

**Hijacking American Foreign Policy in the Middle East:  
An Analysis of the Power of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee**

I explored how AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) influences Congress. I explored AIPAC's influence in terms of legislation, political funding, and congressional races. I examined the influences since AIPAC inception in 1956 to the current day. It has been argued that AIPAC is the most influential interest group within the United States. It has also been argued that Israel is the top recipient of United States aid because of the influence that AIPAC holds over Congress, and I attempt to explore how that affects all of America politics.

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At a time in this country where terrorism seems to be the number one concern, people are looking for answers. Why the United States? Why New York City? What have we done to deserve this? There are many theories of why, but all mention the US policy towards Israel and our unrelenting support of her actions. How can any foreign government have so much support and influence on the sole super-power? Most turn their heads to AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a registered lobbyist group in Washington. AIPAC is referred to as “The Lobby” by most people on Capital Hill. This is due to their tremendous influence, power, and effectiveness. (Aruri 251) What techniques does AIPAC employ in order to be so much more effective than other lobbyist groups? In order to discover this we will first look to the creation and purpose of AIPAC, then to its lobbying efforts, before finally exploring what this means for American politics.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee was established in 1958 by Si Kenen. (“Who We Are”) Today AIPAC has over 100,000 members in all 50 states. Membership includes Christian-Zionists who are heavy donors and supporters of Israel. (Findley 171) AIPAC works as an agent of the Israel government, under the cloak of an American lobby group. According to Richard H. Curtiss, the main purpose of AIPAC is to lobby Congress for aid increases to Israel, both in the form of grants and military equipment. (Curtiss vi) “AIPAC is virtually the only group in Washington whose successes result in the loss of American Jobs to overseas competitors, and exposure to danger overseas of American military and diplomatic personnel, and even American businessmen and tourists.” (Curtiss vii) Richard Curtiss wrote this after the attacks on

US personal in both Iran and Beirut, but before the attacks on the US September 11, 2001. I believe those attacks to be part of that same string related to US actions in favor of Israel and seen to be anti-Islamic.

AIPAC does not serve the interests of the American public, but the interests of Israel. Despite this, AIPAC is able to lobby Congress and the White House to serve those interests. As one analyst explains about AIPAC lobbying strength, “It is this and this alone that gives Israel the means to withstand all verbal pressures and reproaches and to continue to impose solutions contrary to the desires and interests of the United States.” (Rubenberg 231) Each year AIPAC puts out its legislative and general goals. This list is sent to every member of Congress and the White House. Continued goals have been the increase of foreign aid, military equipment, stopping the sale of military equipment to Arab neighbors, the movement of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and stopping all forms of “anti-Semitism.” (Findley 23)

The goals of AIPAC, which vary microscopically from year to year, are carried out in many forms. The major forms are; disseminating information to the public and Congress, lobbying Congress and the President, influencing congressional and presidential races, and through its college programs. AIPAC produces multiple newsletters, the largest being *The Near East Report*. This report is sent to every AIPAC member, all of Congress, Governors and the White House. This report holds all of the key information about upcoming legislation, how AIPAC feels about the legislation, and who it feels are threats to pro-Israel legislation. It asks its members to get involved in key legislation. Currently AIPAC utilizes the internet to mobilize its members. Like other lobby groups, such as [moveon.org](http://moveon.org), AIPAC has pre-drafted letter that all members have to

do is type their zip code, name, address, and email and a letter is sent to their representatives and the President. (“Take Action”) The letters are on current legislation being discussed or legislation that AIPAC feels need to be made.

