

THE PRO-ISRAEL LOBBY, THE UNITED STATES, AND  
THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL: THE PRO-ISRAEL LOBBY'S  
INFLUENCE ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

by

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The pro-Israel lobby has been in the spotlight in recent political controversies, but does the pro-Israel lobby actually influence foreign policy decisions? Using factors pulled from literature about the influence of ethnic minority interest groups on foreign policy, I evaluate the influence of the pro-Israel lobby on foreign policy. Ultimately, I find that the pro-Israel lobby wields both monetary and political power to influence foreign policy making in the United States. I then continue with my analysis by evaluating whether the pro-Israel lobby was involved in the decision to leave the Iran Nuclear Deal. While the pro-Israel lobby was unable to prevent President Obama from dropping economic sanctions against Iran, it was able to convince President Trump to leave the deal.

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## **Does the pro-Israel Lobby Influence U.S. Foreign Policy?**

I had two primary research questions: Has the pro-Israel lobby influenced U.S. foreign policy decisions? Specifically, what influence can be found in regard to the U.S. decision to leave the Iran Nuclear Deal? My research examines four factors that have been compiled by Trevor Rubenzer, a scholar who studies ethnic minority interest groups. These factors are used to evaluate the influence of ethnic minority interest groups on foreign policy decisions. I will show the influence of the pro-Israel lobby on foreign policy by applying the four factors to the pro-Israel lobby. Next, I will examine whether there is any current evidence of the pro-Israel lobby influencing the U.S. departure from the Iran Nuclear Deal.

### **Talking about the “pro-Israel lobby” instead of the “Israel lobby”**

I will use the term “pro-Israel lobby” instead of the term “Israel lobby,” which is used in other literature, to characterize U.S. interest groups and individuals that support the relationship between the U.S. and Israel. Use of the term “Israel lobby” confuses the purpose and origins of pro-Israel interest groups in the United States. The “Israel lobby,” as defined by Mearsheimer and Walt<sup>1</sup>, is over-expansive and includes government officials not part of the formal pro-Israel lobby.<sup>2</sup> Even though all government officials who support Israel are not necessarily included in Mearsheimer

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<sup>1</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 112–13.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Lieberman, “The ‘Israel Lobby’ and American Politics,” *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 2 (2019): 241, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/870004471/fulltextPDF/E76A41441FD14306PQ/1?accountid=14698>.

and Walt's definition<sup>3</sup>, their definition of the "Israel lobby" is unclear.<sup>4</sup> Instead of limiting the definition of the "Israel lobby," Mearsheimer and Walt include in their definition any individual or organization that has the same political agenda, to further the interests of Israel.<sup>5</sup>

The "Israel lobby" could also be interpreted as a lobby that is entirely consistent with the interests of Israel. This is not always the case with pro-Israel interest groups in the United States. These interest groups are not permitted to have direct ties or communication with the state of Israel, unless they choose to register as a foreign lobby group. Additionally, pro-Israel interest groups do not always support policies that are completely consistent with what the government of Israel wants. While pro-Israel interest groups support some policies that are often consistent with Israeli interests, this relationship is not demonstrative of the current state of the pro-Israel lobby. Therefore, the term "pro-Israel lobby" is more consistent with the structure and purpose of pro-Israel interest groups within the United States.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "The Blind Man and the Elephant in the Room: Robert Lieberman and the Israel Lobby," *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 2 (2009): 262, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/blind-man-and-the-elephant-in-the-room-robert-lieberman-and-the-israel-lobby/BC9C61C0F2089104EC6C3F89D5F7089D>.

<sup>4</sup> Lieberman, "The 'Israel Lobby' and American Politics," 241.

<sup>5</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 112–13.

<sup>6</sup> While Mearsheimer and Walt use the term "Israel lobby," they concede that the term "Israel lobby" is more misleading and not entirely accurate. They use "Israel lobby" for the purpose of matching the terminology with other widely known lobbies, such as the "gun lobby."



## **Defining the pro-Israel lobby**

The pro-Israel lobby, while not a foreign lobby in the U.S.,<sup>7</sup> promotes policies that they believe to be beneficial to the state of Israel. Like most lobby groups, they use the influence of money and other political means to strategically support or undermine influential members of Congress.

Furthermore, the pro-Israel lobby is sometimes not a unitary interest group. The pro-Israel lobby consists of interest groups and individuals that look to further the interests of Israel by actively attempting to influence legislation and discourse within the United States. Under my definition, the lobby includes individual donors, PACs, and interest groups that help encourage pro-Israel policies. As I will explain later, there are certain issues that create major divisions between the members of the pro-Israel lobby. Just like the different approaches to promoting U.S. interests, exemplified by political parties in the U.S., there are different ways to promote the interests of Israel. Divisive issues like the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people and the U.S. involvement in the Iran Nuclear deal have created rifts within the pro-Israel lobby. Thus, today, it cannot be assumed that the pro-Israel lobby is centrally controlled or always unified in its message.

My research will look at formal groups within the pro-Israel lobby to determine the influence of the lobby as a whole. The interest groups, within the pro-Israel lobby, that I will primarily address in my analysis are the American Israel Public Affairs

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<sup>7</sup> Foreign lobbies are lobbies or interest groups that are controlled or directly affiliated with a foreign government. Foreign lobbies are required to register with the U.S. government under the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

Committee and J-Street.<sup>8</sup> AIPAC is one of the more well-known interest groups in the United States. While AIPAC does not directly contribute to any campaign, it does pair prospective donors and lobbying groups with campaigns or legislators.<sup>9</sup> AIPAC has typically been more conservative and aligned most of its support with the Likud party, the conservative controlling party of Israel.

Alternatively, J-Street is one of the more well-known liberal interest groups within the pro-Israel lobby. In recent years it has expanded in power and influence significantly. Since 2008, J-Street has been one of the top contributors from the pro-Israel lobby.<sup>10</sup> I use these two interest groups to characterize the pro-Israel lobby because they are two of the larger, well-known interest groups within the lobby and they demonstrate the expanse of political ideology within the lobby.<sup>11</sup>

### **Why it is not anti-Semitic to talk about the pro-Israel lobby**

Before I begin my analysis, I would like to disclose that my analysis is not meant to be critical of the Jewish people or their religion. I understand that there are

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<sup>8</sup> These interest groups are not the only members of the pro-Israel lobby. There are various other groups that are also quite influential such as Christians United for Israel and the Conference of Presidents.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "How (and How Not) to Talk About the Israel Lobby," *Foreign Affairs*, March 15, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Center for Responsive Politics, "Pro-Israel: Top Contributors to Federal Candidates, Parties, and Outside Groups | OpenSecrets," accessed April 18, 2019, <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/contrib.php?ind=Q05&Bkdn=Source&cycle=2008>.

<sup>11</sup> Other authors have chosen J-Street and AIPAC to categorize the pro-Israel lobby; see, Amy B. Becker, "Politics Versus Place? The Relative Influence of Partisanship, Ideology, and Connection With Israel on Support for the Iran Nuclear Agreement," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, August 6, 2016, edw023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edw023>.

predominant and dangerous stereotypes around Jewish power and influence.

Specifically, there is no part of my analysis that questions the legitimacy of Israel's existence. None of my analysis is meant to criticize the Jewish culture or religion. My research is meant to focus on the pro-Israel lobby, whose primary purpose is to promote policies beneficial to Israel within the United States. The pro-Israel lobby does not represent the state of Israel or the Jewish people as a whole. Instead, it is characterized by individuals, businesses, and organizations that want to see the enactment of policies that they believe are beneficial to Israel and the relationship between the U.S. and Israel. This is a study of the influence of a political lobby, not the influence of a religion or ethnic group.

## **Prior Discourse About the Pro-Israel lobby and Ethnic Minority**

### **Interest Groups**

My analysis required me to consider two sources of discourse surrounding the pro-Israel lobby: the general influence of the pro-Israel lobby and the influence of ethnic groups on U.S. foreign policy. The problem with some of the literature surrounding the influence of the pro-Israel lobby is that it does not rely on a defined framework when evaluating the influence of the pro-Israel lobby. While studies about the influence of ethnic groups on U.S. foreign policy have provided these frameworks, there are multiple competing factors that have been defined by the literature.

### **Previous discourse about the influence of the pro-Israel lobby in the U.S.**

One of the earlier critiques of the pro-Israel lobby was written by a former congressman, Paul Findley.<sup>12</sup> His narrative was highly critical of the pro-Israel lobby and provided various examples of influence of the pro-Israel lobby. One example Findley provided was the incident with the USS *Liberty*, an attack on a U.S. ship by Israeli planes and submarines. He contended that the supposed cover-up of this incident led to further harm with another incident involving the USS *Pueblo*, whose crewmembers were captured by North Korea.<sup>13</sup> He primarily relied on his own experience in Congress and the testimonies of other members of Congress to create a

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Findley, *They Dare to Speak Out: People and Institutions Confront Israel's Lobby*, Third (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2003), <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uoregon/reader.action?docID=1273936>.

