



**NAVAL  
POSTGRADUATE  
SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**EXPLAINING THE UNITED STATES-ISRAEL  
RELATIONSHIP**

by

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June 2013

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.			
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>	<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> June 2013	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> EXPLAINING THE UNITED STATES-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP		<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Kira N. Waxer		<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A		<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.	
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited		<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b> A	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b> This thesis examines to what extent International Relations (IR) Realist Theory explains the United States-Israel relationship. It studies the evolution of the United States-Israel relationship through the Cold War and post-Cold War period to analyze how it has developed to the one these two countries share today. The United States gives Israel robust economic, military and diplomatic support. This thesis argues that the benefits that the United States receives outweigh the costs of the relationship, and that supporting Israel helps achieve the United States' national interests of preserving stability and access to oil in the region.			
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> foreign policy, foreign aid, Israel, realism, U.S.-Israel relations			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 77
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU

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**EXPLAINING THE UNITED STATES-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(MID EAST, S ASIA, SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines to what extent International Relations (IR) Realist Theory explains the United States-Israel relationship. It studies the evolution of the United States-Israel relationship through the Cold War and post-Cold War period to analyze how it has developed to the one these two countries share today. The United States gives Israel robust economic, military and diplomatic support. This thesis argues that the benefits that the United States receives outweigh the costs of the relationship, and that supporting Israel helps achieve the United States' national interests of preserving stability and access to oil in the region.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMRAAM	Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles
BARD	Binational Agricultural Research and Development
BIRD	Binational Industrial Research and Development
BPI	Boost Phase Intercept
BSF	Binational Science Foundation
DPAG	Defense Policy Advisory Group
EUCOM	United States European Command
ESF	Economic Support Funds
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
JPMG	Joint Political-Military Group
JSPC	Joint Strategic Planning Committee
MLRS	Multiple Launch Rocket System
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
QME	Qualitative Military Edge
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicles
U.S.	United States

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first and foremost like to thank my family. My mother and father have been incredibly supportive of me pursuing my degree and have been a vision of success for me to aspire to pursue through education.

Thank you to Dr. Russell and Dr. Mabry for truly being Doctors of the craft and taking time out of their busy schedules to mentor me and help me make this thesis a successful study of the subject.

Thank you to Johanna Bakmas for being a light in dark places, when all other lights were out. If we can get through the last few years, I am pretty sure we can do anything.

Thank you to my officemates Molly MacCalman, Paul Roeder, and Laura Whitney. You all have seen me through the best of times and the worst of times, and kept me going even though I doubted myself. This paper encapsulates my time with you three, and I will miss you greatly when we go our separate ways.

Thank you to Dan Nussbaum and Alison Kerr for encouraging me to pursue my degree and letting me take time to work on school and this thesis.

And finally, thank you to Tom Norbot for being my constant support, always believing in me, and saying exactly what I needed to hear to keep going. I could not have gotten this far without you.

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

This thesis asks whether the United States-Israel relationship is of strategic benefit to the United States. To answer this question, this thesis includes a historical case study of the evolution of the relationship through the explanatory power of neorealist international relations (IR) theory. It looks at the ebbs and flows in the relationship and considers the power of IR theory to explain them. The post-Cold War period is examined in detail, as the strategic benefit of the relationship after this period is put into great question, mainly by IR scholars. If this IR theory proves inadequate to explain the relationship, moral and political arguments will be considered as well.

The first hypothesis will be from the perspective of neorealist IR theory. In order to examine the merits of the relationship, I will provide a recent historical study of the alliance that will cover both countries' strategic interests and the costs and benefits of the relationship. The first section of this study will focus on the Cold War period.

## **B. IMPORTANCE**

The United States is currently in a precarious situation in the Middle East. Its relationships with countries in the region have been shaken after the 9/11 attacks, the following wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, continued need for access to oil in the Persian Gulf, the Arab Spring, and Iran's nuclear ambitions. What has remained strong through this period is United States' policy and relationship toward Israel. However, arguments have recently surfaced that question why the United States gives Israel unconditional military, economic and political support. Critics of the relationship ponder the strategic benefits of this for the United States and ask whether it is truly in America's interests to give this unquestioned support to Israel. A closer look at this issue will help define what the United States interests are in the region and assist in clarifying the special relationship it shares with Israel.

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## **II. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL DURING THE COLD WAR**

### **A. RELATIONS DURING THE COLD WAR (1948–1991)**

After World War II, the United States was the only single country with the resources and willpower to stop the Soviet threat. It adjusted its foreign policy to fit: from 1945–1991 its policy was one of containing Soviet influence at all costs wherever it occurred. The Soviet Union began its foray into the Middle East as a strong supporter of Israel. However, as Arab states took up the cause of opposing what they viewed as new American colonialism, the Soviet Union moved from cordial relations with Israel to being a sponsor of the pan-Arab nationalist cause.

The United States had three main strategic goals in the Middle East during the Cold War: prevent and deter any expansion of Soviet influence, maintain access to the region's oil, and preserve stability, but only if it did not conflict with the first two objectives. As part of the first goal, major resources were invested to create military power and political ties. This chapter will refer to each of these goals in trying to understand the history of relations between the United States and Israel.

### **B. RELATIONS BETWEEN 1948–1967**

The first period that will be examined, 1948–1967, shows little actual strategic support of Israel.<sup>1</sup> President Truman's decision to support Israel after its independence was not a strategic decision—in fact, he was cautioned against it by his Secretary of State George Marshall. His advisors were more concerned about access to Arab oil and feared that a relationship with Israel could hinder that effort. However, he was persuaded by previous international commitments, such as the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the UN

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Reich, *Securing the Covenant: United States Relations after the Cold War* (kindle edition) (London: Praeger Publishers, 1995), 387–407 of 2203.

Resolution 181 of 1947, which called for separate Jewish and Arab states, sentiment after the Holocaust, the Zionist cause, and domestic factors, including the American Jewish vote.<sup>2</sup>

During the Eisenhower administration, Israel was viewed by President Eisenhower as a problem in the region, and he did not want to give arms to any nation that might encourage hostilities. He and his advisors were very aware of the potential cost of supporting Israel in terms of maintaining access to Arab oil. However, the United States and Israel did have a common interest on intelligence matters. Indeed, it was because Israel fought against Soviet military equipment and tactics in the independence and Suez Canal wars that it was able to provide the United States with important anti-Soviet combat intelligence.<sup>3</sup>

United States Secretary of State George Marshall and Secretary of Defense James Forrestal thought that Israel was a strategic liability. They believed that support of Israel might cause Egypt to become closer with the Soviet Union, or that they might need to employ United States troops to save Israel if it were attacked. President Eisenhower refused the arms that Israel requested, which along with other factors made Israel decide to ally with Britain and France in the 1956 Suez War.<sup>4</sup>

President Eisenhower's argued that he did not want to encourage an arms race in the region by having the United States supply Israel with weapons. By the 1960s, when the Soviet Union continued supplying arms to Egypt, President Kennedy began to rethink American policy. He wanted influence in the region and the means to counter the Soviet Influence. The Joint Chief of Staff released a statement on April 3, 1963 saying that

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<sup>2</sup> Reich, *Securing the Covenant*, 513 of 2203.

<sup>3</sup> Karen Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation in the Post-Cold War Era: An American Perspective* (Jerusalem: Westview Press, 1992), 11–12.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Freedman, "Introduction" in *Israel and the United States: Six Decades of U.S.-Israeli Relation*, ed. Robert O. Freedman (Boulder: Westview Press, 2012), 2–3.

supplying arms to Israel on a case-by case basis “would provide greater flexibility in exerting U.S. influence to restrict the flow of arms to the area and in maintaining the military equilibrium which inhibits actual hostilities.”<sup>5</sup>

President Eisenhower, despite his lukewarm stance towards Israel, had not achieved any better relations with the Arab states. They began to turn even more radical and pro-communist under the Soviet influence in the 1950s and early 1960s, while the Soviets increased their military supplies to the Arab states in the region. The United States decided that it needed to counter that influence. However, it was still entangled in the Vietnam War and was at the time uninterested in getting involved in other conflicts abroad.<sup>6</sup>

While Israel initially received domestic support from the United States in 1948, this was not immediately followed with military or political support. From 1949–1965 the U.S. gave Israel \$63 million in aid, most of which was for economic development. The main supplier of arms to Israel at this time was France. Weapons sales did not occur until HAWK anti-aircraft missiles were sold by President Kennedy in 1962.<sup>7</sup> This sale was the start of support for maintaining Israel’s qualitative military edge (QME), which is the ability for Israel to defeat any credible state or non-state actor, over its Arab neighbors in the region.<sup>8</sup>

### **C. RELATIONS BETWEEN 1967–1973**

The period from 1967–1973 saw an increased American interest in making Israel a strategic ally. When Israel defeated the Arab armies in 1967 (which combined received \$112 billion in military aid from the Soviet Union) the United States decided that Israel’s QME could be used to help deter future wars in the region.<sup>9</sup> American aid to Israel

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<sup>5</sup> Mordechai Gazit, “The Genesis of the U.S.-Israeli Military-Strategic Relationship and the Dimona Issue,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35, no. 3 (2000): 416.

<sup>6</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic cooperation*, 11–14.

<sup>7</sup> Reich, *Securing the Covenant*, 529 of 2203.

<sup>8</sup> Roby Nathanson and Ron Mandelbaum, “Aid and Trade: Economic Relations Between the United States and Israel, 1948–2010” in *Israel and the United States: Six Decades of U.S.-Israeli Relations*, ed. Robert O. Freedman (Boulder: Westview Press, 2012), 126–128.

<sup>9</sup> Nathanson and Mandelbaum, “Aid and Trade,” 128–129.

increased from \$35 million in 1970 to \$545 million in 1971 to ensure Israel's QME.<sup>10</sup> Israel's victory over the Soviet Union's two proxy states, Egypt and Syria, meant that those alliances cost more for the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the territory that Israel acquired during the 1967 war would give the United States future leverage because Egypt knew that the United States had good relations with Israel and thus relations with the United States was the only way to get the territory back. This was one of the causes of Egypt turning pro-Western.<sup>11</sup>

Between the two wars of 1967 and 1973, the United States did not view Israel as a formal strategic asset, but security relations undeniably increased. Israel was able to provide information to the United States on Soviet equipment that they captured from its positions at the Suez Canal. Israel also had the ability to block the Soviet Union from using the canal as a shorter supply route to the Indian Ocean. Additionally, because Israel was using some of America's military equipment (President Johnson decided to sell F-4 Phantom fighters to Israel in 1968<sup>12</sup>) it was able to make modifications and improvements that the United States could use against the Soviets. Karen Puschel stated, "From the perspective of American military planners preoccupied with the Soviet threat, Israel had become a laboratory for developing countermeasures to Soviet weapons and tactics."<sup>13</sup> Israel had shown again that it, along with western tactics and machinery, could defeat the Soviet weaponry provided to the Arab states. This also was the beginning of the turning point in how the United States looked at the balance of power in the region—key individuals such as Secretary of State Henry Kissinger argued that only a strong Israel could foster peace.