The dissemination of information is also carried out from AIPAC lobbyists on Capital Hill. These lobbyists note conversations and prepared speeches and then bring the transcripts back to AIPAC, who then sends it out immediately to its concerned members. These members almost instantly are calling Senators and Representatives offices to get them to change their mind. AIPAC, not unlike other interest groups, has the amazing ability to get its well organized grass-roots members to act. It has been said that, “AIPAC carries on its lobbying operation very well and that the organization is the model other lobbying organizations seek to emulate.” (Organski 19)

Besides disseminating information to the public and Congress, AIPAC pursues its goals through direct lobbying of Congress and the President. AIPAC has four fulltime lobbyists on Capital Hill, and numerous assistants and members that work for key Congressmen and Senators. These lobbyists are well trained and know how to put the pressure on our representatives. According to Paul Findley, during the 1970’s and early 1980’s AIPAC used the fear of being called anti-Semitic. (Findley 47) Congressmen did not want AIPAC to give them that label, so when a lobbyist said that their remarks or actions were anti-Semitic, the accused usually recanted the comments to save face with AIPAC and its supporters. There are many cases of AIPAC’s influences both our Legislature and their electoral races. To better understand AIPAC’s power and techniques let’s look at a chronological case studies of their power.

The real momentum for AIPAC came in the early 1980's when they were faced with multiple challenges. The 1970's had been strong for AIPAC and the pro-Israel lobby because of the support for the Yom Kippur War, but support started to diminish in the late 1970's and early 1980's. The American public saw the actions of Israel to be dangerous and not in the best interests of the United States. In 1981, AIPAC tried to stop the sale of AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System planes) sales to Saudi Arabia. (Curtiss 38) They felt that Israeli's safety would be harmed, but at that point the US saw Israel and a military giant in the region, and they felt that a stronger relationship with Saudi Arabia might lessen tension in the area. AIPAC lobbied to stop the sale, but Republicans in both Houses toed the line with President Reagan, and the sale was approved. Dismayed by the sale AIPAC began a full out attack on those that supported the sale, and were seen as "soft" on anti-Semitism and on the PLO. (Findley 127)

The first victims of AIPAC's attacks were Representatives Paul N. (Pete) McCloskey and Paul Findley. Representative McCloskey's first sin was to have repeatedly said that if an incumbent administration couldn't keep the Israel Lobby from blocking its Middle East policies, it was time to take the issue to the people. (Curtiss 39) At the time of this comment 1978-1982, public support for the "Land for Peace" idea was strong and both the Carter and Reagan were strong supporters of the plan. In order to keep its goals on track AIPAC set-up an all-out war on Representative McCloskey and targeted him as a larger threat to Israel than all of the Arab nations combined. Donors from all over the country poured money into California to unseat McCloskey. AIPAC's labeling of McCloskey as an enemy of Israel caused many pro-Israel PAC's to shell money out to McCloskey's opponent. At the time there were over 30 pro-Israel PAC's.

McCloskey, who was a Presidential hopeful, was barely defeated in the Republican primary and has not held public office since. McCloskey's law firm continues to get threats from Jewish community members, especially since he selected to represent those killed on the USS Liberty in the Mediterranean Sea by Israelis during the 6 day war in 1967. AIPAC takes full credit for the defeat of McCloskey.

That same year AIPAC launched a full out attack on Representative Paul Findley from Illinois. They saw Findley as a threat because he continuously was in support for cutting aid to Israel, and more importantly for recognizing the PLO as the representatives of the Palestinians. (Findley 55) Findley had travel to the Middle East on numerous occasions and meet with "unfriendly" Arab leaders. During the 1979 Iranian Hostage Crisis, Findley convinced Carter to use PLO chairman Yasser Arafat to negotiate for the United States. He did and was able to secure the first release of hostages. Carter, in fear of AIPAC, did not disclose that he used Yasser Arafat, and because of no public recognition of it, Iran refused to continue to negotiate. (Findley 14) Findley shared this information with a couple of sources, yet no one would say anything.

