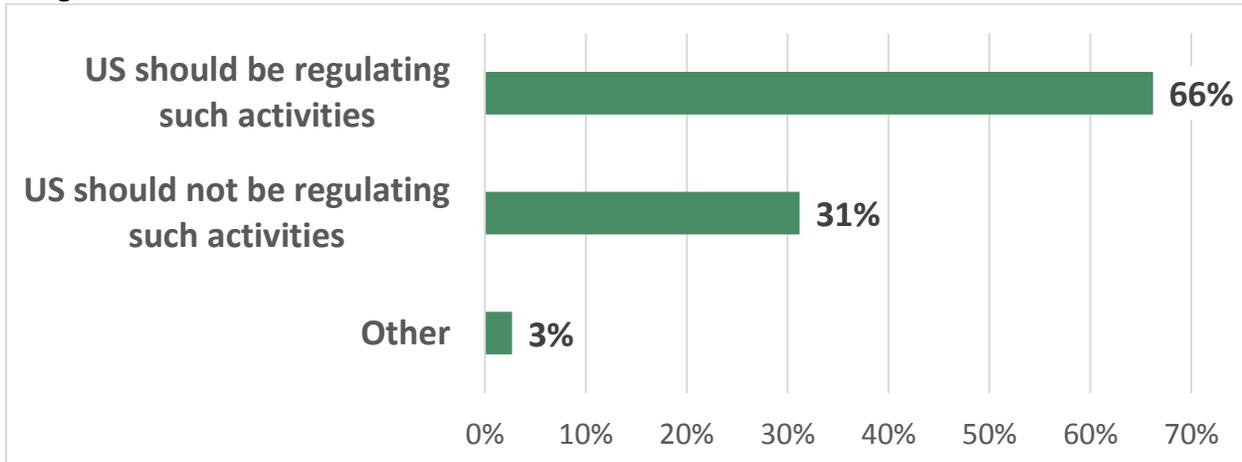
The original lobby leaders, such as Abraham Feinberg and AIPAC founder Isaiah Kenen, were far more forthright. They honestly stated the goal was obtaining weapons, money, diplomatic support because Israel needed it, rather than because America needed Israel. Both were subsequently pursued by the Department of Justice to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938 (FARA). Their preferred method for obtaining guns and money was by providing campaign funding to US politicians in exchange for casting their votes on aid legislation. A 1962-1963 Senate investigation revealed that AIPAC indirectly received foreign startup money to lobby and engaged in massive stealth US public relations campaigns.¹²

Today, the tight coordination between the Israeli government and US groups continues. However, the PR frame has been changed to “preserving the special relationship” and “common values.” By 1970, no matter what the Israel/lobby did, the Justice Department refused to pursue important questions about whether some Israel lobby actors were in fact foreign agents who should be regulated under FARA. Since 1970 several espionage investigations of AIPAC, and one known counter-intelligence investigation of the ADL, were

¹² “Activities of Nondiplomatic Representatives of Foreign Principals in the United States” Hearings of the committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, May 23, 1963.

quietly closed for no perceivable reasons. The final year the Department of Justice appeared to take an interest in the Israel/lobby as a foreign agent enforcement challenge was 1970.

Question: Until 1970 the US enforced laws requiring public disclosures when Israeli government & surrogate programs sought to influence US public opinion and lobby Congress



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Today, most Americans appear to support a return to a simpler time when Israel’s foreign agents were compelled to comply with disclosure laws. Before 1970, organizations such as AIPAC did not hold as much power over elected officials and AJC officials were not treated like US diplomats by foreign governments. Today 66% of Americans favor a return to regulating AIPAC and other Israel/lobby group activities. This may be due to more numerous establishment media reports about coordinated Israeli government and Israel/lobby programs using covert operations to achieve their objectives targeting members of the US Congress.¹³ It could also be due to highly critical alternative media reporting about how Israel/lobby programs harm Americans.

Conclusion

Solid majorities of Americans do not approve of major Israel/lobby programs, how they are won, and the vast amount of unconditional US diplomatic commitments and funding they consume. However, only by transforming into active opposition, rather than passive opposition, will Americans be able to get their government into the business of representing them, rather than the small—but unquestionably influential—Israel/lobby. For news media and analysts to be taken seriously, they must begin to discuss the Israel/lobby as the primary force behind outcomes most Americans—quantifiably—oppose.

¹³ Adam Entous and Danny Yadron, “US Spy Net on Israel Snares Congress” *Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 2015