The War of Attrition between Israel and Egypt in 1970 saw increased influence of the Soviet Union in Arab states. It provided Egypt with 15,000 troops, which operated

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<sup>10</sup> Nathanson and Mandelbaum, "Aid and Trade," 128.

<sup>11</sup> David Makovsky, "The United States and the Arab-Israeli Conflict from 1945 to 2000: Why the Arabists are Wrong" in *Israel and the United States: Six Decades of U.S.-Israeli Relations*, ed. Robert O. Freedman (Boulder: Westview Press, 2012), 28.

<sup>12</sup> Nathanson and Mandelbaum, "Aid and Trade," 128–129.

<sup>13</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 15.

150 aircraft.<sup>14</sup> The United States noticed this direct involvement and further pushed the need to have a counter-force in the region. Also, since the Soviet Union was still providing the Arab states with arms, it was clear that it was trying to help the Arab states meet their objective of defeating Israel and to gain back the territories they had just lost. The United States sought to counter this intention by making sure that attacking Israel would continue to be fruitless, and that it was America alone that could convince the Israelis to go towards peace and to give back territory.<sup>15</sup>

The United States was in need of obtaining new allies and assets in the Middle East because of this expansion of Soviet Influence. The British had recently pulled out of the region, and Arab states were continuing to be aggressive towards Israel. With the Soviet Union clearly continuing to pursue its influence with, and continue its aid to, the Arab countries, America sought its own client state to counter the Soviet-armed Arabs.

The opportunity for United States-Israeli strategic cooperation came when the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) attempted a coup against King Hussein's regime in 1970, seeking to overthrow the Hashemite Kingdom with the help of Syrian tanks. Because Syria and the PLO were already client states of the Soviet Union, the United States feared that if Jordan fell, the strategic balance of power in the Middle East would change and shift even further under Soviet influence. Israel was concerned that a more anti-Zionist regime would take King Hussein's place. Thus, America and Israel had the converging interest to save Jordan from the PLO, Syria, and ultimately, the Soviet Union. Fearing that if the United States sent in its own planes for air strikes to protect the King, it might be seen by Moscow as too direct an involvement, the United States decided to ask Israel to send some of its planes to drive back the Syrian tanks. Israel agreed, and between its buildup in the Golan and the American transfer of a large naval presence to the coast of Lebanon, the tanks backed off and King Hussein was able to defeat the PLO in what was known as "Black September." This instance of United States-Israeli cooperation highlighted "Israel's deterrent value in the region and (challenged) the longstanding proposition that Israel was no more than a liability to

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<sup>14</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-17.

American interests in the region.”<sup>16</sup> President Nixon even sent a note to Israel after the crisis stating that the United States was “fortunate in having an ally like Israel in the Middle East.”<sup>17</sup> This was the first reference to Israel as an “ally,” representing the mutuality of the relationship between the two countries.<sup>18</sup>

Senator Henry Jackson and others during this time agreed that Israel served American strategic interests, helped protect moderate Arab governments (Jordan in 1970) and was a United States ally against Soviet aggression and influence in region.<sup>19</sup> Puschel states, “Not only could Israel clearly take care of itself, but it emerged from the war in a strong position to affect other events in the region.”<sup>20</sup> Because of Israel’s overwhelming military defeat of the Arab forces, the United States started to see Israel as a real strategic ally.

#### **D. RELATIONS BETWEEN 1973–1979**

American aid to Israel increased during 1973–1979 to achieve the United States’ foreign policy objective of countering the Soviet Union. Roby Nathanson and Ron Mandelbaum state, “The year 1973–1974 marks the shift that saw American aid change from being solely reactive to active in that the United States utilized foreign aid to achieve its strategic goals in the region.”<sup>21</sup> After the Vietnam War, the United States seriously began to see the Middle East as a frontier in the containment of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was still funneling massive amounts of aid and military equipment to its Arab allies and Israel’s enemies. A policy tool at the time (which continues to this day) was the use of arms sales to achieve American interests. The United States began to increase amounts of aid given and weapons sold to Egypt and Israel, while assuring Israel that it would never let its qualitative military edge disappear. During the 1973 war, it was the thinking of both President Nixon and Secretary of State

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<sup>16</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 18–20.

<sup>19</sup> Reich, *Securing the Covenant*, 543 of 2203.

<sup>20</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Nathanson and Mandelbaum, “Aid and Trade,” 129.

Henry Kissinger who claimed “that the United States could not afford to have Soviet allies armed with Soviet weapons beat a U.S. ally armed with U.S. weapons.”<sup>22</sup> After the 1973 Yom Kippur war, this strategy was used to incentivize Israel to exchange the land it captured from Egypt in the Sinai for peace. The Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty saw the United States giving Egypt and Israel \$7.3 billion each in the form of military and economic grants.<sup>23</sup>

The United States showed its first tangible strategic support to Israel when it provided the much needed airlift in the 1973 Yom Kippur War because it wanted to deal a blow to Egypt and the Soviet Union. In the first few days, the United States supplied Israel with over 1,000 tons of military equipment and exceeded the amount that the Soviet Union had given Syria and Egypt combined. This airlift changed the tides of the war and led to an Israeli victory, which struck a huge blow to the Soviet-backed Egyptian forces.<sup>24</sup>

After the war, close relations with Israel helped the United States become the key diplomatic mediator in the region. Between 1974 and 1979, President Sadat in Egypt signed two disengagement agreements and the Camp David peace treaty with Israel. Because the Soviet Union had little influence over Israel, and because of the aid that the United States provided after the peace treaty, Egypt during this time switched to America’s sphere of influence. By supporting Israel, the United States helped create the first peace treaty in the region while dealing a considerable blow to the Soviet Union as Egypt began to view its relationship to the United States as indispensable to its goal of regaining the Sinai Peninsula. The new military ties between the United States and Israel helped prevent future large scale war in the region, as attacking Israel became an impossible war to win because it had American support.<sup>25</sup> Also, very important to the

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<sup>22</sup> Nathanson and Mandelbaum, “Aid and Trade,” 129.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 128–129.

<sup>24</sup> Reich, *Securing the Covenant*, 745 of 2203.

<sup>25</sup> Makovsky, “Why the Arabists are wrong,” 28–31.

second strategic goal of the United States in keeping its Arab oil supply flowing, the peace between Israel and Egypt meant that the United States did not have to be friends with Israel at the expense of relations with its Arab neighbors.<sup>26</sup>

The Egyptian-Israeli peace process helped in defining these new relations. Political, defense and energy documents were signed between the United States and Israel. Significantly, the United States said it would not go through the PLO to discuss peace with the Palestinians and Israel. The United States also reiterated that it was committed to Israel's long-term defense needs, protection of Israel against regional powers, and additional planning for future resupply missions during wars. American-Israeli cooperation was increased by \$3 billion for construction of new airbases in the Negev Desert. Furthermore, a Memorandum of Defense was signed in 1979, which allowed Israeli military exports to America. The United States also made up a large portion of the peace keeping forces in the Sinai. All of these projects and agreements meant that by the end of the 1970s, there was an increased number of Americans who were involved in Israel's security. As the Soviet Union continued to be an adversary of the United States in the region, Israel and the United States began to look at strategies on how they could together face this Communist threat.<sup>27</sup>

#### **E. RELATIONS BETWEEN 1979–1991**

The early 1980s were characterized as the America trying to persuade the region that the Soviet Union was the main threat that they should all be fighting and to cooperate with the United States. It was not an easy argument, and the lack of support from the Arab states led the United States to lean more towards Israel. Israel came to be seen as the only reliable ally in the region, which foreign aid reflected as it stayed at three billion annually, all in the form of grants.<sup>28</sup> In 1981 the two countries signed another

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<sup>26</sup> Puschel, *U.S. Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 26–28.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Reich, *Securing the Covenant*, 628 of 2203.



memorandum of understanding. While it did not do much in practical terms, it helped secure Israel as a strategic ally, instead of a just another country who received foreign aid.<sup>29</sup>

In June 1982, Israel nominally invaded Lebanon to help root out the PLO who had taken refuge in Beirut. The United States neither endorsed nor criticized this invasion, however they did not help Israel explicitly in any way. This invasion sparked a major divide among American leaders. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger feared that the moderate Arab states would weaken their support for America if it backed Israel in its invasion. Others, such as secretary of State Alexander Haig, reasoned that the enemies of Israel were not friends of the United States. Indeed the PLO had received assistance from the Soviet Union, and Washington certainly did not want them or Syria (another known Soviet Union client state) pulling the strings in Lebanon. With American leaders split, Israel continued its invasion. Eventually Washington convinced the Israelis to withdraw as United States Marines, as part of an international peacekeeping force, were sent to help evacuate the PLO. The United States had wanted the Israeli forces to draw out the PLO and drive Syria back from Lebanon so that the new government would become a client state of Washington.<sup>30</sup>

After the war ended, President Reagan attempted a multi-lateral peace talk, called the “fresh start” initiative. It was agreed that this was a good time for Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel to try to come to an agreement. This failed, in part because Israel vehemently objected to the security issues related to it. King Hussein of Jordan also did not participate, and as the Soviet Union increased its presence in Syria, America again turned to Israel as a strategic ally in the region. The United States attempted a peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon in May 1983, but it proved futile due to PLO factions in Lebanon who vehemently opposed the idea. Because this failure was

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<sup>29</sup> Reich, *Securing the Covenant*, 569–574 of 2203.

<sup>30</sup> Organski, *\$36 Billion Bargain*, 196–198.

influenced by the Soviet Union and Syria, the United States-Israel relationship was reinforced as a counterforce in the region and as two countries with increasingly convergent interests.<sup>31</sup>

National Security Directive 111, signed between the United States and Israel in October 1983, stressed the defensive nature of the relationship, based on a common threat of the Soviet Union, and not of Israel's Arab neighbors. It paved the way for "discussions on joint military exercises, the stockpiling of U.S. military equipment, the sharing of intelligence data, the use of Israeli ports by the sixth fleet, and joint planning for possible military contingencies."<sup>32</sup> A Joint Political-Military Group (JPMG) was formed in November 1983, which stated that American and Israeli officials would meet twice a year to discuss military issues and strategic cooperation.<sup>33</sup>

Officials in the United States had different reasons for supporting the strategic cooperation with Israel. The National Security Council viewed Israel as fitting into its activist approach to the region in which they desired to play more of a role to counter the shadowy dealings of the Soviet Union and the increasing terrorism activity in the Middle East. Secretary of State George Shultz gave his support to the strategic nature of the relationship because he saw the mutual interests between Washington and Jerusalem, and viewed a strong Israel as good for the United States. He was firm in his belief that if Israel were more secure (which the United States could help bring about through aid) then it would be more willing to take risks in pursuing peace, which would help stabilize the region. Diplomat (and later Secretary of State) Larry Eagleburger focused on realpolitik terms: securing any ally in the region that might stem the influence of the Soviet Union. Israel was willing, strong, and reliably able to partake in the mutual strategic interest of containment against the Soviet aggression in the region.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Reich, *Securing the Covenant*, 593 of 2203.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 608 of 2203.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 75.