<sup>13</sup> Findley, 196.

critical narrative about the influence of the pro-Israel lobby. However, there was no theoretical framework presented or used to evaluate his claims.

Mearsheimer and Walt furthered the idea that U.S. support of Israel is not wholly rational but instead influenced substantially by the Israel lobby. They divided the rationale for supporting Israel into two categories: strategic and moral. Mearsheimer and Walt claim that the initial support of Israel was strategic.<sup>14</sup> The Cold War was in full swing following the founding of Israel in 1948 and the U.S. was in an existential war with the U.S.S.R. and its allies. Due to Israel's recent founding, Israel was seen as a weak point in the Middle East that could potentially fall to the spread of communism.<sup>15</sup> During the Kennedy administration, the U.S.S.R. gave increased aid to the bordering states of Iraq, Egypt, and Syria; thus, the U.S. felt that Israel could be a strategic asset that would help prevent the spread of Communism. This, supposedly, was the source of the viewpoint that Israel is a strategic ally in the Middle East.

While Mearsheimer and Walt indicate that Israel was initially a strategic asset, they contest that it still remains a strategic asset in the Middle East. They introduce several examples of situations where the U.S. may not have acted in its own self-interest, but instead remained too loyal to its ally in the Middle East.<sup>16</sup>

One example that Mearsheimer and Walt introduce is the seemingly irrational maintenance of the United States' alliance with Israel following the fall of the U.S.S.R. The alliance with Israel was initially intended to help contain the spread of Communism

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<sup>14</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, 51.

<sup>16</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, 58, 60, 70, 75.

in the Middle East; however, according to Mearsheimer and Walt, there was no longer a justification to remain such strong allies. If anything, they argue, Israel was more of a liability.<sup>17</sup> While this may not have been apparent at the time, U.S. support of Israel may have resulted in anti-American sentiment that still endures today in many parts of the Middle East. The support of Israel's suppression of Palestine further increased the hatred of the U.S. Following this logic, the U.S. should not have remained such a devoted supporter of Israel following the end of the Cold War because Israel was no longer as strategically useful.

Another justification that Mearsheimer and Walt address is the moral justification for supporting Israel. The moral case for supporting Israel, according to Mearsheimer and Walt, rests on Israel's moral and democratic nature. The U.S. has emphasized the spread of democracy as one of its key foreign policies. Israel is one of the few democracies that exist in the Middle East. Supposedly, Israel is weak and needs protection from enemy countries that surround it. Also, Israel claims the moral high ground, even in the disputes with Palestine. According to some, the violence between Palestinians and Israel was initiated by the Palestinians when they rejected a peace offer in 2000.<sup>18</sup>

Mearsheimer and Walt disagree with the moral case for Israel and believe that there is something more than a moral compass that is influencing unconditional support for Israel. While they do agree that the existence of Israel is worth defending, they do not feel its existence is currently threatened and, thus, deserves unconditional support

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<sup>17</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, 58.

<sup>18</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, 79.

from the United States. Therefore, Mearsheimer and Walt conclude that the Israel Lobby must be more powerful than it has usually been accredited and is heavily influential on U.S. foreign policy.

Although Mearsheimer and Walt are well known and respected in the field of political science, they faced substantial criticism for their critical analysis of the Israel Lobby and its alleged power in the United States. Robert Lieberman, another prominent political scientist, authored a full critique of Mearsheimer and Walt's book.

Specifically, he focused on the lack of the proposed causality between the Israel Lobby and U.S. foreign policy.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, Lieberman criticized the lack of variation in the data and case studies that Mearsheimer and Walt selected. He believes that there are alternate case studies that were left out that would have contradicted some of their findings. Mostly, Lieberman argues that Mearsheimer and Walt left out situations with varying levels of pressure by the Israel lobby and the corresponding foreign policy.<sup>20</sup>

In regard to the Israel Lobby's influence in the United States, Lieberman stated that it was too ambiguous to determine whether the lobbying by the Israel Lobby was actually influential on policy change. In some instances, congressional candidates who had received nearly \$250,000 in contributions from pro-Israel groups were still unable to win seats.<sup>21</sup> This demonstrates that the Israel Lobby is not omnipotent and may not be as influential as Mearsheimer and Walt propose. Also, according to Lieberman, total contributions in congressional election cycles have steadily increased while

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<sup>19</sup> Lieberman, "The 'Israel Lobby' and American Politics," 249.

<sup>20</sup> Lieberman, 250.

<sup>21</sup> Lieberman, 244.

contributions by pro-Israel groups have remained steady.<sup>22</sup> Comparatively, the Israel Lobby may not be spending as much as it sounds. “[I]t is far from clear that even these large-sounding amounts of money are enough to be decisive in increasingly expansive congressional elections, especially for Senate seats.”<sup>23</sup> Lieberman casts doubt on the Mearsheimer and Walt’s proposal of an influential pro-Israel lobby.

Subsequently, Mearsheimer and Walt responded to this criticism. First, they responded to the methods they used for their research in determining influence of the Israel Lobby:

One cannot measure the influence of an interest group simply by looking at whether it “won” or “lost” a particular policy dispute. The real question is what the outcome would have been had interest group pressure been absent. After all, an interest group may lose a specific policy battle but still force policymakers to water down their goals or expend lots of political capital in order to overcome its opposition. In short, there is no simple linear relationship between “lobbying activities” and “policy outcomes” in the real world; thus gauging a lobby’s clout requires paying careful attention to the process by which decisions and outcomes were reached.<sup>24</sup>

Similar to my later analysis surrounding the Iran Nuclear Deal, there is no single way to measure influence. Looking at interest groups, whether a candidate wins or loses may not be a complete indication of the interest group’s influence. Also, as I discuss later, interest groups can influence policy by political means other than just monetary donations and lobbying.

Next, Mearsheimer and Walt respond to Lieberman’s criticism of the causality they try to demonstrate in their analysis. Lieberman pointed out that a single aspect of

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<sup>22</sup> Lieberman, 244.

<sup>23</sup> Lieberman, 244.

<sup>24</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, “The Blind Man and the Elephant in the Room: Robert Lieberman and the Israel Lobby,” 260.



an interest group's strategy to influence legislation could not be the sole factor in changing legislation and public opinion. Mearsheimer and Walt agree and proceed to demonstrate how a combination of Jewish voters, lobbying, and influencing public discourse can affect policy. In regard to lobbying, much of campaign funds come from individuals. These individuals are often times not required to report their ethnicity or religion so there is no way to really see the total amount of funds donated on behalf of the "Israel Lobby." These individual donations would be in addition to the funding by PACs that must be reported.<sup>25</sup>

Mearsheimer and Walt continue by arguing that Jewish voting compounds the influence of the Israel Lobby. They claim that the Jewish vote can be a swing vote in some states that have substantial Jewish populations because there is no obvious party loyalty.<sup>26</sup> However, even in states that have a relatively large Jewish population, like New York, they still only make up about 7% of the state.<sup>27</sup> In the United States, Jews comprise of only 2% of the entire population.<sup>28</sup> This is hardly a significant percentage of the population to drastically affect the outcome of national elections. Additionally, it cannot be assumed that all Jews would support pro-Israel policies. As I discuss later, there is a growing resistance, within the younger generation of Jews, to U.S. support of

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<sup>25</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, 266.

<sup>26</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 163.

<sup>27</sup> Pew Research Center, "Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics | Pew Research Center," 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/jewish/#social-and-political-views>.

<sup>28</sup> Pew Research Center, "Israel and the U.S. Are Home to More Than Four-Fifths of the World's Jews | Pew Research Center," 2013, <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/03/20/israel-and-the-us-are-home-to-more-than-fourfifths-of-the-worlds-jews/>.

Israel. Therefore, the concept that the sheer number of Jewish Americans could influence elections and consequently influence foreign policy to be more favorable to Israel is far-fetched.

While Mearsheimer and Walt provide a detailed and supported analysis of the pro-Israel lobby's influence, there does not appear to be a consistent method of analysis. Compared to other methods of analysis, they do not rely on a strict framework for their analysis.<sup>29</sup> Instead, their analysis depends primarily on the narratives of others who support their view of the pro-Israel lobby.

### **Gauging the factors of influence for ethnic minority interest groups**

The other body of literature important to my research is the research on ethnic minority interest groups; specifically, their influence on foreign policy. In recent years, the various factors that determine the influence of these interest groups have been distilled into a few important indicators of influence over foreign policy.

Looking first at the development of the factors of influence, in a case study about the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), Patrick Haney and Walt Vanderbush introduced the factors that are typically used to determine the influence of ethnic minority interest groups. Specifically, they focused on money, lobbying ability, and unity of both the organization and its constituency.<sup>30</sup> They ultimately found that their case study of CANF reinforced the validity of the factors used to examine

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<sup>29</sup> See Lieberman, "The 'Israel Lobby' and American Politics."