AIPAC was fearful that Representative Findley would begin to pool support for the PLO and the Palestinians. They decided to make sure in his 1982 campaign; there was no way for him to win. First, the 1980 census required a re-drawing of the legislative districts. Three maps were made, of which two almost guaranteed Findley victory, while the other almost guaranteed defeat. (Curtiss 30) There were three judges deciding on the maps; two Republicans and one Democrat. To the surprise of many one of the Republican judges, a supporter and sympathizer of AIPAC, voted with the Democrat, ensuring Findley's defeat. (Findley 23) To help make sure defeat was

guaranteed, AIPAC mobilized college student volunteers from across the country, encouraged pro-Israel PAC's to donate large sums to Findley's opponent, Richard Durbin, and made it almost impossible for Findley to get anyone to come to fundraisers on his behalf. (Rubenberg 374) 51% of Richard Durbin's donations came from out of state contributors, and under the direction of AIPAC, \$104,325 came into Durbin's campaign from Pro-Israel PAC's. AIPAC also sent 200 Student volunteers to do door to door canvassing for Durbin.

When Findley tried to get his good friend Bob Hope to do a fundraiser for him, AIPAC mobilized its forces. Shortly after the announcement, Hope received one threatening phone call and letter after another. Hope's agent, a Jew, threaten to quite if he went and performed for this "PLO, anti-Semite." (Findley 27) When Findley attempted to speak at the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, someone screamed bomb, and his engagement was over. The "bomb" was bubble gum. With one road block after another, Findley was struggling to keep afloat. With all the money and energy AIPAC put into defeating Findley, he only lost by 1400 votes. (Curtiss 42) AIPAC took full credit for Findley's defeat, and used it as a triumph over non-compliant Congressman. (Rubenberg 317) From that point on Findley was used as an example for other Congressman.

Another case of scare tactics used by AIPAC comes in the form of Senator Jesse Helms. Senator Helms, known for his populist far right beliefs, has always been an opponent of any and all foreign aid, but after the 1984 election that changed. AIPAC's President Tom Dine had labeled Helms as the "worst" in the Senate and Pro-Israel PAC's under the direction of AIPAC donated \$222,342 to North Carolina Governor Hunt. That

election became the most costly senate election up until that point. Senator Helms was just barely able to win over Hunt, and decided to change his stance on AIPAC and AIPAC initiatives. (Curtiss 56) After the election he traveled to Israel with Jewish constituents and has since voted 100% with AIPAC, and even continued to lobby for the removal of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv and to move it to Jerusalem after the measure had failed. Fearful of AIPAC and the Pro-Israel PAC's Senator Helms became a staunch supporter of Israel. Since the 1984 election AIPAC has continued to support Helms and has not supported anyone running against him.

The Reagan administration had more poor choices in the Middle East, since it came to office. Most of those poor choices were at the hands of AIPAC. All of the choices hurt the US position in the Middle East with the Arab nations. The most fatal mistake during those first four years was Lebanon. First, President Reagan removed the Marines from the country, because of the fear of becoming biased in the country's civil war, but then after the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, reintroducing the Marines back into the country. According to Rubenberg, AIPAC and the Israeli government pressured President Reagan into action. After persuading the President, AIPAC went after Congress to make sure they would not pass any legislation that would remove the Marines from Lebanon, or require the use of the War Powers Act. (Rubenberg 345) The President asked AIPAC to help make sure Congress did not discuss the Marines or Lebanon at all. The reason was that the President authorized the Marines to use American fire power against domestic rivals of the Phalange, which turned the US mission in Lebanon from peacekeeping to war. AIPAC did such a good job that Congress extended the Marines stay in Lebanon for eighteen months before it would be

reviewed under the War Powers Act. (Rubenberg 345) President Reagan called AIPAC's Thomas Dine personally to thank him for his work. Shortly afterwards the Marine Barracks in Lebanon were bombed killing 264 Americans and President Reagan authorized the removal of all US troops, a move that discredited the US in the eyes of the Arab world. (Rubenberg 346)

The 1984 election year was a busy one for AIPAC. The Israeli government was concerned with the possible sale of Stinger missiles to both Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The Israeli government called up AIPAC's Thomas Dine and told him to "fix" the problem. (Rubenberg 351) After much lobbying, AIPAC was only partially successful in its goals. The arms sale to Jordan was canceled and deal with Saudi Arabia was dramatically decreased. The President authorized the sale of 400 of the original 1,200 missiles to Saudi Arabia, without the approval of Congress through a national security measure. AIPAC was able to convince Congress not to vote for the sale, so to save face with the Arab world, President Reagan sold them anyways. Afterward he called AIPAC to tell them that all further sales of Stinger Missiles to Arab nations would be done through their approval. (Rubenberg 352) Once again AIPAC was able to circumvent the best interests of the United States for that of Israel.