The JPMG began in January 1984 with three joint projects: American military access to Israeli hospitals, the storing of American medical equipment in Israel, and exchange visits between Israeli and American doctors.<sup>35</sup>

Though American and Israeli officials came to the table with slightly different goals, they came out with groundwork for strategic cooperation that has remained to this day. It was decided that the scenario that would enable the United States to come to the aid of its strategic ally were only ones where the Soviet Union played a major role. Even though Israel wanted a broader categorization of intervention, which would include the Arab States around them without major Soviet support, the United States was determined to keep it solely focused on the Soviet Union. This was beneficial to Israel for three reasons: it provided solid reasoning for strategic cooperation with Israel among the Arab states, it paved the way for putting to paper the agreements that would solidify the strategic cooperation and joint planning for future operations, and it was the first firm commitment the United States made to deter the Soviet Union, through Israel.<sup>36</sup>

Despite these conditions for military support, a senior administration official stated, “We want to try to work out agreements that do everything we can to help Israel maintain its posture of having an effective military advantage in the region so that it is not going to be knocked over by somebody’s superior military power.”<sup>37</sup> Even though the strategic cooperation was focused solely on the Soviet Union, the closer relationship to and agreements with Israel were to help increase its overall security.

Further military and practical cooperation ensued during the year of the first JPMG. American officials began to visit Israel more frequently and soon pursued collaboration on technological projects. Israel had the ability to quickly turn an idea into an actual and useful military product or application.<sup>38</sup> The United States Navy quickly became the most interested in the strategic use of Israeli ports for its Sixth Fleet. Haifa was well equipped with high-performance maintenance and repair facilities, was

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<sup>35</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 81–82.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

available to American ships at short notice and was a friendly port in that region. Because of Israel's innovative technological field, joint projects were discussed and agreed upon, including a new naval missile. The United States also made use of the Negev Desert in Israel for practice and testing. This desert was unique in that 85 percent of it was usable for training exercises and did not have civilian populations. It also already had two American-built air bases built in the aftermath of the Egypt-Israeli peace accord. Sixth Fleet fighter pilots, Army Apache helicopters, and Marines all made use of the unique training capabilities in Israel.<sup>39</sup> Between all these joint projects and the repositioning of war materials that was continuing in 1986–87, defense dialogue became much easier for American officials. The strategic use of Israel was becoming clearer.

The Reagan administration at the end of the 1980s saw the greatest strategic cooperation to date. The JPMG was still meeting biannually to discuss how the program was going and new ways for collaboration. American and Israeli officials were brought together regularly at military-to-military group meetings to converse on current projects. The Free-Trade Agreement was signed by the United States in Israel in 1985, which reduced trade tariffs and barriers. Military cooperation continued with combined sea and air exercises, along with new joint plans for possible future security scenarios. Israel was designated as a “major non-NATO ally” in 1987. Research and technology remained in strong partnership with Israel joining the United States in the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program, joint projects to design new aircraft, electronics, naval vessels, and tank guns, and Israel continued to play a large role in being a weapons evaluator for American weapons against Soviet arms in combat. The United States purchase of Israeli military goods grew from nine million in 1983 to \$480 million in 1988. In April 1988 another Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two countries. The White House stated:

The memorandum of agreement reiterates for the public record our longstanding relationship of strategic cooperation with Israel. It reflects

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<sup>39</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 88–89.

the enduring U.S. commitment to Israel's security. That commitment will never flag. The President knows that a strong Israel is necessary if peace is to be possible.<sup>40</sup>

Israel was also now constantly referred to as an "ally," which was important as it showed America's commitment to Israel's security. The justification of the United States-Israel relationship was based on broad American policy objectives in the region, including deterring the Soviet Union and countering its influence and also regional stability, which the United States believed to require a strong Israel.<sup>41</sup> George Shultz stated in 1988, "Strategic cooperation can only succeed when there are shared interests, including the commitment to building peace and stability in the region."<sup>42</sup> The policy was based on that only a strong Israel that had the friendship and confidence of the United States would be secure enough to be able to make peace.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

Washington's foreign policy goals in the Middle East during the Cold War were to deter Soviet influence, retain access to Arab oil, and maintain stability. To this end in the region, Israel became America's strategic ally. According to A.F.K. Organski, "U.S. assistance to Israel has been an essential component of the maximalist strategy that has sought to repulse any expansion, through proxies, of Soviet power and influence. U.S. assistance has been meant to raise the effectiveness of Israel's military power as an obstacle to such expansion"<sup>43</sup> The military and economic support that Israel has received from the United States has been because Israel was a strategic asset in attaining Washington's Cold War policy goal of countering Soviet influence in the region. Whether it remained such an asset after the Cold War will be examined in the next chapter.

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<sup>40</sup> Reich, *Securing the Covenant*, 622 of 2203.

<sup>41</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 94-98.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>43</sup> Organski, *\$36 Billion Bargain*, 202.

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### **III. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL IN THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD**

In the last chapter it was argued that the relationship between the United States and Israel made strategic sense during the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War, the continued strategic rationale for the United States-Israel relationship was questioned. Budgets in Washington were being cut from the diminished Soviet threat, which meant that every alliance was going under scrutiny for being a strategic asset. The Reagan administration often stated that the reason for the American-Israeli relationship was because the Soviet Union was a menace in the region, and that they were partners against this threat. If the relationship did not make sense from a strategic standpoint, was a new rationale going to be offered? Or would the United States decide it was no longer in its interest to be allied with Israel and cut back on aid and joint projects? The question whether allies needed enemies was being questioned in the post-Cold War world, especially concerning Israel.

#### **A. GEORGE H. W. BUSH: 1989–1993**

Because there was no one imperative for strategic cooperation, there will likely never be one reason for its decline. Strategic cooperation exists, in the final analysis, because an extremely close U.S.-Israeli relationship exists.<sup>44</sup>

The George H.W. Bush administration responded to the new post-Cold War reality in three ways: 1) arguing that the Soviet threat was not completely destroyed; 2) that the United States still had other enemies; and 3) that with the defense budget cuts that it would be more reliant on help from foreign allies. If the United States sought local regions to maintain their own stability, Israel could be of use in the Middle East. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney gave a speech in March 1990 underscoring the continued importance of the relationship at the time stating that America's "bedrock commitment to Israel's security is absolutely unshakable," and "we have always had and

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<sup>44</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 155.

always will have a special relationship with Israel.”<sup>45</sup> He then pointed out the mutual benefits that both countries gained because of their strategic cooperation in the past and how the program was continuing under the new administration.<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, in the beginning period of the first Bush administration, military agreements and strategic cooperation continued to increase. In September 1989, the United States signed an agreement that allowed it to lend Israel supplies and equipment for use in military research. Another big leap in the relationship was when Cheney announced that the United States had decided to allow Israel to use its pre-positioned military equipment in case of an emergency. In January 1990, Under Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz negotiated with Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin on the sale of American Patriot missiles. Significantly, this marked the first time that the system would be deployed outside the United States.<sup>47</sup>

The Gulf War in early 1991 tested the relationship between President Bush and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. Israel was concerned that Iraq would shoot missiles at Israel, which it threatened to do. Arab countries in the coalition, especially Egypt and Syria, were adamant that Israel not get involved with the effort to push Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. The Bush administration knew that Israel would need powerful assurances from the United States to restrain it from attacking Iraq’s missile capabilities. When Israel was attacked by Scud missiles during the Gulf War, President Bush deterred Israel from striking back by promising to share greater information on the American campaign, sending Deputy Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger to Israel as a direct liaison with the President, and ordering four Patriot batteries and its crews to Israel for its defense against future missiles. This plan and the following restraint by Israel not to retaliate showed that the two countries could work together towards a common objective

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<sup>45</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 104.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 100–105.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 105–106.



in the region. Shamir agreed that the most important goal was Israel's long-term security and the destruction of Iraq's military capabilities, which the United States assured Israel it was carrying out.<sup>48</sup>

The other argument is that this incident in the Gulf War showed that Israel was a liability to the United States. John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt claim that it was in the America's interest to conduct the Gulf War, but it had to spend time and resources to keep Israel from getting involved, which would have broken the coalition of Arab states.<sup>49</sup> While this event can be viewed from either lens, it is important to look at the events that followed.

Relations after the Gulf War warmed. The strategic relationship between the United States and Israel was affirmed by Secretary of Defense Cheney, who stated that the Gulf War was "a demonstration of the value of maintaining Israel's strength, and her ability to defend herself, and also the value of the strategic cooperation between our two countries."<sup>50</sup> This statement was backed up by an agreement in May 1991 for the United States to fund 72 percent of the Israeli Arrow ATEM program, the United States selling 10 used F-15-A fighters to Israel (worth roughly \$65 million), and the announcement by Cheney that the United States was going to pre-position substantial quantities of military equipment for America's use in a future conflict. This open talk about pre-positioning is significant because it was one of the most sensitive subjects to the Arab world and signified a new openness to speak about the strategic relationship with Israel. This was in part to reinforce Israeli deterrence and banish any ideas that the United States was shifting its interests away from its relationship with Israel.<sup>51</sup>

After the Gulf War ended in 1991, the United States shifted its focus in the region. It had never been the intention of the United States to build up security and increase confidence in Israel and then stick to the status quo. The intent of the aid was to

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<sup>48</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 132–133.

<sup>49</sup> John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, StraU.S. and Giroux, 2007): 58.

<sup>50</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 145.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 145–146.

increase Israel's might and position in the region so that it would be in a strong enough position to want to create peace with the Palestinians and its neighbors.<sup>52</sup> In the early 1990s the United States refocused its concentration on using its influence to achieve long lasting and comprehensive peace agreements between Israel and the rest of the region, and also to create security agreements that would promote regional stability and unrestricted access to oil reserves in the Persian Gulf. It was believed in the United States that an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would reduce the risk of instability and lower risk in its access to oil.<sup>53</sup>

The Bush administration thus sought to test its theory that only a strong Israel would take risks for peace. Relations between the United States and Israel were bound to take a downturn because the issues that would come up during a peace process would be perceived as a threat to Israel's existence as a nation. The differences that arose between the Bush administration and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's government pushed Congress to include Israel when considering a five percent decrease in aid to five main recipients of aid.

A movement started to grow in the United States government, which sought to link issues with monetary assistance. President Bush delayed a request by Israel for \$10 billion in loan guarantees to absorb Soviet immigrants because Israel continued building settlements. The larger sense of partnership was cast into doubt as "perceived mutual interests had given way to intense differences over the peace process."<sup>54</sup> This was demonstrated in July 1990 when the United States postponed a regular session of the JPMG that was to meet in September.

Bernard Lewis states, "While the U.S.-Israel relationship was often prickly during the Bush administration, its fundamentals were not damaged and the stage was set diplomatically for a quantum leap forward."<sup>55</sup> The Bush administration saw the peace

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<sup>52</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 109.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard Reich, *Securing the Covenant: United States Relations after the Cold War* (kindle edition) (London: Praeger Publishers, 1995), location 643 of 2203.

<sup>54</sup> Puschel, *U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, 111.