<sup>30</sup> Patrick Haney, *The Cuban Embargo : Domestic Politics of American Foreign Policy* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 48, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uoregon/reader.action?docID=2038882#>.

influence of ethnic minority lobbies. These factors had previously been synthesized from other past studies of ethnic minority lobbying groups.<sup>31</sup>

Trevor Rubenzer compiled and analyzed the current factors that are used throughout existing research. There are eleven factors that Rubenzer identified in his research that indicate an interest group's influence on foreign policy: whether an ethnic minority interest group is assimilated, unified, organized, politically active, numerous; and has public support, ties to its home country, substantial political opposition, financial resources, a focused message, and alliances with other interest groups.<sup>32</sup> In his expansive literature review, Rubenzer found two factors that were most referenced and relevant to analysis: the extent of political involvement with foreign policy and the organizational strength of the lobby.<sup>33</sup> These factors have been used by other authors to describe the basic factors that should be required when analyzing the influence of ethnic minority lobbies on foreign policy.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See Abdul Aziz. Said, *Ethnicity and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Praeger Publishers, 1977); Martin Weil, "Can the Blacks Do for Africa What the Jews Did for Israel?," *Foreign Policy*, no. 15 (1974): 109, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1147933>.

<sup>32</sup> Trevor Rubenzer, "Ethnic Minority Interest Group Attributes and U.S. Foreign Policy Influence: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 4, no. 2 (2008): 169–85.

<sup>33</sup> Rubenzer, 183.

<sup>34</sup> See Becker, "Politics Versus Place? The Relative Influence of Partisanship, Ideology, and Connection With Israel on Support for the Iran Nuclear Agreement"; Maria Koinova, "Sustained vs Episodic Mobilization among Conflict-Generated Diasporas," *International Political Science Review* 37, no. 4 (2016): 500–516, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512115591641>; Elena Chadova-Devlen, "Whose Interests? US-Russian Foreign Policy Controversies in Russian American Ethnic Press," *International Studies Perspectives* 15, no. 1 (February 2014): 36–53, <https://doi.org/10.1111/insp.12011>; Liat Radcliffe Ross, "Muslim Interest Groups and Foreign Policy in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom: Identity, Interests, and Action," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 9, no. 3 (July 2013): 287–306, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-8594.2012.00186.x>.

## **Evaluating the Influence of the Pro-Israel lobby Regarding U.S.**

### **Foreign Policy**

Relying on Rubenzer's factors and two additional factors, I will use four factors to determine the influence of the pro-Israel lobby in the United States: political involvement with foreign policy, political opposition, organizational strength, and political unity. While there are eleven total factors included by Rubenzer in his literature analysis, there are only four that had substantial supporting evidence and could be applied to the pro-Israel lobby.<sup>35</sup> Also, many of the factors could be incorporated into other factors. For example, financial resources can also be included when determining the organizational strength of an ethnic minority lobby. Rubenzer's analysis concluded that there were two basic factors that should be required in every analysis of ethnic minority interest groups: involvement with foreign policy and organizational strength. However, Rubenzer explains that these factors can be combined with other factors: "My results suggest that political activity and organization are the key factors that determine the presence or absence of influence. In this sense, there may be multiple paths to influence..."<sup>36</sup> Rubenzer's conclusions suggest that his cardinal factors can be combined with other factors.

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<sup>35</sup> Not all of the factors in Rubenzer's literature review are applicable to the pro-Israel lobby. For example, whether the members of the pro-Israel lobby in the U.S. are able to identify with Israelis is not relevant to the influence of the pro-Israel lobby. The pro-Israel lobby does not always follow the interests of Israeli Jews. Thus, it is unimportant whether American Jews are able to identify with Israeli Jews.

<sup>36</sup> Rubenzer, "Ethnic Minority Interest Group Attributes and U.S. Foreign Policy Influence: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis," 183.

It is important to include both political opposition and unification with Rubenzer's key factors when looking at the pro-Israel lobby. If there is significant political opposition to a lobby, it could struggle to pass policy due to open opposition and, thus, could be under increased scrutiny. This would make it far less effective, especially if key members of Congress, who a lobby was trying to influence, were openly opposed to the lobby. For example, the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) was able to expand significantly because there was little opposition to the support of Cuban Americans by both Congress and the public.<sup>37</sup> If there is not significant political opposition, a lobby can expand its influence significantly. Therefore, political unification is an important factor to include in the analysis of the pro-Israel lobby.

Similar to political opposition, if there is a rift in a particular lobby it can undermine the purpose of the lobby. There can be multiple factions competing for different policies that they individually believe to be beneficial. For example, the unity within CANF was found to demonstrate how unity was effective as a factor of influence with ethnic minority interest groups. If there is not unity within a lobby it can have a negative effect on the message and influence on policy.<sup>38</sup> Also, there have been recent divisions within the pro-Israel lobby, which makes unity a relevant factor. Thus, I will include these two factors with the two cardinal factors defined by Rubenzer.

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<sup>37</sup> Haney, *The Cuban Embargo : Domestic Politics of American Foreign Policy*, 49.

<sup>38</sup> Haney, 48.

### **The pro-Israel lobby focuses primarily on foreign policy**

The extent to which a lobby is involved with foreign policy is clearly key when determining the influence of a minority interest group on foreign policy. Looking at the pro-Israel lobby, the vast majority of issues it is concerned with relate to foreign policy; specifically, foreign policy that concerns Israel.<sup>39</sup> This is made apparent with AIPAC's website that includes various issues that it addresses. All of the issues listed are directly or indirectly related to foreign policy: ranging from Iran to the international boycott and divestment movement.<sup>40</sup> J-Streets website mirrors many of the issues AIPAC lists on its website.<sup>41</sup> The purpose of the pro-Israel lobby is to promote favorable U.S. foreign policy for Israel.

Additionally, AIPAC often sponsors trips to Israel for new members of Congress and for other supporters.<sup>42</sup> These trips are made to solidify the commitment to Israel and promote the relationship between the United States and Israel. Thus, the lobby is almost exclusively involved with issues of foreign policy because domestic U.S. policy has little to no effect on the interests of the state of Israel.

### **The expansive organization and strength of the pro-Israel lobby**

Whether a minority interest group is organizationally strong can be determined by the size, resources, and lobbying ability of the interest group. The size of an interest

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<sup>39</sup> Dennis. Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal: Bombs, Bureaucrats, and Billionaires* (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG, 2018), 71.

<sup>40</sup> The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "AIPAC," n.d.

<sup>41</sup> J-Street, "J-Street," n.d.

<sup>42</sup> Nathan Thrall, "How the Battle Over Israel and Anti-Semitism Is Fracturing American Politics," March 2019.

group's organization is usually determined by the number of members, employees, and offices. Resources and lobbying ability are usually shown through the organizations funding and ability to hire lobbyists.<sup>43</sup> While the pro-Israel lobby consists of multiple interest groups, I will focus much of my analysis on two of the biggest players, J-Street and AIPAC.

Looking first at the size of J-Street, their main site claims they have 180,000 members and 1,000 lay leaders. Instead of having main offices, like AIPAC, J-Street appears to have a more informal system where interested volunteers can contact lay leaders. Lay leaders not only serve as contacts for potential donors or volunteers, they also reach out to campaigns. Additionally, there are regional directors, similar to AIPAC's regional offices, that also work with congressional campaigns. J-Street also claims to host the third-largest annual gathering of Jews in the U.S.<sup>44</sup>

Similar to J-Street, AIPAC claims to have more than 100,000 members and more than 400 staff members. Although, AIPAC is organized differently because it has established offices throughout the U.S. The offices allow AIPAC to reach out to campaigns directly and work with candidates to develop pro-Israel platforms.<sup>45</sup> Many of its office are centered on the East coast. Compared to J-Street, AIPAC is more established throughout the U.S. with its various offices.<sup>46</sup> However, combined, the two interest groups have an expansive network of supporters, offices, and staff members.

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<sup>43</sup> Rubenzer, "Ethnic Minority Interest Group Attributes and U.S. Foreign Policy Influence: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis."

<sup>44</sup> J-Street, "J-Street."

<sup>45</sup> Ady Barkan, "What Ilhan Omar Said about AIPAC Was Right," *The Nation*, February 12, 2019.

<sup>46</sup> The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "AIPAC."

AIPAC has served as a template for other lobbying groups because of its organizational strength. AIPAC is structured into legally distinct entities that allow it to reap the benefits of both tax-exempt educational non-profits and lobbying groups.<sup>47</sup> One interest group that specifically followed the AIPAC template was CANF. CANF followed this template and created three distinct branches within its organization: a political action committee, a lobbying entity, and the foundation itself.<sup>48</sup> The political action committee can donate funds to campaigns or congressmen; the lobbying entity can lobby; and the main organization can conduct research and educate the public.<sup>49</sup> While AIPAC and CANF are not lobbying groups, their organization, as a whole, allows them to accomplish what normal lobbying groups can and more.