Besides attacking Senators and Representatives during the 1984 election, AIPAC also went after the Presidential race. Both parties scrambled to show that they were doing a better job to fulfill AIPAC's five major policy goals. Reagan pushed his successes from the last four years to show that he has Israel's best interests at mind, while Presidential hopeful Walter Mondale hoped to pull in the more traditional Jewish Democratic vote by promising to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

(Aruri 261) AIPAC leader Thomas Dine commented in regards to Mondale, he “bounces ideas off us on Mideast issues before issuing policy statements. Mondale’s well-known and well-liked. He’s rooted in our community.” (Rubenberg 362) Dine, while not outright endorsing Mondale did so in such a way that most Jews voted for him. Spokesmen from Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries told the US that if the US Embassy was moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, that there would be “grave consequences.” (Rubenberg 347) Furthermore, American property and lives would be the target of these consequences. International pressure became so great that President Reagan indicated that he would veto it; despite this scores of Congressmen took up the issue to please AIPAC.

AIPAC in their 1987 Policy papers stated, “(t)he United States should continue to encourage King Hussein to enter into direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel. It should not provide the King with Military assistance and weapons before he makes good on his repeated promise to seek peace-by sitting down in direct, face to face negotiations with the government of Israel.” (“AIPAC Policy Statement, 1987” 108) These papers are distributed to every member of Congress, Congressional employee, and White House employee. When it comes to dictating the Arab/Israeli peace process, AIPAC’s policy papers have been the most influential. In the 1987 papers, AIPAC gave the United States government five points that it must follow for peace. “

1. there must be direct negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors leading to peace treaties;
- 2.the U.S. role should be that of facilitator of direct negotiations rather than participate in the negotiations;
3. the PLO should not be involved in negotiations. Instead, the United States should encourage the promotion of alternative and constructive Palestinian representatives;
4. an independent Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria and Gaza is unacceptable;

5. any international accompaniment to negotiations should have as its purpose direct talks between parties. It should not replace direct negotiations, or have veto power over the initiatives presented or the power to impose terms on the parties.” (“AIPAC Policy Statement, 1987” 111-112)

This policy statement from AIPAC became the working papers for all contact with Arab governments and the Arab/Israeli peace process.

During the 1994 election cycle Senator Bob Dole was working to repair his image with AIPAC. AIPAC’s enemy list has caused many politicians to change their stance on Israel. Some are even convinced to do so before their name ends up on the list, as is the case with former Presidential Candidate Bob Dole. “...in the same way that the moderate Republican Dole has adopted the extremist position of the Christian Right as a way of winning key support among conservative white voters, so too has this man who has never been known as an ardent supporter of Israel suddenly found himself embracing the neoconservative pro-Likud platform.” (Hadar 95) He felt that the only way to win over the Republican nomination and the General Election was to have AIPAC’s support. (Aruri 326) To gain the support of AIPAC, Senator Dole made an announcement at AIPAC’s national policy meeting, claiming his attention to continue to push for the US Embassy to be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The four person team in charge of setting the Clinton Administration’s Middle East policy was all made up of members of AIPAC’s policy division. Each member retired from AIPAC to take these key positions with the Clinton Administration. (Aruri 197) Furthermore, most of President Clinton’s transitional team was made-up of key AIPAC personal and other key Jewish leaders.