<sup>55</sup> Bernard Lewis, "The United States and Israel: Evolution of an Unwritten Alliance" *Middle East Journal*, 53, no. 3 (1999): 370.

process as being in both American and Israeli interests. The joint military exercises and projects were appreciated and increased by George H.W. Bush, which along with economic and military aid were used to help create an even stronger position for Israel from where it could negotiate a peace with the Palestinians.<sup>56</sup>

## **B. BILL CLINTON: 1993–2001**

The end of the Cold War revealed that the special relationship was not limited to the strategic dimension but included the peace process as well. Indeed, Israel's peace initiatives under Rabin and Peres strengthened the relationship and brought it to its highest peak.<sup>57</sup>

The peace process that President Bill Clinton pursued reconstructed the strategic relationship between the United States and Israel. With the election of Yitzhak Rabin as Prime Minister, personal relations between the countries were as close as they had ever been. Far from the previous Israeli administrations' hard line positions on the peace process, Rabin and his foreign minister Shimon Peres were willing to negotiate for peace. "Israel's leaders realized that their country's value to the United States in the post-Cold War era depended on strategic cooperation and its willingness to stabilize the Middle East through peacemaking."<sup>58</sup>

In this vein, Clinton supported the Oslo negotiations with the PLO initiated by Rabin and Peres. Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty in October 1994 with encouragement from the United States. The relationship was further strengthened by negotiations mediated by the United States between Israel and Syria.

Clinton stated in 1993 that he "strongly believed in the benefit to American interests from strengthened relations with Israel."<sup>59</sup> In the next couple of years, to increase strategic cooperation, he approved the transfer of sophisticated computers and excess American military equipment, sustained the Arrow missile project, secured

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<sup>56</sup> Lewis, "The United States and Israel: Evolution," 370.

<sup>57</sup> Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship?'" *Diplomatic History* 22, 231–262 (1998): 30.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

funding for the Boost Phase Intercept (BPI) missile defense program, authorized joint development programs and pilot training programs, and provided military hardware including a Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS), F-16 fighters and F-15I long-range bombers, and Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM).<sup>60</sup> In return, the United States acquired Israeli military systems, together with unmanned aerial vehicles, and scheduled joint exercises with American forces and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).<sup>61</sup>

The Clinton administration also addressed the common threats that the United States and Israel shared in place of the Soviet Union. Violence by Islamic fundamentalists and the threat of nuclear proliferation were increasingly concerns of the United States. Memorandums of understanding (MOUS) on counterterrorism were signed in 1994 and 1996 and a steering committee was created to find out how the two countries could cooperate and share strategies regarding the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

All of these policies during the Clinton era strengthened the strategic cooperation between the United States and Israel. American interests had turned from the Cold War's position of containing Soviet Influence to working with Israel to create a lasting and comprehensive peace process with its neighbors. The United States viewed a stable Middle East as one of its interests, and the Clinton administration used the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians as a way to achieve that stability. The new strategic and political partnerships that occurred during the peace process in the 1990s were based on rewards for Israel taking risks for peace.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948," 28–29.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 29

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

### C. **GEORGE W. BUSH: 2001–2009**

George W. Bush embodies both the Reaganite assessment of Israel as a strategic ally and Clintonite enthusiasm for the country and understanding of its dilemmas.<sup>63</sup>

The George W. Bush administration viewed the peace process as one where Israel took risks for peace and was rewarded by violence. President Bush became disenchanted with Yasser Arafat at the Taba peace talks and for the first two years of his presidency decided to strategically disengage from the peace process.

After the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the administration began once again to see Israel as a strategic partner against a common foe—instead of the Soviet Union, it was now terrorism. The legislative branch reinforced Bush’s attitude towards Israel: 89 out of 100 senators urged him not to stop Israel from “Using all [its] might and strength”<sup>64</sup> against Palestinian terrorism.

After 2001, President Bush sought an agenda of unilateralism and promoting democracy. In this vein, he came to view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as one that would be more easily solved once the Arab states and Palestinians became democratic. He regarded Israel as fighting the same fight against the anti-democratic terrorist groups. It was a valued partner in the region because it was already democratic.

His administration also at this time was forming an anti-Iran coalition. Israel shares the strategic goal of weakening Iran’s power and influence, as Iran houses Islamic radicals who deny Israel’s right to exist and fund groups who use terrorism against Israel.<sup>65</sup> President Bush wanted the anti-Iran coalition to include Sunni states and Israel. He hoped having the common enemy of Iran could bring these countries that would not normally work together, and align against a greater foe.

Israel and the United States have continued their strategic cooperation in a few different areas: joint military exercises, homeland security, and missile defense systems.

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<sup>63</sup> Dana Allan and Steven Simon, “The Moral Psychology of U.S. Support for Israel,” *Survival*, 45: no. 3(2003): 130.

<sup>64</sup> Allan and Simon, “The Moral Psychology of U.S. Support,” 130.

<sup>65</sup> Efraim Inbar “U.S.-Israel Relations in the post-Cold War Era: The View from Jerusalem” in *U.S. Relations in a New Era*, ed. Eytan Gilboa and Efraim Inbar (New York: Routledge, 2009), 39.

As part of their agreement to hold bilateral training exercises, Juniper Cobra was conducted between the United States and Israel in March 2007. It was an air defense computer based model that was designed to improve interoperability, cooperation and understanding between the two militaries. In June 2007, the Israeli and American air forces held a week-long training exercise in the Negev desert where they practiced bombing targets and simulated dog fights. United States European Command (EUCOM) and the IDF in March 2008 conducted a training exercise in Tel Aviv which the Commander of EUCOM, United States Army General Bantz J. Craddock, stated before Congress about the importance of these joint exercises. These military exercises between the American and Israeli militaries emphasize the continued strategic cooperation that continued through the Bush administration.<sup>66</sup>

As a result of the 9/11 terror attacks in September 2001, President Bush significantly increased homeland security efforts in America. These efforts were aided by Israel who has experienced terrorist threats and attacks for decades, and Israeli agencies and manufacturers assisted by sharing technology, strategies, and training. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Israeli Public Security Minister Avi Dichter signed a memorandum in January 2007 to formalize homeland security collaboration. Furthermore, in the spring of 2007, Israel was one of five countries in a Congressional bill that awarded \$25 million in grants to businesses whose equipment and technology combatted terrorism.<sup>67</sup> Israel became an important partner in its knowledge of strategies to decrease the possibility of another American domestic attack.

Lastly, the United States and Israel continued their cooperation on missile defense systems. In October 2007, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and United States Secretary of Defense Robert Gates signed an agreement to work together on countering tactical rockets and long range ballistic missiles by constructing a multi-layered missile defense system.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Inbar, "U.S.-Israel Relations," 44–45.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

These projects all contributed to the increasing strategic cooperation that developed under President Bush. He viewed Israel as being a strategic friend against the threat of terrorism, and democracy surrounded by tyrants, and a country that supported America's new global unilateralism.<sup>69</sup>

#### **D. BARACK OBAMA: 2009–PRESENT**

The fundamental reality is that both states are guided by their perceived national interests, and it is these interests, not their mutual affection, that will ultimately determine the nature of their relationship.<sup>70</sup>

President Barack Obama began his term as president with a shift towards cooler relations with Israel than his predecessor George W. Bush. His administration placed an emphasis on outreach to Muslim countries and downplaying the connection that Americans were making between Islam and terrorism. He believed that the United States needed to be perceived as being more even handed in order to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement, which was viewed as being in the national interest. Should his outreach efforts to Muslim countries fail, President Obama believed that an Israel-Palestinian peace settlement would weaken Hezbollah and Hamas, Iran's known proxies, create a gap between Syria and Iran, and bring the Sunni states against Iran. Personal relations between President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were perceived as tense because Obama was left leaning and liberal and Netanyahu led a conservative right wing government.<sup>71</sup>

This change and rift in relations was discouraged by most members of Congress. In March 2013 nearly three hundred members of the United States Congress wrote a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stating:

We are concerned that the highly publicized tensions in the relationship will not advance the interests that the U.S. and Israel share...Our two

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<sup>69</sup> Inbar, "U.S.-Israel Relations," 42.

<sup>70</sup> Dov Waxman, "The Real Problem in U.S-Israeli Relations," *The Washington Quarterly* (Spring 2012): 74.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Freedman, "George W. Bush, Obama and the Arab-Israeli Conflict" in *Israel and the United States: Six Decades of U.S.-Israeli Relations*, ed. Robert O. Freedman (Boulder: Westview Press, 2012), 57–61.

countries are partners in the fight against terrorism and share an important strategic relationship. A strong Israel is an asset to the national security of the United States and brings stability to the Middle East.<sup>72</sup>

President Obama, possibly in response to this letter, but also having realized that the peace process could not move forward with the poor relationship with Israel, decided to improve relations with Israel and again pursue indirect talks between Israel and the Palestinians. In an effort to mend ties, the Obama administration approved an additional \$250 million in military aid to Israel to help fund its Iron Dome Missile defense system.<sup>73</sup> In 2008, a Joint Strategic Planning Committee (JSPC) was created to deal with strategic challenges such as long-range ballistic missiles and non-conventional weapons of mass destruction.<sup>74</sup>

Dov Waxman argues that the reason for the tension in the United States-Israel relationship is because the two countries have different strategic perspectives. While they share many common interests in the region, they differ on how to achieve their desired outcome. The United States and Israel both want to see a weakened Iran, a decrease in missile and nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, and want to stop terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas, support more modern Arab regimes such as Jordan, and preserve stability in the region as a whole. President Obama views Israel as being in denial of long-term trends and in defiance of American pressure on it. Israel views the Obama administration as lacking an effective mechanism to stop Iran, not supporting its regional allies to the fullest extent, and creating the potential for a power vacuum. The United States is worried that it might pay a price of Israel's stubbornness, and Israel is concerned that it may face the consequences of what they considered was Obama's diplomatic naiveté.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Freedman, "George W. Bush, Obama," 62.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Lewis, "The United States and Israel: Evolution," 375.

<sup>75</sup> Waxman, "The Real Problem in U.S.," 73-75.



## E. CONCLUSION

British Prime Minister Lord Palmerton stated, “Nations have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests.”<sup>76</sup> This statement encapsulates Realist IR theory and is what has been explored in this chapter examining the United States-Israel relationship in the post-Cold War period. How has the historical relationship evolved after the Cold War? What were the reasons for these increasing strategic ties between the United States and Israel? If the Cold War was indeed over, what became the rationale for the strategic cooperation?

George H.W. Bush, the first president in this new post-Cold War climate, decided it was in America’s interests to continue the relationship with Israel. He viewed the Soviet threat as not completely destroyed and he leaned towards using Israel for creating peace and maintaining regional stability in the Middle East. President Bill Clinton viewed Israel as an asset for pursuing the peace process and used increasing strategic cooperation efforts as rewards for Israel taking risks during negotiations, though he was ultimately only partially successful. When the September 11 attacks occurred during President George W. Bush’s first term, the value of Israel came in the form of being a friendly state that has fought extremism since its inception and helped the United States in counter-terrorism and homeland security efforts. President Barack Obama took an initially distant approach to Israel as he reached out to Muslim countries but eventually pursued the same strategic relationship that his predecessors had with Israel. Today, the United States and Israel have parallel interests in stopping Iran’s nuclear ambitions, ensuring that fundamentalist regimes do not come into power, and fighting Islamic terrorism; however, their strategies towards these issues do not always converge.