Both J-Street and AIPAC have a broad network of offices and a substantial number of staff. Both organizations claim to have over 100,000 members across the U.S. While, J-Street and AIPAC do not constitute the entirety of the pro-Israel lobby, they are a substantial part of the pro-Israel lobby. Also, they help demonstrate the varying structures of interest groups within the pro-Israel lobby.

Similar to the size of an interest group, the resources and lobbying ability are also important factors in determining the organizational strength of an interest group.<sup>50</sup> The pro-Israel lobby is widely known within the political arena to have substantial financial resources and lobbying ability. Specifically, AIPAC is recognized as one of

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<sup>47</sup> Haney, *The Cuban Embargo : Domestic Politics of American Foreign Policy*, 37.

<sup>48</sup> Haney, 37.

<sup>49</sup> Haney, 37.

<sup>50</sup> Rubenzer, "Ethnic Minority Interest Group Attributes and U.S. Foreign Policy Influence: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis," 172.



the key players in U.S. politics. In 2007, Representative Jim Moran recognized that AIPAC is widely known to be a key player in politics, “Every member knows it’s the best-organized national lobbying force.”<sup>51</sup> Bill Clinton also acknowledged AIPAC as “stunningly effective” and “better than anyone at lobbying in [D.C.]”<sup>52</sup> Even AIPAC, itself, recognized its strength through a quote posted on its website from the New York Times that called AIPAC “the most important organization affecting America’s relationship with Israel.”<sup>53</sup> These are just a few testimonies to the strength and presence of AIPAC in politics. Mearsheimer and Walt present countless other testimonies to AIPAC’s political standing in the U.S.<sup>54</sup>

While AIPAC has had an established network in the United States for decades, J-Street has emerged as a significant player within the pro-Israel lobby. Both organizations are well organized and have access to many resources. Thus, they are prime examples of the organization factor required by Rubenzer.

### **How fear of critical discourse about Israel limits political opposition**

Lack of political opposition can greatly affect the influence of an ethnic minority interest group. Often times interest groups can negate each other by providing contradicting narratives and support. If there are few groups that oppose a particular

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<sup>51</sup> Anonymous, “Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA), Comments on the Influence of the Pro-Israel Lobby, Tikkun,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no. 1 (2007): 205–7.

<sup>52</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 153.

<sup>53</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, 154.

<sup>54</sup> See Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*.

interest group, the interest group is much more likely to have unchecked influence on policy.<sup>55</sup>

The pro-Israel lobby has little outside political opposition. Part of this lack of political opposition may be contributed to a general fear of being accused of anti-Semitism. Mearsheimer and Walt address this controversial topic in their discussion of the pro-Israel lobby and how fear of anti-Semitism accusations may sway public discourse about U.S.-Israeli foreign policy. They believe that many individuals are afraid to criticize acts by Israel because they fear that there will be political and social backlash. Once someone has been charged with being anti-Semitic it is difficult to prove the contrary.

Accusations of anti-Semitism could play a substantial role in quelling political opposition. Mearsheimer and Walt raise many examples of instances where unsupported accusations of anti-Semitism are made.<sup>56</sup> This supports the fact that there is little political opposition to the pro-Israel lobby in the U.S. because criticism of Israel and the pro-Israel lobby is politically dangerous and unpopular. If the pro-Israel lobby is able to paint criticism of Israel as inherently anti-Semitic, the lobby can make criticism of Israel a form of taboo.

One example of taboo already related to Israel is Israel's possession of nuclear weapons. The policy of amimut, the Hebrew word for opaque, is an agreement with Israel to not publicize the fact that Israel has nuclear weapons.<sup>57</sup> The purpose of amimut

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<sup>55</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt.

<sup>56</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt, 193–96.

<sup>57</sup> Dougland Birch and R. Jeffrey Smith, "Israel's Worst-Kept Secret," *The Atlantic*, September 16, 2014,

is to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East by denying and hiding the fact that Israel has nuclear weapons. While this may or may not have been a result of the pro-Israel lobby in the U.S.,<sup>58</sup> it does demonstrate an example of taboo related to critiques of Israel and its capabilities.

Another example is the outcry sparked by Representative Ilhan Omar's comments about the Israel lobby. She posted a critical tweet claiming that support for Israel was "all about the Benjamins baby."<sup>59</sup> The statement was said to perpetuate a common negative stereotype that Jewish money plays a strong role in politics. The aftermath opened a rift in the Democratic party between those who support Omar and her statement and those who thought it demonstrated anti-Semitic themes. The controversy ultimately led to the introduction of an anti-Semitism resolution that condemns any accusation that American Jews may be more loyal to Israel than the United States.<sup>60</sup> In addition to the resolution, President Trump, in a tweet, said that Jewish groups had sent a petition to Speaker Pelosi demanding the removal of Representative Omar from the Foreign Relations Committee.<sup>61</sup> If successful, it would be a victory for the pro-Israel lobby and demonstrate their influence in Washington D.C.

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<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/israel-nuclear-weapons-secret-united-states/380237/>.

<sup>58</sup> This is outside the scope of my current research; however, it would make an interesting research topic for other research about the pro-Israel lobby.

<sup>59</sup> Barkan, "What Ilhan Omar Said about AIPAC Was Right."

<sup>60</sup> Sheryl Stolberg, "House's Anti-Semitism Resolution Exposes Generational Fight Over Ilhan Omar," *New York Times*, March .

<sup>61</sup> Tom Perkins, "Did Pro-Israel Lobby Funding Influence Democrats' Responses to Ilhan Omar?," *The Guardian*, March 9, 2019.

Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren both supported Omar while also critiquing the anti-Semitism resolution. Senator Sanders said, “[W]hat’s going on in the house now is an effort to target Congresswoman Omar as a way of stifling that debate [about Israel policy].” Senator Warren followed suit by saying, “[B]randing criticism of Israel as automatically anti-Semitic has a chilling effect on our public discourse.”<sup>62</sup> The comments made by Representative Ilhan Omar were not anti-Semitic. It is commonly recognized that interest groups often resort to campaign funding and lobbying to shape politics. The fact that it may have coincided with a negative Jewish stereotype is a coincidence. Her statements were addressing the use of money in politics, specifically, by interest groups. In this case she was addressing the influence of AIPAC, not the negative stereotype about Jews and money.

J-Street, on its website, has addressed the issues that have arisen from criticism of Israeli policy and anti-Semitism accusations. As part of the pro-Israel lobby, one of J-Street’s founding policies is that criticism of Israeli policy should be accepted and not shut down. It is important to distinguish between critical discourse surrounding the policies of Israel and discourse that questions Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state. Additionally, there should not be constraints on discussion of Israeli policies. Discourse should be encouraged and not shut down through fear or threats of anti-Semitism.<sup>63</sup>

The fear of being accused as an anti-Semite, whether warranted or not, makes anti-Israel discourse unlikely and unpopular. There should undoubtedly be condemnations of white-supremacist groups that proliferate a false narrative and

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<sup>62</sup> Perkins.

<sup>63</sup> J-Street, “J-Street.”

damaging stereotypes about Jews. However, critical discussion about Israel should be permitted, to an extent, without fear of appearing anti-Semitic. Thus, there is little opposition to the pro-Israel lobby due, in part, to fear of political and social backlash.

### **An expanding rift within the pro-Israel lobby**

Political unification is another important factor in evaluating the influence of an ethnic minority interest group on foreign policy. Similar to the rationale behind political opposition, if there are fewer competing viewpoints and fighting within a lobby there is a greater chance to be influential.<sup>64</sup> The pro-Israel lobby has faced a steadily widening divide as its members become more partisan.<sup>65</sup>

Until recently, AIPAC has been the face of the pro-Israel lobby. The pro-Israel lobby had historically been more sympathetic to what the Israel government wanted and rarely differed from self-proclaimed Israeli interests. However, this changed with the increasing awareness of conflict between Palestinians and Israel. From that awareness, organizations like J-Street and IfNotNow took root in the policy areas that were largely underrepresented in the pro-Israel lobby. Instead of the usual conservative and pro-Likud party policies of AIPAC, newer interest groups pushed for peace. While it was not the approach that the conservative Israeli government wanted, groups were still able to push for policies they believed were still beneficial for Israel.

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<sup>64</sup> Rubenzer, "Ethnic Minority Interest Group Attributes and U.S. Foreign Policy Influence: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis," 172.

<sup>65</sup> Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal: Bombs, Bureaucrats, and Billionaires*, 80.

| <b>Issue</b>  | <b>AIPAC<sup>66</sup></b> | <b>J-Street<sup>67</sup></b>   |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| The Israel-Palestine two state solution                   | Supports                  | Supports   |
| Jerusalem should be recognized as Capital of Israel       | Supports                  | Supports, but U.S. should have waited until after two state solution |
| Special relationship between the United States and Israel | Supports                  | Supports, but should not undermine relations in the Middle East      |
| Boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement         | Opposes                   | Opposes, except BDS related to two-state solution                    |
| Iran Nuclear Deal   | Opposes                   | Supports   |

Table 1: The Policy Stances of AIPAC and J-Street Regarding Issues Concerning Israel

Observing the positions on issues concerning Israel, AIPAC and J-Street share many of the same viewpoints. J-Street and AIPAC mostly differ on how to address each issue but often share the same end goal. For example, the boycott, divestment, and

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<sup>66</sup> The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "AIPAC."