One way AIPAC is able to influence our leader is through its black list, or enemies list. The following is just part of the list of those who have seen their names on the list; most are never able to recover.

Zbigniew Brzezinski – National Security Advisor to Carter  
Paul Findley – Congressman from Illinois (R)  
Charles Percy – Senator from Illinois (R)  
Paul N. (Pete) McCloskey –Congressman from California (R)  
Richard Nixon – President (R)  
Gerald Ford – President (R)  
Jimmy Carter – President (D)  
J. William Fulbright – Senator from Arkansas (D)  
Roger Jepsen – Senator from Iowa (R)  
Jesse Helms – Senator from North Carolina (R)\*  
Caspar Weinberger – Secretary of Defense to the Ragan Administration  
Steve Symms – Senator from Idaho (R)  
James Abdnor – Senator from South Dakota (R)  
Edwin Zschaum- Congressman from California (R)  
James G. Abourezk – Senator from South Dakota (D)  
Bob Dole – Senator from Kansas (R)\*

Those with stars decided to change their stances on Israel after appearing on the enemies of Israel list. Current people on that list include professors, politicians and artisans. The enemies list is just another form of intimidation by AIPAC.

Administration and Congressional leaders over the past twenty years have felt the need to go and speak at AIPAC's annual policy conference. At this last year's conference, all major Presidential hopefuls and key leadership spoke. The following are the most revealing comments made by US and Israel leadership. All quotations have been taken from the transcripts from the conference:

"I think Israel is especially lucky that AIPAC exists in this country to present Israel's case. I don't think anyone is more knowledgeable than you about the Middle East as it really is. And I think no one can present the case better."

Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"You are the most effective general interest group...across the entire planet. And if you did not exist, we would have to invent you." Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich

"We need you, we need your leadership, we need your willingness to remain deeply involved in public affairs...Over the years, the relationship that we have all shared has deepened and grown." Former Vice President Al Gore

"AIPAC has done a magnificent job, better than anybody else lobbying in this town. ... You have been stunningly effective." Former President Bill Clinton

"The work that AIPAC does is a vital part of our democratic process. You speak out boldly, and that's good for America, it's good for Israel and good for the cause of peace and justice in the world. You make sure that politicians hear what voters have to say not only on Election Day but on every day of the year." President George W. Bush

American Politicians feel the need to attend this conference and praise AIPAC for it's work and also to pledge their undying support for them.

Capital Hill is not the only place AIPAC works to combat what it sees as anti-Israeli actions and speeches. AIPAC's Political Leadership Development Program (PLDP) is a program for pro-Israel student groups and individuals. (Rubenberg 336) PLDP hosts workshops and is active on most college campuses. AIPAC helps students write for school papers, host speakers, and report on anti-Israeli activities on campus. Newspaper articles, tapes, notes, and transcripts are taken and compiled on all anti-Israeli personal. AIPAC takes this information and keeps file on the individuals. Individuals range from academics, to members of the legislature, to musicians and artists. Some of the more notable are Dr. Norm Chomsky, Dr. Rashid Khalidi, and Congressman Paul Findley. These documents are used to provide students with quotations taken out of context, in order to throw the speaker off, or discredit them. AIPAC suggests to its PLDP members to hold a pro-Israel meeting before pro-Palestinian speech and leave the room covered in pro-Israel fliers. Furthermore, it suggests holding loud demonstrations to interrupt the speaker, or to pack the audience with pro-Israel students. (Rubenberg 337) The more disruptive the pro-Israel lobby on campus can be, the more likely the school's administration will be to not invite more pro-Palestinian speakers.

Now that we have seen what AIPAC's goals are and how they accomplish them, we need to discover what this means for American politics. In Chapter two and three of E.E. Schattschneider book, The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America, he explains the position of interests groups and how they play a pivotal role in American Politics. While this book was written in 1960, it does lay forth the purpose and biases interest groups have. Schattschneider explains that interest groups have one purpose, and that is to convince Congress and the President that their issue is the most important and that they need to support it. If an interest group is successful, their issue will be defended in Congress, if they are not effective, like today's farm lobby, cuts will be made and interests will not be served.