This chapter argued how the strategic reasoning for the relationship evolved through the four presidents in the post-Cold War period. Military cooperation and joint projects continued and grew under each administration, even though the rationale

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<sup>76</sup> Waxman, “The Real Problem in U.S,” 74.

changed from fighting the communist threat, to pursuing peace, to combating terrorism. What exactly the United States gives to Israel and what it gets in return (aka the costs and benefits of the relationship) will be explored in the next chapter.

## **IV. COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF UNITED STATES-ISRAEL RELATIONS**

The past two chapters have examined the evolution of the United States-Israel Relationship from a strategic perspective. The first chapter looked at relations during the Cold War, and it was concluded that the relationship made strategic sense in the value Israel had against the threat from the Soviet Union. The post-Cold War period saw changes to the strategic reasoning behind the relationship. The rationale moved from a counter to the Soviet threat to one based on working towards peace and fighting terrorism. Whether or not the benefits of this continued relationship outweigh the costs in the post-Cold War period will be explored in this chapter.

### **A. BACKGROUND: WHAT DOES THE UNITED STATES PROVIDE TO ISRAEL**

#### **1. Economic Aid**

The United States has provided \$115 billion to Israel since its creation in 1948.<sup>77</sup> It has been the country that has received the most foreign assistance from the United States since World War II. This aid is comprised of Economic Support Funds (ESF) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funds. Until the early 1970s, America did not give much aid to Israel. Aid increased after the 1973 war with Egypt and received a spike after the signing of the Camp David Accord in 1979s. It has remained around \$3 billion each year since then. The composition of the aid has changed from being mostly economic to now mostly military assistance, with economic aid being phased out.<sup>78</sup>

Israel also receives economic assistance in the form of grants and loan guarantees. Israel received \$20 million in refugee resettlement grants in 2012. Between 1973 and 1991, it received a total of \$460 million. The amounts changed due to influxes of Ethiopian Jews during and Soviet Jews after the Cold War. Loan guarantees have been

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<sup>77</sup> Jeremy M. Sharp. U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel*, CRS Report 7-5700 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, 2012), Summary.

<sup>78</sup> Nathanson and Mandelbaum, "Aid and Trade," 124–125.

provided to Israel for similar reasons. Israel has requested loans from commercial sources in the United States to help with housing shortages caused by absorption of these new immigrants. The United States Treasury sets aside subsidies to guarantee these loans. Israel has never defaulted on a United States-backed loan guarantee.<sup>79</sup>

The aid given to Israel has some specific special properties. For example, 26 percent of the aid is allowed to be spent domestically in Israel, and it is all received by Israel within the first 30 days of the new fiscal year in one lump sum. In addition, there is no minimum amount for arms purchases by Israel, and Israel may bypass the Department of Defense and buy directly from American companies.<sup>80</sup>

## **2. Military Aid**

American military assistance to Israel has been increasing in the past decade. In 2007 the Bush administration agreed to a package that increased Israel's FMF yearly from \$2.55 billion to \$3.1 billion by 2013. Israel receives about 60 percent of all of America's FMF and it accounts for 18–22 percent of its defense budget. 74 percent of this FMF is spent back in the United States, while \$26 is allowed to be spent domestically. This is because “successive administrations and many lawmakers believe that a strong domestic Israeli defense industry is crucial to maintaining Israel's technological edge over its neighbors.”<sup>81</sup> Indeed, it is because of the America's commitment to ensuring Israel's Quantitative Military Edge (QME) that Israel is the one of the most technologically advanced militaries in the world. It is the belief of the United States that Israel must compensate for its lack of manpower by having better equipment and training.<sup>82</sup>

Recent administrations have also provided military support by giving funding for joint military projects. The cost of the Iron Dome missile defense system was subsidized

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<sup>79</sup> Sharp, CRS 7–5700, 20–21.

<sup>80</sup> Nathanson and Mandelbaum, “Aid and Trade,” 131–132.

<sup>81</sup> Sharp, CRS 7–5700, 7.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–6.

by the Obama administration in March 2010 by \$205 million. A new medium-range ballistic missile interceptor is currently being jointly developed and funded between the United States and Israel called “Arrow III.”<sup>83</sup>

### **3. Diplomatic Support**

The United States also gives Israel considerable diplomatic support in the form of UN vetoes, slow pressure to halt fighting, and backing during peace negotiations. The United States vetoed forty-two UN Security Council resolutions against Israel between 1972 and 2006, which accounts for more than half of all American vetoes during those years. The United States insisted that any resolutions that were critical of Israel must also condemn terrorism. In the UN General Assembly, the United States also regularly supports Israel in voting against resolutions calling for action on Israel’s part for the sake of Palestinians.<sup>84</sup>

The United States also has a history of not immediately criticizing Israel for military actions it takes. In the 1967 war, the United States did not put pressure on Israel to cease fighting and did not condemn Israel afterwards. During the 1973 war, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger allowed Israel to temporarily violate a cease-fire in order to secure its military position.<sup>85</sup>

The United States similarly has worked hard to preserve Israel’s interests during the many peace negotiations between Israel and its neighbors. It sought approval from Israel before commencing further peace initiatives in 1972. During the peace negotiations from 1993–2000, the United States shared its positions beforehand with the Israelis and coordinated closely with the Israeli approach.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Sharp, CRS 7–5700, 12–14.

<sup>84</sup> John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007): 40–41.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 42–44.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 46–47.

## **B. UNITED STATES INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

In determining what America's interests are in the Middle East, this thesis shall study what the presidents of the United States have determined them to be, as written in its National Security Strategy Narratives.

According to President Obama's National Security Strategy published in May 2010, America's interests in the Middle East are:

broad cooperation on a wide range of issues with our close friend, Israel, and an unshakable commitment to its security; the achievement of the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations for statehood, opportunity, and the realization of their extraordinary potential; the unity and security of Iraq and the fostering of its democracy and reintegration into the region; the transformation of Iranian policy away from its pursuit of nuclear weapons, support for terrorism, and threats against its neighbors; nonproliferation; and counterterrorism cooperation, access to energy, and integration of the region into global markets.<sup>87</sup>

President George W. Bush's vision of the Middle East in his 2006 National Security Strategy report:

A Middle East of independent states, at peace with each other, and fully participating in an open global market of goods, services, and ideas. We are seeking to build a framework that will allow Israel and the Palestinian territories to live side by side in peace and security as two democratic states. In the wider region, we will continue to support efforts for reform and freedom in traditional allies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia.<sup>88</sup>

President Bill Clinton stated that America's interests in the Middle East are: "pursuing a comprehensive breakthrough to Middle East Peace, assuring the security of Israel and our Arab friends, and maintaining the free flow of oil at reasonable prices."<sup>89</sup>

President George H. W. Bush states America's interests as "the security of Israel and moderate Arab States as well as the free flow of oil"<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States (Washington, DC: The White House, 2010), 24.

<sup>88</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States (Washington, DC: The White House, 2006), 38.

<sup>89</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States (Washington, DC: The White House, 1994), 25.

<sup>90</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States (Washington, DC: The White House, 1990), 13.

President Ronald Reagan proclaimed that United States' national interests in the Middle East are "maintaining regional stability, containing and reducing Soviet influence, preserving the security of Israel and our other friends in the area, retaining access to oil on reasonable terms for ourselves and our allies, and curbing state-sponsored terrorism."<sup>91</sup>

All of the Presidents, except for President George W. Bush, who have written a National Security Strategy, have stated that a component of America's interests in the Middle East is ensuring security for Israel. Congress has reinforced this position by the economic aid and military assistance it has approved and provided to Israel. Thus the arms of the government in the United States are in agreement that the United States has an interest in Israel's security. Bernard Reich argues that this is the case for two reasons: to preserve oil flow and stability in the region and to produce peace between Israel and its neighbors. This shall be explored in depth in the "Benefits" section below.

## **C. BENEFITS**

In November 2011, Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Andrew J. Shapiro reiterated President Obama's commitment to continuing Israel's aid and QME stating,

We support Israel because it is in our national interest to do so...America's commitment to Israel's security and prosperity has extended over many decades because our leaders on both sides of the aisle have long understood that a robust U.S.-Israeli security relationship is in our interests. Our support for Israel's security helps preserve peace and stability in the region.<sup>92</sup>

### **1. Stability and Oil**

Ariel Roth argues that because one of the main concerns of the United States in the Middle East is to preserve stability to ensure oil flows to itself and its allies, that reassuring Israel is the means to pursue this interest. He argues that supporting Israel helps to moderate Israeli behavior. An Israel that feels vulnerable and without any major

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<sup>91</sup>The National Security Strategy of the United States (Washington, DC: The White House, 1987), 17.

<sup>92</sup> Sharp, CRS 7-5700, 3.

allies might act in a self-preserving manner that could potentially cause great harm to America's interests in the Middle East. These actions, according to Roth have "the potential to destabilize the broader region, and endanger the secure access to oil on which the United States is dependent."<sup>93</sup> Thus he argues that the strategic rationale behind United States support to Israel and a benefit we get from this support is better understood as restraint-inducing reassurance. The rationale behind the strategic importance of the relationship has evolved from deterring and fighting the Soviet threat to one of stability of the oil-rich Middle East. A large benefit that the United States receives in return for its clear support for Israel is that it moderates Israeli behavior that would undermine America's interests.<sup>94</sup>

United States support for Israel must be clearly displayed in two ways in order for Israel to be reassured: diplomatic affirmation and in military arms. The United States must make clear that it, without question, supports Israel's right to exist as a sovereign and secure state. Israel has felt betrayed in the past by Great Britain in the 1930s and 40s by its attempts to pacify the Arabs that they wished to befriend, and by America in the prelude to the end of the British mandate in 1948 when it vacillated on its support for the creation of the Jewish state.

This diplomatic support must be accompanied by military arms for Israel's defense. Israel must be materially reassured that it has the means to defend itself. This assistance must be constant and not just at the last minute such as the 1973 airlift. In order to feel secure, Israel relies on military effectiveness, which comes about through maximum training and expertise in arms. While it has been argued that these arms are not always used in ways that America agrees on, the ability of Israel to defend itself restrains Israel in the regional arena.<sup>95</sup>

This combination of diplomatic and military reassurances has helped to restrain Israel during the 1973 War in its decision to not pre-emptively strike Egypt, and

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<sup>93</sup> Ariel Roth, "Reassurance: A Strategic Basis of U.S. Support for Israel," *International Studies Perspectives*, 10 (2009): 379.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 379–380.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.



Operation Desert Storm when it helped Israel from getting involved, which might have broken the coalition against Iraq. The lack of American reassurances to Israel hurt America's interests in the 1967 war in which Israel felt vulnerable and alone and decided to launch a pre-emptive strike against Egypt. As a result of the war, Egypt and Syria turned to closer ties with the Soviet Union to recuperate their losses.