<sup>67</sup> J-Street, "J-Street."

sanctions movement (BDS) has recently taken root with the purpose to pressure Israel through economic means. While both AIPAC and J-Street generally oppose BDS, J-Street supports BDS that is targeted at promoting a two-state solution.<sup>68</sup> Even though J-Street often has a different proposed method of addressing issues concerning Israel, it shares many of the same general viewpoints with AIPAC.

The major issue that AIPAC and J-Street disagree on is the Iran Nuclear Deal. The deal dropped economic sanctions against Iran if they agreed to not continue their nuclear weapons program. Israel's right-wing government was clearly opposed to the Iran nuclear deal because they believed it would give Iran more power in the region without the added burden of economic sanctions. While AIPAC sides with Israel's view of the deal, other pro-Israel interest groups like J-Street supported the deal.<sup>69</sup> The more liberal interest groups supported the deal believing it would effectively stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons. They believed that if the nuclear weapons program continued there could be an increased chance of conflict between Israel, Iran and their allies.

The 2016 Illinois Senate race between incumbent Senator Mark Kirk and Senator Tammy Duckworth demonstrated the conflict within the pro-Israel lobby concerning the Iran Nuclear Deal. Senator Duckworth is a veteran who lost both of her legs in the Iraq war and had previously served in the House as a representative from Illinois.<sup>70</sup> Prior to the race for Senator Kirk's Senate seat, Senator Duckworth was

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<sup>68</sup> The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "AIPAC"; J-Street, "J-Street."

<sup>69</sup> J-Street, "J-Street."

<sup>70</sup> "Biography," Tammy Duckworth U.S. Senator for Illinois, accessed May 11, 2019, <https://www.duckworth.senate.gov/about-tammy/biography>.

undecided on her position on the Iran Nuclear Deal.<sup>71</sup> However, in September 2016 Senator Duckworth, along with other congressmen from Illinois, announced their support for the Iran Nuclear Deal.

We live in serious times that call for serious, if imperfect, solutions. The only deal that works for the U.S. and our allies and stops Iran's nuclear program for nearly 15 years is the one before us. We urge our colleagues to join us in support of President Obama's accord with Iran.<sup>72</sup>

Subsequently, in the 2016 Senate Race, Senator Duckworth received over \$320,000 in funding from the liberal pro-Israel lobby.<sup>73</sup> Her second highest contributor in the 2016 election was J-Street who contributed over half of all the pro-Israel funding, \$188,000.<sup>74</sup> Later, in 2018, Senator Duckworth received over \$200,000 from J-Street.<sup>75</sup>

On the other hand, the incumbent, Senator Mark Kirk, was staunchly opposed to the Iran Nuclear Deal. Senator Kirk believed that “the deal condemns the next generation to cleaning up a nuclear war in the Persian Gulf,” and “tens of thousands of

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<sup>71</sup> Jonathan Broder, “How the Iran Nuclear Deal Weakened AIPAC, Washington’s Most Powerful Interest Group,” *Newsweek*, September 1, 2015, <https://www.newsweek.com/2015/09/11/whos-afraid-israel-lobby-367368.html>.

<sup>72</sup> Tammy Duckworth, Bill Foster, and Mike Quigley, “Duckworth, Foster, Quigley: Why We Support an Imperfect Iran Nuclear Deal,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 2015, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/commentary/ct-duckworth-foster-quigley-iran-nuclear-deal-support-vote-perspec-0910-20150909-story.html>.

<sup>73</sup> Center for Responsive Politics, “Rep. Tammy Duckworth - Illinois District 08,” accessed May 11, 2019, <https://www.opensecrets.org/members-of-congress/industries?cid=N00027860&cycle=2016&type=I>.

<sup>74</sup> Center for Responsive Politics.

<sup>75</sup> Raymond Arke, “AIPAC Doesn’t Contribute Directly to Candidates. Which pro-Israel Groups Do?,” *Center for Responsive Politics*, February 11, 2019, <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2019/02/aipac-dont-contribute-which-pro-israel-groups-do/>.



people in the Middle East are gonna lose their lives...”<sup>76</sup> Senator Kirk continued by claiming that the Iran Nuclear Deal “is the greatest appeasement since Chamberlain gave Czechoslovakia to Hitler.”<sup>77</sup> Senator Kirk received significant funding from the conservative pro-Israel lobby to the point where he was called “AIPAC’s Million Dollar Baby.”<sup>78</sup> When Senator Kirk was a representative in the House, he received more funding than any other representative.<sup>79</sup> He also introduced the Nuclear Weapons Free Iran Act of 2015 that restricted Obama’s ability to create a lasting nuclear deal with Iran.<sup>80</sup> While Senator Duckworth ultimately won the 2016 Senate race, the race itself demonstrates the conflict within the pro-Israel lobby regarding the Iran Nuclear Deal.

The Iran nuclear deal highlighted the growing divide within the pro-Israel lobby. The divide was based mostly on party affiliations: conservative versus liberal. In general, the liberal side of the pro-Israel lobby supported the deal, whereas the conservative side opposed the deal. Until this point there had been relative support from both sides of the political spectrum in regard to foreign policy concerning Israel.<sup>81</sup> The

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<sup>76</sup> Andrew Kaczynski, “Sen. Mark Kirk On Iran Deal: Obama &quot;Wants To Get Nukes To Iran,&quot; Predicts Nuclear War In Middle East,” *Buzzfeed News*, July 15, 2015, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/andrewkaczynski/sen-mark-kirk-on-iran-deal-obama-wants-to-get-nukes-to-iran#.qu535WE6A>.

<sup>77</sup> Kaczynski.

<sup>78</sup> MJ Rosenberg, “Mark Kirk Is AIPAC’s Million Dollar Baby,” *HuffPost*, April 5, 2010, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mark-kirk-is-aipacs-milli\\_b\\_448192](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mark-kirk-is-aipacs-milli_b_448192).

<sup>79</sup> Center for Responsive Politics, “Pro-Israel: Money to Congress | OpenSecrets,” accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/summary.php?ind=Q05&recipdetail=M&sortorder=U&cycle=All>.

<sup>80</sup> “Iran Nuclear Agreement: Legislation,” *Ballotpedia*, accessed May 6, 2019, [https://ballotpedia.org/Iran\\_nuclear\\_agreement:\\_Legislation](https://ballotpedia.org/Iran_nuclear_agreement:_Legislation).

<sup>81</sup> Broder, “How the Iran Nuclear Deal Weakened AIPAC, Washington’s Most Powerful Interest Group.”

J-Street President, Jeremy Ben-Ami, noted the change within the pro-Israel lobby following the Iran nuclear deal, “The illusion that there’s some form of wall-to-wall unity and unanimity on these issues in the Jewish political community has probably been put to rest by this fight.”<sup>82</sup> Thus, the debate over the Iran nuclear deal within the pro-Israel lobby demonstrates a growing rift and lack of political unity within the lobby.

### **Considering the factors, the pro-Israel lobby is influential**

There is no set method to weigh each of the four factors; however, viewing these factors in the context of the pro-Israel lobby allows me to conclude that the Israel lobby is influential in respect to U.S. foreign policy. The four main factors I considered were involvement with foreign policy, organizational strength, political opposition, and political unification.

First, the pro-Israel lobby is almost exclusively directed at foreign policy. Involvement with foreign policy is reflected in the primary issues referred to on the websites of interest groups within the pro-Israel lobby. Also, domestic U.S. policy has little effect on Israeli interests. Second, the organization and resources of J-Street and AIPAC demonstrate the strength and nationwide influence of the pro-Israel lobby. Third, political opposition to Israel is often limited because of the unpopularity and political backlash faced by those who are critical of Israel and the relationship between the U.S. and Israel.

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<sup>82</sup> Broder.

Finally, there is division growing in the pro-Israel lobby around the Iran nuclear deal. Until recently, the pro-Israel lobby has generally been cohesive in its policy positions. However, the Iran Nuclear Deal has exposed the growing divide and increasing partisanship in the pro-Israel lobby.

## **The Pro-Israel Lobby's Influence on U.S. Involvement in the Iran Nuclear Deal**

Following my analysis of the influence of the pro-Israel lobby on foreign policy generally, I investigate the circumstances surrounding the creation of the Iran Nuclear Deal and its ultimate demise. First, I provide a background on the context and structure of the Iran Nuclear Deal. Next, I examine how parts of the conservative pro-Israel lobby prevented Congress from approving economic sanctions against Iran and convinced President Trump to leave the deal.