What makes AIPAC so different from the farm lobby or the teachers union? The first thing that makes AIPAC different is size and money. While there are other interest groups that are the same size or bigger than AIPAC's 100,000 members, AIPAC's member are usually also members of pro-Israel PACs. With there currently being over 72 pro-Israel PACs, all who can contribute 2,000 per election year (1,000 in the primaries and 1,000 in the general election), AIPAC has a stronger base. No other major US lobby has so many PACs to support it. While AIPAC no longer tells these PACs who to support, the PACs do look to AIPAC's *Near East Report* to see who is a "friend" of Israel. (Findley 167) With 72 PACs with a combined ability to donate \$144,000 to each candidate, and that is before individual contributions of its member, donations to the local party office and hosting of fundraisers. Financially, no single lobby controls so much in campaign donations.

The second form in which AIPAC is more successful is framing the issue for the public. When Representative Findley spoke on behalf of the PLO, AIPAC was able to frame his comments in a way that made the public sympathetic to the Israeli cause. They called Findley an anti-Semite and implied that he was for the destruction of Israel because he recognized the PLO, who did not recognize the right of Israel to exist. AIPAC was able to frame the issue in a way that put Israel and AIPAC in a positive light. When people began to speak out about the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, the Israeli government supplied AIPAC with photos of dead Jews from World War II and from the first Arab/Israeli War. These pictures were used to draw people attention away from Sabra and Shatila, and to the plight of the Jews at the hands of Arabs.

The reason AIPAC can frame the issues so well is the lack of true knowledge about the Palestinians, Arabs and the conflict. When the public only sees Arabs as terrorists in movies, and don't see them as people, it makes it easier for AIPAC to frame the issue. But if it is that easy to frame an issue based on the lack of knowledge, how come others haven't used the technique? The answer is simple, AIPAC can use people's humanity and guilt from WWII to their advantage.

So what don't these techniques work in Europe? Europeans have just as large of a Jewish population as America, even more anti-Semitism, and are just as guilty about WWII. I believe the answer is two fold; information and the two-party system. Europeans are in general, much more knowledgeable about the situation in the Middle East specifically of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The media in Europe is still biased towards Israel, but more pictures of the West Bank and Gaza are shown in Europe. The

knowledge of the situation in the Occupied Territories, would keep European groups similar to AIPAC from using deception.

The second major reason is the two-party system. In Europe, there is the multiparty system that allows for more concentration of parties. Interest groups in Europe are not as effective as they are in the US because they are usually incorporated into a party. It would be kind of ridiculous to think of the pro-Israel party running in Germany or the United Kingdom. AIPAC is an interest group whose sole purpose is the survival and strength of Israel. In the United States, AIPAC is able to survive because of the two-party system. By only having two parties, interest groups are more prevalent because each party can't incorporate each and every interest group out there. The two-party system in the United States lays the foundation for strong powerful interest groups.

Further analysis needs to be conducted on pro-Israel interest groups in other Western countries. Do they exist? How strong are they? Are they able to influence policy as much as AIPAC is in the United States? In regards to AIPAC, more research needs to be conducted to determine if their techniques could be adopted and used by pro-Palestinian groups as effectively. Furthermore, has any other group used AIPAC's combination of techniques? As AIPAC changes and incorporates the religious right into their basis, can they be stopped? Are we going to be able to have a government that is not under siege by the pro-Israel lobby?

While more research needs to be conducted, we can see that the stronghold of AIPAC is strengthening. In the Bush administration, the Middle East expert is no other than Bernard Lewis; an AIPAC supporter and strong anti-Islamist. As long as the "experts" directing US foreign policy in the Middle East are members of AIPAC or

AIPAC sympathizers, no progress will be made. If we want to stop international terrorism aimed at the United States, we need to begin with loosen the grip of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and the government of Israel.

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