Roth states that the goal of the reassurance policies is to ensure that Israelis feel "that they are not universally hated and that they do not face their security challenges fully alone."<sup>96</sup> A secure and assured Israel would help lessen its idea that the only possible policies are ones that are aggressive and unilateral against the Arab World. The more secure that Israel feels, the more stable and thus safer America's access to Middle East oil will be, which makes the United States more secure. The military and diplomatic support that the United States gives to Israel helps to guarantee other American interests in the region.<sup>97</sup>

## **2. Peace**

Bernard Reich argues that peace between Israel and the Palestinians and Israel and its Arab neighbors is in America's interest. He states, "the prime U.S. objective remains the creation of a secure and stable Middle East, from which oil flows to the United States and its friends and allies at a reasonable price, and in which a secure Israel lives at peace and maintains normal relations with moderate and stable (and increasingly democratic) Arab neighbors."<sup>98</sup> He claims that Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab peace would help achieve all of these objectives. To this end he argues that Israel needs to feel secure in order to negotiate for peace. The economic and military aid that the United States has given Israel has helped to make Israel feel secure. This in turn has helped produce Israeli concessions and bridge a much needed gap in negotiations. In order to achieve the 1979 Egypt-Israel Camp David Peace Treaty, the United States pledged to help Israel build new airfields in its Negev desert so that it would give up the ones it had

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<sup>96</sup> Roth, "Reassurance," 386.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>98</sup> Bernard Reich, *Securing the Covenant*, 1532 of 2203.

gained during the 1973 war. Similarly, the United States promised to ensure Israel never had need for oil so that it would retreat from the Sinai oil fields it had captured.<sup>99</sup> The United States also provided a total of \$7.5 billion in economic and military assistance to Israel and Egypt to ensure concessions.<sup>100</sup>

As in the previous section on reassuring Israel it was not alone, the United States must assure Israel that it is secure enough to make concessions for peace. While there has been an argument for the contrary policy—pressure Israel and cut off assistance until its only option is to negotiate—these results have proven to be ineffective. Indeed there is a close link between Israeli confidence, American backing, and peace negotiations and treaties.<sup>101</sup>

The United States' close relationship with Israel helped to achieve the groundbreaking Egypt-Israel peace agreement and led Egypt into the American sphere of influence during the Cold War. This was a huge victory for the United States. It was also made clear to the Palestinians and Arab states during the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 that the United States was the only country who had enough influence over Israel to make the policy concessions that they wanted. Military and economic assistance packages can be used to incentivize both sides to come to the negotiating table. This can provide security and guarantees so that both sides are confident that they have more to gain than to lose from working towards peace. The United States benefits from being the only country that has the credibility and capability to persuade Israel to negotiate.<sup>102</sup>

The United States also supports peace between Israel and its neighbors because new weapons could come into Arab or Iranian hands and threaten Israel's survival and regional stability. The United States might then have to send American troops to the Middle East to intervene.<sup>103</sup> If Israel is secure and the region is secure, the United States

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<sup>99</sup> Bernard Reich, *Securing the Covenant*, 1532 of 2203.

<sup>100</sup> Sharp, CRS 7-5700, 28.

<sup>101</sup> Reich, *Securing the Covenant*, 1545-1573 of 2203.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 1596-1611.

<sup>103</sup> Bernard Lewis, "The United States and Israel: Evolution," 373.

can worry less about using its own forces to ensure stability. If military, economic, and diplomatic support can be used instead, it would be in America's interest to do so.

### 3. "Hard" Security Issues

#### a. *Military Cooperation*

Israel and the United States have multiple joint committees where they meet regularly to discuss how to facilitate deeper cooperation: Defense Policy Advisory Group (DPAG) and the JPMG. The two countries frequently conduct joint military exercises, such as United States Marines training at an urban warfare center in Israel's Negev Desert (Noble Shirley) and the missile-defense exercises that the United States and Israel conduct in the eastern Mediterranean biennially (Juniper Cobra).<sup>104</sup>

In the realm of counterterrorism, Israel has led the way in quite a few techniques, tactics and procedures which the United States in particular has adapted and benefitted from. Specifically this includes targeting terrorist leaders and bombmakers by integrating targeting platforms such as UAVs and attack helicopters and human collection means. The United States has used in this approach in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and Pakistan. Israel and the United States have also developed a joint R&D research committee which works to quickly come up with technical solutions to the challenges of terrorism.<sup>105</sup>

Israel learned two major lessons from its work combating the second intifada in the West Bank: that more armor was needed on armored vehicle crews, and that in urban areas a D9 bulldozer proved useful in mobility tasks and as a weapons system. Thousands of American troops went to train at the National Urban Training Center in Israel's Negev Desert to get used to the environment they were going to be in in the prelude to Iraq, as it mimicked a typical Iraqi town.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Michael Eisenstadt and David Pollock, "Asset Test: How the United States Benefits from Its Alliance with Israel," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 2012, FPR, 14.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>106</sup> Eisenstadt and Pollack, "Asset Test," 15.

Israel has also been a leader in developing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and in training special unleashed search dogs to detect improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The United States has purchased many of the Israeli pioneered UAVs which helped to jumpstart its own UAV program. The United States military has also started using the unleashed dogs for searching for booby traps, IEDs and reconnaissance. They have sent dog handlers to Israel for training.<sup>107</sup>

***b. Defense-Industrial Cooperation***

Close ties have emerged between the defense-industrial establishments of Israel and the United States which have produced many paybacks for the United States. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy's 2012 Strategic Asset Test states, "The United States has derived a number of unanticipated benefits from its aid to Israel, by directly and indirectly fostering the emergence of one of the most innovative and dynamic defense industries in the world."<sup>108</sup> Israel uses American equipment in combat and then provides feedback to the manufacturers, which have led to modifications that have increased their effectiveness for both militaries. Israeli and American firms also work together often to improve the sales of military equipment to the United States military and other countries, which allows the United States to use Israel's extensive R&D and combat knowledge while preserving American jobs.<sup>109</sup> Israeli technology has also been used to keep combat forces safe in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, the Israeli-developed tank armor that has probably saved thousands of American lives.<sup>110</sup>

***c. Homeland Security***

Following the September 11 attacks, Israel has emerged as a partner for the United States in its goal to achieve greater homeland security. They have cooperated in the areas of: counterterrorism, critical infrastructure protection, emergency planning, response, and consequence management, aviation security, cyber security, chemical,

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<sup>107</sup> Eisenstadt and Pollack, "Asset Test," 16.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

biological, and radiological/nuclear security.<sup>111</sup> Tens of thousands of American law enforcement officials have been trained in Israel on Israeli-developed counterterrorism, bomb disposal and consequence management techniques. Many United States public health and emergency service officials have also trained in Israel and learned how Israel responds to mass-casualty incidents. The United States has adopted many of these Israeli emergency techniques.<sup>112</sup>

In the realm of airline security, the United States has adopted the Israeli practice of having sealed cockpits with armored doors, as well as some elements of passenger screening and behavior pattern recognition, which was developed in Israel and is now used in 161 airports across the United States.<sup>113</sup>

Other Israeli homeland security technologies that the United States uses include: border monitoring techniques, video surveillance and incident information-management systems for air-and seaports, video synopsis systems, biometric scanning technologies, and surveillance technologies for critical infrastructure. Israel will continue to be a source of security technologies for the United States, especially in the fields of explosives, video surveillance, smart sensors, access controls, and cyber security.<sup>114</sup>

#### **4. “Soft” Security Issues**

##### ***a. Economic Revitalization***

Israel is a model of economic revitalization; its economic scores are ranked some of the highest among developed countries in terms of scientific and technological innovation. Israel has become “a useful international economic and technological partner for the United States...reaching the magnitude of some much larger, longstanding U.S. allies in Europe and elsewhere.”<sup>115</sup> Israel contributes to the American economy as two-way trade between the United States and Israel was \$7 billion

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<sup>111</sup> Eisenstadt and Pollack, “Asset test,” 19.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>115</sup> Eisenstadt and Pollack, “Asset Test,” 32.

in 2011. Israel accounted for another \$7 billion in investments to the United States, and another \$23 billion in loans to the United States government.<sup>116</sup>

The United States and Israel have many successful joint R&D projects. For example, “Israel contributes thousands of skilled professionals, hundreds of joint patent applications, and hundreds of coauthored scientific and technical papers to the American economy, workforce, and advanced industrial base.”<sup>117</sup> The United States-Israel Binational Industrial Research and Development (BIRD) along with the Binational Agricultural R&D Foundation (BARD) and the Binational Science Foundation (BSF) have not only created between 18,000–50,000 jobs for the American economy, but the sales of the products have reached a total of \$5 billion.<sup>118</sup>

The success of the Israeli economy has decreased the necessity for American economic aid. Israel faced a huge economic downturn in the 1980s and was heavily reliant upon the United States for economic assistance. Since then, Israel’s progress has diminished the need for such aid, as Israel has become a country that contributes to the United States economy in areas that are key to helping restore America’s competitiveness.<sup>119</sup> If Israel were in economic trouble, it would be a liability to the United States. However, the achievement of Israel’s economy is not only beneficial to the United States in many ways, but is also a model for it and other countries around the world.

***b. Cyber/Information Technology***

The vulnerability of the United States has increased with its reliance on computers and information technology. The United States National Cyber Strategy has emphasized the need for the United States to work with other countries to address the threat from hostile states and other actors. Israel is one of the leading countries in cyber technology and addressing threats to it. In 2006, Bill Gates stated, “innovation going on

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<sup>116</sup> Eisenstadt and Pollack, “Asset Test,” 31.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–34.

in Israel is critical to the future of the technology business.”<sup>120</sup> Israel and the United States cooperate in many ways in the private sector of cyber security. This cooperation includes: critical infrastructure, banking, communications, utilities, aviation, surface transport, and internet connectivity. Many secure American financial transactions are made using Israeli developed and licensed algorithms and techniques. In terms of joint-policy goals: the United States and Israel have been credibly described as working together on the Flame and Stuxnet computer viruses in an effort to delay Iran’s nuclear capability.<sup>121</sup>

*c. Renewable Energy Sources*

The joint cooperation between the United States and Israel on researching and developing renewable energy sources has the promise of creating thousands of new American jobs and helping America achieve its goal of decreasing its reliance on foreign oil. In 2007, the BIRD Energy program was created, which has already received millions in investments for joint United States-Israel alternative energy projects. This program has already seen the creation of a solar window that produces electricity and a more energy efficient wind turbine rotor that decreases installation costs by 50 percent. Israeli innovations inspired the BrightSource Energy plant in California that has provided a thousand new jobs, along with Virent Energy Systems in Wisconsin and Mississippi that uses Israeli technology to commercialize biofuels and has created hundreds of jobs in each of those states.<sup>122</sup>

**5. Stable Democracy with Similar Interests**

Robert Blackwill and Walter Slocombe argue in “Israel: A Strategic Asset for the United States” that Israel shares many of the same national interests of the United States and makes direct contributions to those interests. They state that the almost identical interests shared by the two countries are: preventing Iran or terrorist groups from

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<sup>120</sup> Eisenstadt and Pollack, “Asset Test,” 35.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

acquiring nuclear weapons, fighting global terrorism and radicalism, promoting stability of democracies in the Middle East, having peaceful borders between Israel and its neighbors, including a peace treaty with the Palestinians.<sup>123</sup>

One event that they point to in the post-Cold War period in which Israeli and American interests aligned is the Israeli strike on Syrian nuclear facilities in 2007. Although Israel never officially acknowledged this attack, it ensured that Syria's nuclear ambitions were stopped at an early stage and helped prevent nuclear proliferation in the region. They point to another value in this relationship for the United States which is in influence over Israeli policy choices. Israel chose not to retaliate against Iraq during the Gulf War in 1992, and decided against selling weapons technology to China, which would have opened a huge market for Israel. These decisions to act and not to act, show how closely aligned United States' and Israel's national interests are and how even when they are not so alike, Israel may still choose to ignore its own interests in favor of America's.