### **The structure of the Iran Nuclear Deal**

Before I begin my analysis, it is important to understand the context and structure of the JCPOA. The P5+1 (Germany, United States, Russia, China, France, and the U.K.), realizing the danger of an Iranian nuclear weapons program, developed and signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015. The JCPOA, commonly known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, strictly regulated all Iranian nuclear enrichment facilities and the disposal of spent fuel from enrichment processes. The main goal of the JCPOA was to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon while allowing it to both enrich uranium for civilian power reactors and have economic sanctions dropped to give Iran access to Western markets.<sup>83</sup>

The JCPOA is an international agreement; therefore, there is no international government that can enforce or regulate the agreement. The anarchic nature of

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<sup>83</sup> Daryl Kimball, "Nuclear Testing and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) Timeline," Arms Control Association, 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/print/7196>.

international relations can make it difficult to create and enforce deals between states because there is no global authority that can enforce international agreements. While the U.N. can help coerce and convince states to follow through with their agreements, it relies heavily on its member states to use sanctions and other diplomatic routes to penalize states for breaking agreements. To make matters more complicated, each individual state part of the deal usually has to have its portion of the deal approved by its respective legislature. This is especially important for the various economic sanctions that the P5+1 had imposed on Iran. For example, Obama was able to approve the JCPOA and agree to its terms; however, Congress could pass legislation that would prevent the president from dropping economic sanctions against Iran in order to comply with the JCPOA. My research primarily looks at the domestic influences on proposed bills to drop economic sanctions against Iran and influence on President Trump who unilaterally left the JCPOA in 2018.

### **The conservative pro-Israel lobby in action**

Due to the structure of the Iran Nuclear Deal, parts of the pro-Israel lobby opposed to the JCPOA had two courses of action to end U.S. involvement in the deal: prevent Congress from dropping economic sanctions against Iran or convince President Trump to leave the deal. Ultimately, both were successful. While there is nothing that definitively shows that the pro-Israel lobby was the reason for these decisions, there is ample evidence the pro-Israel lobby opposed to the Iran Nuclear Deal fought fiercely to limit and stop it.

### *Non-monetary methods of stalling the Iran Nuclear Deal*

As I previously discussed, there are alternate ways for ethnic minority groups to influence legislation. While money can be influential, there can also be political means of influence. However, alternative political influence is difficult to find and gauge. Usually, it is required to talk directly with officials or have officials speak out about forms of influence that are not obvious. However, this is rare because of the fear of backlash from parts of the pro-Israel lobby. For example, Representative Ilhan Omar, a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, has faced political backlash from the pro-Israel community. According to President Trump, Jewish groups sent a petition demanding that Representative Omar no longer serve on the committee because of her controversial comments about AIPAC.<sup>84</sup> The Jewish groups were not directing money to persuade others to remove Representative Omar; instead, they wielded their general influence in foreign policy to create a threat to someone who spoke out.

As I demonstrated earlier, speaking out against Israel or the pro-Israel lobby can often result in significant social and political backlash. The pro-Israel lobby purposefully wields its influence in U.S. politics to deter opposition. The case of Representative Omar acts as a warning to other politicians that openly oppose some pro-Israel policy. It is especially significant that she is a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs because it may lead other members of the committee to think twice before opposing pro-Israel policy or the pro-Israel lobby.

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<sup>84</sup> Stolberg, "House's Anti-Semitism Resolution Exposes Generational Fight Over Ilhan Omar."

*Fighting the Iran Nuclear Deal with money*

One way to fight the Iran Nuclear Deal was to appeal directly to the public. AIPAC, through one of its spinoff groups Citizens for a Nuclear-Free Iran, dedicated up to \$40 million to run ads opposing the deal.<sup>85</sup> AIPAC and its allies purchased advertisements combatting the Iran Nuclear Deal in 23 states.<sup>86</sup> The advertisements addressed the shortcomings of the Iran Nuclear Deal, specifically calling attention to Iran's support of terrorist groups and the weaknesses of the deal. Ultimately, these advertisements called for an end to the Iran Nuclear Deal.

Another approach that interest groups take to influence legislation is through monetary contributions. Typically, these contributions are made to congressional or presidential campaigns. Also, interest groups often direct funds to ranking members and chairmen of committees and subcommittees. Members of congressional committees can be very influential in the development of bills and can either assist or impede the ability for certain legislation to make it to the floor of the House or the Senate. Interest groups often note the voting habits of particular members of foreign relation committees in both the Senate and House and apportion funds accordingly.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ailsa Chang, "Lobbyists Spending Millions To Sway The Undecided On Iran Deal," *NPR*, August 6, 2015; David Callahan, "The Super-Rich Have Found a New Way to Wield Political Power: Philanthropy," *The Nation*, August 5, 2016.

<sup>86</sup> Chang, "Lobbyists Spending Millions To Sway The Undecided On Iran Deal."

<sup>87</sup> John Newhouse, "Diplomacy, Inc.: The Influence of Lobbies on U.S. Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* May-June (2009), [http://go.galegroup.com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T003&resultListType=RESULT\\_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CA198996112&docType=Viewpoint+essay&sort=RELEVANCE&contentSegment=&pr](http://go.galegroup.com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T003&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CA198996112&docType=Viewpoint+essay&sort=RELEVANCE&contentSegment=&pr).

Based on the strategy of interest groups to target committees, I investigated the funding of members and chairmen of the foreign relation committees in both the House and the Senate. I selected these committees because they are particularly influential and would be heavily involved in any legislation surrounding the JCPOA.<sup>88</sup> Specifically, I found that Robert Menendez, the ranking member and former chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, received substantial funding from the pro-Israel Lobby. According to the Center for Responsive Politics,<sup>89</sup> Senator Menendez received \$1.3 million in funding from pro-Israel groups throughout his career.<sup>90</sup> In 2018 alone, Senator Menendez received \$550,000 in funding from pro-Israel groups and individuals.<sup>91</sup> Additionally, a former president of AIPAC, David Steiner, contributed to Senator Menendez's legal fund, which was used to help address legal costs related to a corruption investigation.<sup>92</sup>

Other members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations also received considerable funding from the pro-Israel lobby. Majority member John Barrasso received \$117,000 from the pro-Israel in 2018 and \$217,000 in his entire career; Senator Rob Portman received over \$330,000; Senator Todd Young received \$209,000; Senator Ted Cruz received over \$800,000; Senator Ben Cardin received \$916,000;

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<sup>88</sup> Newhouse.

<sup>89</sup> The Center for Responsive Politics is a nonpartisan nonprofit that tracks money in U.S. politics. See <https://www.opensecrets.org>. It is referenced in much of the literature I use.

<sup>90</sup> Center for Responsive Politics, "Pro-Israel: Money to Congress | OpenSecrets."

<sup>91</sup> Center for Responsive Politics.

<sup>92</sup> Alexander Burns, "Senator Menendez's Legal Fund Raised \$431,000 in First Quarter of 2015," *The New York Times*, April 15, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/16/nyregion/senator-robert-menendezs-legal-fund-raised-431000-in-first-quarter-of-2015.html>.



Senator Jeanne Shaheen received \$475,000; Senator Tim Kaine received \$470,000; Senator Jeff Merkley received \$231,000; and Senator Cory Booker received \$445,000.<sup>93</sup> Nearly half of the twenty members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations have received substantial funding from the pro-Israel lobby.<sup>94</sup>

Looking at the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, there is a similar trend. Like the ex-chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Senator Robert Menendez, the chairman of the House Committee on Foreign affairs, Eliot Engel has also received significant funding from the pro-Israel lobby. In his career, he has received over \$1 million from the pro-Israel lobby.<sup>95</sup> Some other members have also received funding: Representative Brad Sherman received almost \$500,000; Representative Theodore Deutch received \$600,000; and Representative Lee Zeldin received \$330,000. While there were fewer members receiving funding from the pro-Israel lobby compared to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the chairman and multiple members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs received substantial funding from the pro-Israel lobby.

Although the reason behind funding specific senators is not explicitly stated; the directing of funds to members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs indicates the focus of the pro-Israel lobby, especially in regard to the Iran Nuclear Deal. In 2016, after Obama entered the Iran

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<sup>93</sup> Center for Responsive Politics, "Pro-Israel: Money to Congress | OpenSecrets."

<sup>94</sup> United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, "Membership | About | United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations," accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/about/membership>.

<sup>95</sup> Center for Responsive Politics, "Pro-Israel: Money to Congress | OpenSecrets."

Nuclear Deal, funding from the pro-Israel lobby jumped from \$12 million to nearly \$15.5 million.<sup>96</sup> While it cannot be shown whether all of these funds were used to inhibit or prevent the Iran Nuclear Deal, there is a correlation between entry into the JCPOA, in 2015, and a subsequent increase in spending by the pro-Israel lobby.

During 2015 there were various attempts to prevent President Obama from dropping economic sanctions against Iran. Normally, the president is given discretion to handle matters concerning foreign policy and diplomacy.<sup>97</sup> However, the Supreme Court has found that there are varying degrees of presidential power. If the president has express congressional approval, he has the most power. If Congress is silent on the issue or does not expressly approve or disapprove, the president must rely on past express powers or constitutional powers. However, this area of presidential power is still a gray area. The lowest form of presidential power is when Congress has expressly disapproved of presidential action.<sup>98</sup> Thus, resolutions of disapproval or approval can affect the discretion given to presidential action.