Israel's contributions range from the aforementioned joint-exercises, Israeli technological advances, missile defense cooperation, counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation, to deterring regional actors from destabilizing the region.<sup>124</sup> They also note that Israel is a stable democracy that is not likely to be swept away in revolutions and Israelis have a deeply-entrenched pro-American outlook. They argue that there are costs in any friendship, such as the one American shares with Taiwan today but that "in a new assessment those real costs are markedly outweighed by the many ways in which Israel bolsters U.S. national interests and the benefits that Israel provides to those interests."<sup>125</sup>

## **6. Summary of Benefits**

The United States receives many benefits from its support to Israel. Their close relationship helps to stabilize the region and secure America's access to oil, through both

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<sup>123</sup> Blackwill, Robert, and Walter Slocombe. "Israel: A Strategic Asset for the United States," Council on Foreign Relations, October 2011: 5.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.



the peace process and as a reassurance to Israel. The United States also gains many hard and soft security benefits from its economic and military aid to Israel, ranging from joint-defense exercises, to homeland security strategies and technologies to innovations in renewable energy sources.

#### **D. COSTS**

This next section will focus on the risks and costs of America's relationship with Israel. The arguments that the costs do not outweigh the benefits mainly come from John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's book, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy." Their arguments stem from the belief that there is no strategic backing for the support the United States gives to Israel. Their claims are that the relationship is a central cause of Anti-Americanism and Terrorism against the United States, that it hurts our other alliances such as with European countries, and that it hurts our relations with Arab States.

##### **1. Anti-Americanism/Terrorism**

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt argue in "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy" that the unconditional support that the United States gives Israel is a central reason behind anti-Americanism in the world and one of the major motives behind the terrorist attacks against the United States.

Their argument is that Islamic radicals are angered by how Israel treats the Palestinians and how the United States supports Israel. They argue that fundamentalists, such as Sayyid Qutb, Sayyid Muhammed Husayn Fadlallah (founder of Hezbollah), Ramzi Youssef (terrorist who masterminded the World Trade Center attack in 1993), and Osama Bin Laden, have all been deeply sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and made it central to their agenda. Bin Laden even tried to move up the 9/11 attacks to coincide with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, to punish the United States for supporting Israel.<sup>126</sup>

Not only do these terrorist leaders have anger against the United States and Israel, but because of better technology, the events in Israel are more visible to the Arab masses.

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<sup>126</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, "The Israel Lobby," 65–67.

Arab and Islamic anger has grown in response to the violence seen on TV and the news of Israelis against Palestinians in the Second Intifada starting in 2000. Mearsheimer and Walt state:

Not only is Israel inflicting more violence upon its Palestinians subjects, but Arab and Muslims around the world can see it with their own eyes. And they can also see that it is being done with American-made weapons and with tacit U.S. consent.<sup>127</sup>

This, they argue, has provided an effective recruiting tool for terrorists. Arab populations regard United States support for Israel as insensitive and against stated American values.<sup>128</sup> Even some American allies in the region such as President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt stated that hatred of America is great in the region, in part because the Arab masses see Prime Minister Ariel Sharon doing anything he wants and the United States not doing anything about it. Likewise King Abdullah II of Jordan proclaimed to the United States Congress in 2007, “The denial of justice and peace in Palestine...is the core issue. And this core issue is not only producing severe consequences for our region, it is producing severe consequences for our world.”<sup>129</sup> These leaders warned the United States to change its policies to appear to be less one-sided.

While Mearsheimer and Walt conclude that the United States pays a significant price for supporting Israel, they also point out that removing the support would not remove all the anti-Americanism in the Muslim World and that anti-Semitism plays a large role in some Arab countries. They even go on to state that some Arab leaders direct their populations’ anger to their frustration with the Israel-Palestinian issue to distract them from the discontent from some of their own policies.<sup>130</sup>

The next section will cover the issue of anti-Americanism, and will argue that United States support of Israel is just one of many sources of Anti-Americanism in the

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<sup>127</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, “The Israel Lobby,” 68.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 68–69.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

Muslim world. If it is the case, however, that United States' support for Israel is one of the main causes of terrorist attacks against America, then it is a massive cost.

*a. Diverse Sources of Anti-Americanism*

Michael Eisenstadt and David Pollack argue in their 2012 Asset Test that there are many and diverse sources of anti-Americanism in the Middle East. They state that Arab populations have routinely polled in disapproval of American foreign policy, and that this occurred even during the Oslo peace process from 1993–2000, where President Clinton was trying to negotiate for an independent Palestinian state. Negative sentiments in the Arab world have increased since 9/11 because of other issues: abuses in Guantanamo Bay, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and drone strikes in Muslim countries. They also remain high due to America's support of unpopular Arab autocratic governments.<sup>131</sup>

Although poll numbers remain high against American foreign policy, popular behavior has followed a different trend. Between 2003 and 2004, anti-American protests were at its highest but have since decreased and are almost non-existent today. The Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain all showed little to no sign of anti-Americanism and in the cases of Libya and Syria, the populations actually demonstrated for and desired United States and NATO assistance.<sup>132</sup>

In the past decade, public opinion in every Arab or predominantly Muslim country has turned against support for Al-Qaeda, and specifically against attacks on American civilians. This is because Al-Qaeda has disintegrated from pan-Arab or Palestinian grievances to local levels and has started inflicting appalling casualties in Muslim states and cities—from Casablanca to Istanbul to Amman and elsewhere. Israel has had nothing to do with this development, as far as evidence can tell.<sup>133</sup>

Eisenstadt and Pollack conclude that there are many diverse sources of anti-Americanism and that local issues have trumped resentment of America's support

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<sup>131</sup> Eisenstadt and Pollack, "Asset Test," 5.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

for Israel and other disapprovals of American foreign policy in the Middle East. Attitudes and opinions are largely overcome by the primacy of interests when it comes to United States-Arab relations, which will be explored deeper in the section below.

***b. Arab States Relations: Zero-Sum Game?***

David Makovsky argues in “The United States and the Arab-Israeli Conflict from 1945 to 2000: Why the Arabists are Wrong” that America’s relationship with Israel has not caused harmful relations for the United States because Arab states tend to act in their own self-interest. He also makes the point that “the growth of the U.S.-Israeli relationship over time has effectively deterred conflict and contributed to regional stability.”<sup>134</sup> Makovsky claims that the zero-sum game approach and that U.S. ties to Israel necessitates distance from Arab states, is simply not true. Because of the strength of the United States-Israel relationship, there has been no regional war since 1973, America has created and maintained the role of peace maker in the Middle East, and has not caused any long-term obstructions to its access to oil.

History has shown that Arab states are driven by their own national interest, despite rhetoric from their leaders that relations with the United States will be compromised if America chooses to have friendly relations with Israel. In the early stages of the relationship, this zero-sum approach was considered by American officials. When Israel first declared independence in 1948, there were arguments in the United States government that the United States could be friends with the Arab states or Israel, but not with both. Secretary of State George Marshall disagreed with President Truman’s decision to recognize Israel. Saudi King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud’s threats that the United States would have to choose what side it was on, which caused Marshall to fear for America’s access to oil if the United States befriended Israel.

President Eisenhower also took this view, and had relatively cold relations with Israel during his term. However, this approach did not strengthen ties with any Arab-leaders, but instead led to an increase in Soviet influence in the region and caused

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<sup>134</sup> David Makovsky “The United States and the Arab-Israeli Conflict from 1945 to 2000: Why the Arabists are Wrong” in *Israel and the United States: Six Decades of US-Israeli Relations*, ed. Robert O. Freedman (Boulder: Westview Press, 2012), 22.

radicals such as Gamal Abdel Nasser to become more defiant. The United States backed Egypt in the 1956 Suez War, taking on Britain, France, and Israel, but received no credit from Nasser. The aftermath of the Israeli victory in the 1967 War, and with the aid of the massive airlift from the United States in the 1973 War, led Arab states like Egypt and Jordan to realize that they needed better relations with America in order to get back the land they had lost to Israel. America's influence over and friendship with Israel had provided a rationale for Arab relations with the United States, and the aid and military assistance that the United States gave Israel made any future war after 1973 too costly for Arab states. The five month Arab oil embargo in 1973–1974 was painful, but did not continue long enough for it to maintain its goal of having Israel concede its gains from the war, and no embargo has happened since.<sup>135</sup>

Relations between the United States and Arab states have developed in the post-Cold War era due to converging interests, as fears of non-state actors and a bellicose Iran threaten to destabilize the region. Makovsky writes, “Not only has the U.S.-Israeli relationship not been a liability for either country, but also it has been, at least to some extent, an asset to the Arab regimes, as a strategic counterweight to radicalism.”<sup>136</sup> Saudi Arabia and the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council fear that Iran desires hegemonic control of Arab oil, and that Iran will funnel money and military equipment to its proxies Hezbollah and Hamas, which could foment unrest and work to destabilize the Sunni regimes and fuel local extremism. The United States and Israel are the most likely to act against Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iran, and Makovsky states, “few Arab government actually believe that a weak Israel would serve their national interest.”<sup>137</sup> So while the rhetoric coming from Arab leaders may be strong, and although their populations may not like the American policy of supporting Israel, Arab states have historically acted in their national interests, which have overcome these sentiments.

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<sup>135</sup> Makovsky, “Why the Arabists are Wrong,” 36.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–33.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

## **2. Allies**

Walt and Mearsheimer also argue that the United States-Israel relationship has damaged some of the relations the United States has with its European allies through its unconditional support of Israel. They offer the results of a survey as an example: in a June 2003 Pew Poll, in Britain, France, Canada and Australia, either a majority or plurality believes that that American policy in the Middle East “favors Israel too much.”<sup>138</sup> They point out how often the United States votes in favor of Israel in UN General Assembly Resolutions, whereas its European allies vote against Israel. They argue that this puts the United States at odds with its allies.<sup>139</sup>

## **E. CONCLUSION**

This chapter explored what the United States provides to Israel in terms of economic, military, and diplomatic support. It stated America’s national interests, as proclaimed by the Presidents of the United States since the Cold War. This chapter then provided an in-depth examination of the benefits that the United States has received from its relationship with Israel—ranging from stability of the Middle East and securing United States access to oil there through the peace process and reassurance to Israel, and the hard and soft security benefits of American economic and military aid to Israel. Next, the risks and costs of increased anti-Americanism, terrorism against American targets, detriment to the United States and other allies’ relationships, and a damaging of American-Arab ties as a result of American support for Israel were examined.

In the cost-benefit analysis that this chapter provides, the benefits outweigh the costs. Israel is of strategic value to the United States in its national security interests in the Middle East. A strong Israel backed by the United States helps to maintain a stable Middle East, which secures American access to oil in the region. Maintaining Israel’s security ensured that no regional war has happened between Israel and its neighbors since 1973. The diplomatic support Israel receives from the United States has reassured it, so that it does not feel it must defend itself by striking unilaterally against its Arab

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<sup>138</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, “The Israel Lobby,” 70.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

neighbors. For the price of \$115 billion since 1948, the United States has only had to send its forces to Israel once in 1991, and then only for a few months to operate Patriot missile batteries. The costs of American support to Israel in relations with Arab states has not been as strong as Mearsheimer and Walt argued, and increasingly they have shared converging interests in countering greater threats in the region such as Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas. Anti-Americanism has been affected by more than American support for Israel, and has increased with the United States' policies of drone strikes, the opening and continued operations of Guantanamo Bay, and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. These costs do not add up to overcome the robust benefits that the United States receives from its support to Israel.

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## V. CONCLUSION

This thesis asked to what extent the International Relations (IR) Realist theory explains the United States-Israel relationship. Realist IR theory maintains that the international system is in a state of anarchy and that, because each state is responsible for its own defense, an increase in any state's security necessarily decreases every other states' security. Therefore, the national interest of each state is to maximize its own security. This thesis has examined whether the United States-Israel relationship makes strategic sense for the United States. The answer is yes, it does.

This conclusion was reached by examining the history of the relationship and how and why it has grown into the one that the United States and Israel share today. The United States did not originally recognize Israel in 1948 because of its strategic benefits, but since President Kennedy's sale of HAWK anti-aircraft missiles to Israel in 1962, gradually Israel became an asset in countering Soviet influence in the Middle East.

American support for Israel provided four major benefits for the United States during the Cold War: 1) it provided modifications and improvements on American equipment it used in battle against Soviet-made Egyptian and Syrian equipment; 2) helped protect the moderate government of King Hussein of Jordan in 1970 against an attempted coup; 3) gave the United States influence over Israel so that Egypt turned to American sphere of influence to regain land it had lost to Israel in the 1967 war; and 4) increased military and technological cooperation between the two countries through the JPMG.

During the Cold War, American objectives in the Middle East were to counter Soviet influence, maintain American access to Arab oil, and create stability in the region. Israel was a willing and able partner in countering the Soviet threat, and its relationship with the United States made it so that only the United States could convince the Israelis to negotiate land for peace, which Egypt desperately wanted. The peace agreements between Israel and Egypt in 1979 and between Israel and Jordan in 1994 have increased the stability of the region, which has also helped to secure America's access to oil.

Therefore it was argued that Israel was a strategic asset for the United States during the Cold War. In the global struggle against the Soviet Union, the United States found a willing and useful ally in Israel. The support that the United States gave to Israel helped America achieve its interests in the region.

Next, the post-Cold War period was examined. Each administration starting with George H.W. Bush was analyzed to discover how the relationship between the United States and Israel grew into the one it is today, and why. This chapter asked what the new reasoning for the relationship was now that the Soviet threat had diminished.

The strategic relationship between the United States and Israel continued to flourish during the George H. W. Bush administration. Although there was no longer a need to counter Soviet influence in the Middle East, the United States maintained that America had other enemies and that with the reduced defense budget, it would increasingly have to rely on its foreign allies. The JPMG continued to meet regularly, and additional military equipment was sold to Israel, including ten used F-15 fighters. America's interests in the region were still to maintain stability and preserve its access to Arab oil, and American support to Israel continued to ensure these interests.

President Bill Clinton's administration showed that Israel was an asset to the United States in its role in the peace process. America's strategy was to create a strong Israel that would be willing to negotiate for peace. Peace agreements between Israel and the Palestinians and Israel and its Arab neighbors would help stabilize the region. In 1994, the United States helped broker a peace between Jordan and Israel that remains in effect to this day. In addition to the peace process, the Clinton administration saw strategic benefit from partnering with Israel to counter new terrorist threats and nuclear proliferation.

After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the George W. Bush administration viewed Israel as a strategic ally against the common foe of Islamic terrorism. Joint military exercises, missile defense systems, and homeland security efforts all increased between the United States and Israel during the second Bush administration and contributed to the

security of America. President Bush's belief in democratic states made Israel a valuable partner in the region, which mostly contained autocratic dictatorships.

Today, in Barack Obama's administration, Israel and the United States have increasingly converging interests. Both countries do not want to see Iran get nuclear capability, want to decrease the influence and capability of Hezbollah and Hamas in the region, stop missile and nuclear proliferation, and prevent fundamentalist regimes from taking power. The United States and Israel have different strategic perspectives on how to achieve these outcomes, which has been a source of tension in the past. However, the strategic relationship remains strong as both countries share the common interest of stability in the region.

The United States found new strategic rationales for its relationship with Israel in the post-Cold War period. Israel went from being an asset in fighting the Soviet threat, to being an asset in the quest for peace agreements in the Middle East, to being a partner in fighting terrorism and preserving stability.

In the final chapter, a cost-benefit analysis was conducted to determine if Israel is a strategic asset to the United States. The United States has given \$115 billion to Israel since 1948 and it was examined what benefits and costs arise from this support. First it was determined what the national security interests of the United States are, and it was determined that they are stability in the region, continued undisturbed access to Arab oil, and a commitment to Israel's security.

There are four main components of the benefits that the United States receives from its economic, military and diplomatic support of Israel:

1. reassuring Israel that it is not alone preserves stability in the region and therefore access to oil;
2. having influence over Israel and being able to give it a qualitative military edge has helped create peace between Israel and two of its neighbors, Egypt and Jordan, which has helped promote stability;
3. numerous hard and soft security benefits ranging from joint-missile defense to renewable resources and cooperation with homeland security efforts makes America more secure, and;

4. being a stable democracy with similar interests in the region that is able to help advance other American interests.

There are costs of the United States relationship with Israel. While anti-Americanism has many diverse sources, disagreement of America's policy to support Israel is one of them. When the United States votes consistently on the side of Israel in UN resolutions, it helps to reassure Israel but it also damages some relationships with other American allies such as the European Union. Unlike what was originally feared by Secretary of State George Marshall, however, supporting Israel has not necessarily meant poorer relations with Arab States, as it is not a zero-sum game in the Middle East. While there are these risks and costs, they do not outweigh the robust benefits that the United States receives from its relationship with Israel. Because of the support Israel receives from America, there has been no regional war since 1973, the United States has increased its relations with its Arab neighbors through the peace processes, and the United States receives numerous technological and strategic cooperative gains that help preserve its own security.

The implications of this finding are that the United States should assertively maintain the status quo in supporting Israel. This policy choice is in the national strategic interest of America, and it makes sense to continue from a neorealist perspective.

This theory suggests that the United States and Israel will continue to have a strong relationship as long as American interests in the Middle East are stability and access to oil. The United States will continue to consistently vote in favor of Israel in U.N. votes to reassure Israel that it has a large and powerful friend. The United States will continue to assure Israel's QME to ensure that none of its enemies get bold enough to start a war, which would disrupt regional stability. There has been no regional war between states in the Middle East since 1973, when America's support for Israel was truly established. Supporting Israel has helped promote the other American interests of stability and access to oil in the region.

The United States and Israel will continue to have strong ties as long as creating peace between Israel and its neighbors is a goal of the United States. The United States has believed since 1967 that only a strong Israel could foster peace. It is America's belief

that a weak Israel would have no incentive to compromise on lands it had gained during the war if it felt that it needed them for security reasons. Because Israel still faces security threats today and does not have peace with all of its neighbors, the United States will likely continue to build up Israel's ability to secure itself. A strong Israel helps to promote the United States' national interest of creating peace in the region.

The United States and Israel will continue to have a strategic partnership as long as there is the common foe of Islamic fundamentalism. If the threat of Islamic fundamentalism decreases, as did the Soviet threat after the Cold War, then some of the strategic value that Israel provides will be less. However, it is possible that a new menace could arise that threatens both Israel and America which could continue the relationship. The mutually beneficial relationship between the United States and Israel will continue as long as Islamic fundamentalism threatens both countries.

If American policy makers make decisions in line with realism, the United States-Israel relationship will remain strong. United States policy makers during the Cold War made policy decisions based on realist needs. After 2001, the United States shifted to more liberal internationalist policies in its desire to democratize the Middle East. The relationship has remained strong even through the transition from realism to liberalism. Therefore it is predicted that the relationship will continue as it makes sense from a realist perspective.

The relationship between the United States and Israel will not get stronger because the United States is facing fiscal problems, and spending by the United States government is under scrutiny. Americans increasingly want to reduce America's spending on foreign aid.<sup>140</sup> There that there has been an increase from 34 percent to 48 percent of those Americans who wish to see United States foreign aid decrease. The United States receives extensive economic and military benefits from foreign aid to Israel, which supports keeping this aid as a high priority.

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<sup>140</sup> Pew Research Center, "As Sequester Deadline Looms, Little Support for Cutting Most Programs," February 22, 2003.

The United States -Israel relationship will not get weaker because even if the United States completely cut ties to Israel, Arab States would still view the two states as connected, based on the past 40 years of strong ties between America and Israel. It would not be in America's interest to decrease support for Israel, because Israel would lose its reassurance from having a powerful ally, and it could even look for support in some of America's enemies such as Russia and China. The United States might still have to come to Israel's aid if something did happen due to strong domestic support in America towards Israel. Due to sequestration in the United States, aid to Israel has already been reduced \$155 million, but it is unlikely that it will be cut much more<sup>141</sup>. This cut is not due to a perceived decrease in Israel's value to American but instead has occurred because of across-the-board cuts.

Current literature suggests that the United States will continue to secure a strong relationship with Israel. Despite America's initial hesitancy to back Israel in 1948, the strategic relationship has grown as American and Israeli mutual interests have grown. However, one issue that will need to be addressed is that although America and Israel share a lot of the same goals, they differ on how to achieve these aims. Israel has the factor of immediacy that the United States does not share, as it is further removed from the situation. Israel has security concerns that make action a necessity, sometimes more often than the United States would like to see. For example, while both Israel and the United States want President Bashar Al Assad's regime to end in Syria, they have different immediate concerns. Israel has struck targets in Syria that they believe hold Iranian-sponsored weapons intended for Hezbollah. These attacks have made it easier for Syrians to join together against Israel, and unite the two sides of the conflict, which is not necessarily what the United States wants. But because Israel has its immediate security concerns to deal with, it decided to strike those targets. Israel's security concerns have also made it harder for Israel and the United States to see the Palestinian issue the same way. Although both America and Israel have claimed that they want a free and independent Palestinian state, their two governments have different concerns on how and

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<sup>141</sup> The Council for the National Interest, "Israel Gets Special Treatment, 93% of Americans Polled Say They Want Foreign Aid Cuts," March 13, 2013.

what that state would look like. Relations between America and Israel have been tense due to these differences in how to go about achieving their goals, but ties between the two countries have remained strong. These issues in Syria, Palestine, and others in the future that may come up are unlikely to uproot the mutually beneficial strategic relationship that has grown. Because the benefits of the United States-Israel relationship outweigh the costs of it to the United States, it is in line with the realist lens and will continue as long as America's interests in the region continue to be stability, access to oil, and peace.

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