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<sup>96</sup> Center for Responsive Politics, "Pro-Israel: Long-Term Contribution Trends | OpenSecrets," accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/totals.php?cycle=All&ind=Q05>.

<sup>97</sup> David H. Moore, "Taking Cues from Congress: Judicial Review, Congressional Authorization, and the Expansion of Presidential Power," *Notre Dame Law Review* 90 (2014), <https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/tndl90&id=1069&div=33&collection=journals>.


<sup>98</sup> Moore.

## A Framework for Presidential Power


U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson provided a paradigm for assessing presidential authority.



“When the president acts pursuant to an express or implied authorization of Congress, his authority is at its maximum, for it includes all that he possesses in his own right plus all that Congress can delegate.”



“When the president acts in absence of either a congressional grant or denial of authority, he can only rely upon his own independent powers, but there is a zone of twilight in which he and Congress may have concurrent authority, or in which its distribution is uncertain.”



“When the president takes measures incompatible with the expressed or implied will of Congress, his power is at its lowest ebb.”

**COUNCIL on  
FOREIGN  
RELATIONS**

From: *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company v. Sawyer* (1952)    Credit: Jonathan Masters

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Figure 1: Justice Jackson’s Three Tiers of Presidential Power

The first attempt to prevent the development of an agreement with Iran was the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2015, which was proposed on January 27, 2015. The act would have required President Obama to reach an agreement by June 30, 2015, and

<sup>99</sup> Jonathan Masters, “U.S. Foreign Policy Powers: Congress and the President,” Council on Foreign Relations, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-foreign-policy-powers-congress-and-president>.

present the text of the agreement to Congress within five days after reaching an agreement. If these terms were not met, there would be additional sanctions imposed on Iran.<sup>100</sup> The act was proposed by Representative Mark Kirk who has received nearly \$2.3 million from the conservative pro-Israel lobby, the most funding received by any Republican.<sup>101</sup> Following his time in Congress, Mark Kirk now serves on the advisory board of United Against Nuclear Iran because of his dedication to supporting sanctions against Iran.<sup>102</sup> The fact that Mark Kirk currently serves on the board of United Against Nuclear Iran demonstrates that he supported the conservative pro-Israel lobby that was opposed to the Iran Nuclear Deal. Ultimately the act was never voted on; however, it did lay the groundwork for future attempts.

Exactly a month later, the Iran Nuclear Review Act of 2015 was proposed. The act was proposed by former chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Bob Corker.<sup>103</sup> Senator Corker has received \$167,000 from the pro-Israel lobby throughout his time in Congress.<sup>104</sup> The act required the executive branch to verify that Iran had not taken any additional steps to further their nuclear weapons program or participated in acts of terrorism against the U.S. or its citizens. Additionally, the act prohibited the president from lifting sanctions against Iran for 60 days.<sup>105</sup> The house unanimously approved the bill and the senate approved the bill with a 98-1 vote.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> "Iran Nuclear Agreement: Legislation."

<sup>101</sup> Center for Responsive Politics, "Pro-Israel: Money to Congress | OpenSecrets."

<sup>102</sup> United Against Nuclear Iran, "Leadership & Staff," accessed May 11, 2019, <https://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/about/leadership>.

<sup>103</sup> "Iran Nuclear Agreement: Legislation."

<sup>104</sup> Center for Responsive Politics, "Pro-Israel: Money to Congress | OpenSecrets."

<sup>105</sup> "Iran Nuclear Agreement: Legislation."

<sup>106</sup> "Iran Nuclear Agreement: Legislation."

Following the 60-day review period, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell proposed an amendment to disapprove of the Iran Nuclear Deal by attaching it to the Hire More Heroes Act of 2015, which was originally proposed in the House.<sup>107</sup> Democrats filibustered the act and the amendment three times and the measure failed by just two votes.<sup>108</sup>

The next day, on September 9, 2015, there were various attempts made to limit the President's ability to lift sanctions against Iran. First, a resolution was proposed in the House asserting that President Obama had not submitted the JCPOA to Congress and, therefore, had violated the Iran Nuclear Agreement Act of 2015.<sup>109</sup> The resolution passed, along party lines, 245-186.<sup>110</sup> Next, the Speaker of the House John Boehner introduced a resolution in the House to approve the JCPOA. The House, a few days later, voted against the resolution of approval 162-269.<sup>111</sup> Even though the Senate was unable to pass a vote of disapproval, the House was unable to pass a resolution approving the deal. Thus, there was no congressional consensus on the JCPOA.

The clearest attempt to undermine the JCPOA was the introduction of a bill on September 9, 2015, in the House that would prevent President Obama from lifting any sanctions against Iran until January 21, 2017.<sup>112</sup> Inauguration day is typically held on January 20th; thus, the purpose was to prevent President Obama from lifting any sanctions on Iran throughout the duration of his final term. The bill was introduced by

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<sup>107</sup> "Iran Nuclear Agreement: Legislation."

<sup>108</sup> "Iran Nuclear Agreement: Legislation."

<sup>109</sup> "Iran Nuclear Agreement: Legislation."

<sup>110</sup> "Iran Nuclear Agreement: Legislation."

<sup>111</sup> "Iran Nuclear Agreement: Legislation."

<sup>112</sup> "Iran Nuclear Agreement: Legislation."

Representative Peter Roskam who has received nearly \$420,000 from the pro-Israel lobby throughout his career.<sup>113</sup> Ultimately, the bill was approved by the House with a vote of 247-186. However, it was successfully filibustered by Democrats in the Senate.

The fact that AIPAC was unable to secure enough votes to ensure a resolution of disapproval was touted as a failure.<sup>114</sup> Some members of Congress felt that AIPAC had overstepped and appeared too partisan in regard to the Iran Nuclear Deal.<sup>115</sup> Part of this sentiment was due to the speech given by Prime Minister Netanyahu in front of Congress in March 2015. Representative Steve Cohen, a House Democrat, said, “Having [Netanyahu] come and try to influence the members of the Congress and lobby against what the president was working on set the tenor....Netanyahu should not get himself involved in American politics in the future, and AIPAC played a stronger hand than they should have.”<sup>116</sup> Netanyahu had spoken at an AIPAC conference the night before and was invited to speak in front of Congress without President Obama’s approval.<sup>117</sup> While AIPAC was not directly involved with organizing the speech, many members of Congress believed that AIPAC was abandoning a bipartisan strategy that had led to its success.<sup>118</sup> Thus, valuable Democrat votes that could have been used to

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<sup>113</sup> Center for Responsive Politics, “Pro-Israel: Money to Congress | OpenSecrets.”

<sup>114</sup> Broder, “How the Iran Nuclear Deal Weakened AIPAC, Washington’s Most Powerful Interest Group”; Karoun Demirjian and Carol Morello, “How AIPAC Lost the Iran Deal Fight,” *The Washington Post*, September 3, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2015/09/03/how-aipac-lost-the-iran-deal-fight/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.bd4848f72258](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2015/09/03/how-aipac-lost-the-iran-deal-fight/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.bd4848f72258).

<sup>115</sup> Demirjian and Morello, “How AIPAC Lost the Iran Deal Fight.”

<sup>116</sup> Demirjian and Morello.

<sup>117</sup> Demirjian and Morello.

<sup>118</sup> Demirjian and Morello.

inhibit the Iran Nuclear Deal were lost due to the increasingly partisan nature of AIPAC.

Even though the attempts to prevent President Obama from lifting sanctions against Iran ultimately did not succeed, there was still no express approval or disapproval by Congress. The lack of a Congressional approval or disapproval, considering Justice Jackson's categories of presidential power, meant that President Obama fell into the second tier of presidential power. Thus, he could not rely on express Congressional approval to justify his actions. Instead he had to rely on past power that had been delegated to him and the Constitutional powers the president holds under Article III of the Constitution. Ultimately, President Obama relied on prior legislation that granted the president limited power to impose and drop sanctions against foreign countries.<sup>119</sup> Also, Congress's decision to neither approve the deal nor disapprove of the deal left the door open for future presidents to take unilateral action concerning the Iran Nuclear Deal.

#### *Convincing President Trump to leave the deal*

The alternative method to stop the Iran Nuclear Deal was to persuade President Trump to leave the deal. President Trump could unilaterally decide to leave the deal as long as Congress did not take action to enact the terms of the deal domestically. Because

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<sup>119</sup> Barack Obama, "Executive Order -- Revocation of Executive Orders 13574, 13590, 13622, and 13645 with Respect to Iran, Amendment of Executive Order 13628 with Respect to Iran, and Provision of Implementation Authorities for Aspects of Certain Statutory Sanctions" (2016), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/01/16/executive-order-revocation-of-executive-orders-with-respect-to-iran>.

Congress had neither approved nor disapproved of the deal, President Trump had enough power to leave the deal unilaterally.

Much of President Trump's campaign funding came from members of the pro-Israel lobby who were opposed to the Iran Nuclear Deal. The top contributor to President Trump's campaign, Renaissance Technologies, donated \$15.5 million to his campaign and PACs.<sup>120</sup> Until recently, Renaissance Technologies was run by billionaire Robert Mercer. Mercer was opposed to the Iran Nuclear Deal and even directed an additional \$2 million to the John Bolton Super PAC, which promotes hawkish foreign policy.<sup>121</sup>

In addition to Mercer, Sheldon Adelson is another billionaire contributor who is opposed to the Iran Nuclear Deal. Adelson contributed \$5 million to President Trump's inaugural committee, which was the largest individual donation ever made to a presidential inaugural committee.<sup>122</sup> Adelson was also the second-highest spender during the 2016 federal elections. He donated \$83 million to support Republicans who were running.<sup>123</sup> Not only has Adelson contributed significantly to President Trump and Republican candidates and incumbents, but he is an avid supporter of Israel and a

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<sup>120</sup> "Top Contributors, Federal Election Data for Donald Trump, 2016 Cycle," Center for Responsive Politics, accessed May 15, 2019, <https://www.opensecrets.org/pres16/contributors?id=N00023864>.

<sup>121</sup> Callahan, "The Super-Rich Have Found a New Way to Wield Political Power: Philanthropy."

<sup>122</sup> Megan Janetsky, "President Trump's Top Donors: Where Are They Now?," *Center for Responsive Politics*, January 18, 2018, <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2018/01/trump-donors-1-year-later/>.

<sup>123</sup> "Top Individual Contributors: All Federal Contributions," Center for Responsive Politics, accessed May 15, 2019, <https://www.opensecrets.org/overview/topindivs.php?view=fc&cycle=2016>.



foreign policy hawk.<sup>124</sup> He has been especially hawkish in regard to the Iranian nuclear program. At a talk in 2013, Adelson said diplomacy to stop Iran's nuclear program would be ineffective. Instead, the U.S. should fire a warning shot, in the form of a nuclear missile, in a sparsely populated part of Iran to show Iran that the U.S. meant business.<sup>125</sup>

Due to his policy stances, Adelson has been actively involved in the pro-Israel lobby. He has spent \$100 million to support trips by young Jewish Americans to Israel, supported groups that oppose the BDS movement, and even paid for a new headquarters for AIPAC.<sup>126</sup> Additionally, Adelson provided \$500,000 to United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI) to help fight the Iran Nuclear Deal with a multimillion-dollar ad campaign.<sup>127</sup> His contribution was nearly one-third of the entire UANI budget.<sup>128</sup>

Many of President Trump's foreign policy decisions have paralleled Adelson's views; specifically, the appointment of John Bolton as National Security Advisor, moving the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, and the decision to leave the Iran

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<sup>124</sup> Kenneth P. Vogel, "Meet the Members of the 'Shadow N.S.C.' Advising John Bolton," *The New York Times*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/21/us/politics/advising-bolton-a-shadow-nsc-of-cronies.html>.

<sup>125</sup> Connor Simpson, "Sheldon Adelson Has an Idea: Lob a Nuclear Bomb into the Iranian Desert," *The Atlantic*, October 23, 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/10/sheldon-adelson-has-idea-lob-nuclear-bomb-iranian-desert/309657/>.

<sup>126</sup> Chris McGreal, "Sheldon Adelson: The Casino Mogul Driving Trump's Middle East Policy," *The Guardian*, June 8, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jun/08/sheldon-adelson-trump-middle-east-policy>.

<sup>127</sup> Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal: Bombs, Bureaucrats, and Billionaires*, 91.

<sup>128</sup> Jett, 91.

Nuclear Deal.<sup>129</sup> Adelson even held a private meeting with President Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, and John Bolton just one day after President Trump announced he would exit the Iran Nuclear Deal.<sup>130</sup> Generally, President Trump has aligned himself with the conservative pro-Israel lobby that is opposed to the Iran Nuclear Deal. His allegiance was made apparent early in his candidacy during a speech to AIPAC in March of 2016. Early in his speech, President Trump said, “My number-one priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran.”<sup>131</sup> He continued by criticizing the structure of the deal and the danger imposed by allowing sanctions to be dropped against Iran.<sup>132</sup> President Trump wanted to make his intentions clear and make a case for receiving support from the pro-Israel lobby opposed to the Iran Nuclear Deal.

Thanks in part to Sheldon Adelson, National Security Advisor John Bolton is now one of President Trump’s most important foreign policy advisors.<sup>133</sup> Initially, President Trump passed over John Bolton and instead chose General H.R. McMaster to be his National Security Advisor. President Trump, an isolationist, felt that John Bolton was too hawkish and decided McMaster would appear more professional. However, McMaster was not as friendly to Israel and often dodged questions about Israeli security.<sup>134</sup> Also, McMaster had convinced President Trump on multiple occasions to

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<sup>129</sup> McGreal, “Sheldon Adelson: The Casino Mogul Driving Trump’s Middle East Policy.”

<sup>130</sup> Vogel, “Meet the Members of the ‘Shadow N.S.C.’ Advising John Bolton.”

<sup>131</sup> Sarah Begley, “Read Donald Trump’s Speech to AIPAC,” *Time*, March 2016.

<sup>132</sup> Begley.

<sup>133</sup> Vogel, “Meet the Members of the ‘Shadow N.S.C.’ Advising John Bolton.”

<sup>134</sup> Dexter Filkins, “John Bolton on the Warpath,” *The New Yorker*, April 29, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/05/06/john-bolton-on-the-warpath>.

remain in the Iran Nuclear Deal.<sup>135</sup> Bolton, on the other hand, wholeheartedly supported Israel and its security in the Middle East. Because of McMaster's perceived hostility to Israel, the head of the Zionist Organization of America, Mort Klein, and Adelson teamed up to try and replace McMaster. Klein said, "We were pushing for [McMaster] to be fired."<sup>136</sup> President Trump proceeded to fire McMaster and replace him with John Bolton, despite President Trump's previous inhibitions.<sup>137</sup> The decision to fire McMaster and replace him with John Bolton was due, in part, to the influence by key members of the pro-Israel lobby opposed to the Iran Nuclear Deal.

Bolton has been openly opposed to the Iranian regime for many years.<sup>138</sup> He has even regularly advocated for active regime change led by the U.S.<sup>139</sup> However, one of the primary reasons behind John Bolton's hatred of the Iranian regime is their nuclear weapons program. When asked about his focus on Iran as an enemy to the United States, Bolton said, "I care about Iran because I care about nuclear weapons."<sup>140</sup> Bolton has been fervently opposed to the Iran Nuclear Deal since its conception and has called the deal "execrable."<sup>141</sup> Just one month after Bolton became National Security Advisor,

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<sup>135</sup> Mark Landler, David E. Sanger, and Gardiner Harris, "Rewrite Iran Deal? Europeans Offer a Different Solution: A New Chapter," *The New York Times*, February 26, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/26/us/politics/trump-europe-iran-deal.html>.

<sup>136</sup> Filkens, "John Bolton on the Warpath."

<sup>137</sup> Filkens.

<sup>138</sup> Michele Kelemen and Jessica Taylor, "Bolton Brings Hawkish Perspective To North Korea, Iran Strategy," *NPR*, March 22, 2018.

<sup>139</sup> John R. Bolton, "To Stop Iran's Bombs, Bomb Iran," *New York Times*, March 26, 2015.

<sup>140</sup> Filkens, "John Bolton on the Warpath."

<sup>141</sup> Filkens.

President Trump announced that it would leave the Iran Nuclear Deal.<sup>142</sup> A framed copy of President Trump's executive order announcing to leave the Iran Nuclear Deal hangs in John Bolton's office, a trophy of Bolton's success.<sup>143</sup>

The combination of external and internal influence was enough to persuade President Trump to leave the Iran Nuclear Deal. Campaign donations and funding set President Trump on a path towards appeasing the pro-Israel lobby by exiting the Iran Nuclear Deal. But, the nail in the coffin was replacing General H.R. McMaster with John Bolton as National Security Advisor, all but ensuring the fate of the Iran Nuclear Deal.

### **Stalling the Iran Nuclear Deal until it could be stopped**

The pro-Israel lobby through its spending in Congress was able to stall domestic action and prevent explicit congressional approval of the Iran Nuclear Deal long enough to allow President Trump to unilaterally leave the deal. While President Trump had the final say in the demise of the Iran Nuclear Deal, the pro-Israel lobby was able to exert its influence over domestic politics until a president could be persuaded to leave the deal. Following the end of the Iran Nuclear Deal there still remains uncertainty around nuclear weapons and Iran; however, one factor remains constant: the presence of the pro-Israel lobby in U.S. foreign policy.

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<sup>142</sup> Mark Landler, "Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned," *The New York Times*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html>.

<sup>143</sup> Filkens, "John Bolton on the Warpath."

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