



Israel-Lobby and U.S Foreign Policy toward Israeli –Palestinian Conflict during Obama's Presidential Term 2009 – 2017

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This paper considers the course of the peace agreement based on Two-State solution relevant from Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and predicated on the principle of “land for peace.” By 1993 the Israelis and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) had signed an interim peace agreement on the White House lawn called the Oslo agreement, the peace agreement designed to partition this territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea into two independent states, Israel and Palestine. It is proposed therefore, that the basic Idea of this agreement basis on the Two-State solution has been held up by the international community as the only realistic deal to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is based on the existence of two separate States, Israel and Palestine. Given the major obstacles of final status issues agreements, for example, the right of return for the Palestinian Refugees, to the Israeli Settlements, Jerusalem and the borders, have meant reaching agreement between the two parties has been very problematic, despite all the efforts of the Obama administration. However, this paper argues that among all these obstacles to peace, the negative role of Israel-lobby led by AIPAC is the main cause of the collapse of the peace process. In this light, the two-state solution will never be realised unless there is a real change in the Israel-lobby position.

Key words: *Israel-lobby, AIPAC, Obama, Tow-State Solution.*



Introduction

The closest relationship between the U.S. and Israel has been one of the most salient features in U.S. foreign policy for nearly three and a half decades. In the U.S and around the world, many are questioning why Washington has maintained its large-scale military, financial, and diplomatic support for the Israel, with little interrogation in Congress about such strong bipartisan support for Israel (Zunes, 2002). Based on this warm embrace, Abdollahi (2016, P: 262) refers to, the foreign policy of the United States as the strategies chosen to protect national interest and to achieve goals towards international relations. Several internal and external factors contribute towards shaping the foreign policy to achieve the required outcomes. U.S foreign policy is not an exception and is discussed in the Middle East, predominantly in context of “Israel-lobby.” In this context, most non-Americans, and some non-Jewish Americans, attribute Israel's pride of place to the impact of Jewish political activism and campaign contributions and to the extraordinarily effective efforts of the so-called "Israel-Lobby" in Washington, led by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). At a time in U.S political history when both organized interest groups of many varieties and insatiable demands for campaign funds have an outsized effect on American politics, no one can ignore the role they play in U.S-Israeli relations. (Lewis, 1999, P: 365). Yet, the term “Israel-lobby”, as labelled by Mearsheimer and Walt in the book bearing the same title, is usually a brief term for defining the alliance of organizations and individuals that work to transform the foreign policy of U.S in a pro-Israel direction where the activities of interest-group are consistent and aligned with the U.S political strategies (Mearsheimer& Walt, 2006, P: 13).

In this paper we argue that currently we are witnessing an everlasting stalemate due to the Israel-lobby stance and its continuous support of the extreme position of Israeli right-wing government - Likud party, meaning that the influence of the Israel-lobby led by AIPAC on U.S foreign policy prevented the U.S from applying the necessary pressure on Israel to achieve solution, which lead to the death of the two-state solution. Meanwhile, some arguments suggest that the key to solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict perhaps is not in Palestine nor Israel, but in the U.S because it is the only superpower in the world that has enough leverage at its disposal to pressure Israel into accepting a Two-State solution.

In the midst of peace process many experts argue that, no President entered the White House with a more nuanced understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian issue or such boundless confidence in his ability to resolve the conflict than did Barack Obama in 2009.



Obama Strategic Vision

“I will “not waste a minute” in tackling the Middle East conflict if elected President”

These words, spoken by President Barack Obama after meeting the Palestinian president Abbas, in Ramallah, on 23Jul. 2008 (Tran, 2008) and indeed, on only his second full day in office, attest to the president’s vow to actively and aggressively seek a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. For this reason, he appointed George Mitchell as his special envoy for Middle East Peace (MacAskill, 2009). In this regard, Dennis Ross’ - Former Obama adviser - assertion that “Obama made a deliberate, strategic decision to add daylight on the relationship between U.S and Israel (Goldberg, 2015; Abdulkarim et al 2017) is evidenced.

With a New Paradigm of U.S policy established on 21 June 2009, the first day of Obama’s office, Robert Gibbs a spokesman from White House stated that President Obama contacted four leaders in the Middle East via phone calls. The first leader contacted by Obama was President Abbas. On his first day he used the opportunity to show commitment to probe the peace process between Israel and Palestine and expressed his hope for continued leadership and cooperation (Farley, 2009). On the other hand, on all fronts the first term was begun with optimism and boldness by President Obama, with no exception to the Middle East. In his speech in Cairo University, 4 June, 2009 Barrack Obama spoke even more strongly about turning the dream of peace into a reality and America’s role in any future negotiations, stating that:

“It is undeniable that the Palestinian people -Muslims and Christians - have suffered in pursuit of a homeland. For more than 60 years they've endured the pain of dislocation. Many wait in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighbouring lands for a life of peace and security that they have never been able to lead. They endure the daily humiliations -large and small that come with occupation. So let there be no doubt: The situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. And America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own.”

According to obama white house .archives website

At the same time, with respect to Israeli settlements, on May 27, 2009, Mrs Hillary Clinton - U.S Secretary of State during Obama’s first presidential term - emphatically and unambiguously demanded that the Israeli government put a halt to Israeli settlements. She said, president Obama wants to see a stop to settlements-not some settlements, not outposts, not natural growth exceptions. We think it is in the best interests of the effort that we are engaged in that cease of settlement expansion. That is our position. That is what we have



communicated very clearly, not only to the Israelis but to the Palestinians and others. And we intend to press that point. *According to state.gov/secretary Website*. Similarly, With respect to borders, Mr Kerry - U.S Secretary of State during the second presidential term- stated that, it was the 1967 resolution of UN Security Council 242 that would be the only basis for resolving the conflict. According to this resolution, Israel would have to withdraw from the occupation of territories and also have to remove its forces from the conflicted areas (Pollak, 2016).

As Obama prepared to modify U.S positions, Allin and Simon (2010, P: 142,143) offered the position analysis, the following premise with regard to the imperative behind President Obama's June 2009 speech in Cairo, which was that the U.S through words and deeds, can recast its position on the Palestine issue. Immense hopes were raised by that speech. In addition, Obama repudiated what had been seen as an excessively acquiescent American policy in the Bush administration towards Israel. This is what the Obama settlements demand was all about. In fact, the Obama administration saw a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the cornerstone of its evolving Middle East strategy. Some important initiatives were taken to highlight these intentions. Along with Senator Mitchell, a team of experienced members was appointed by Obama as representatives for peace in the Middle East. The team worked by engaging Middle East key players and reviewing existing policies to provide the beginnings for the changing policy of U.S. Moreover, on several occasions there was public repetition of commitment to the two-state solution. After his speech, the creation of state for people of Palestine was directly tied to national security interests for U.S (Katulis, Lynch & Adler, 2009, P: 2).

Thereby, Obama devised a tactic for his negotiation strategies: (1) bring the two sides Israel and the Palestinians to the negotiating table, (2) demand Israel freeze settlement construction, and (3) request, in return that moderate Arabic states make symbolic gestures toward Israel. The Obama administration believed this would achieve two things. First, it would persuade large segments of the Israeli public that peace was imminent. This would motivate the public to pressure their government to assume a more accommodating position that would advance peace. Second, these measures would create a positive atmosphere and make it possible to lead the parties toward a permanent settlement (Shalom, 2017. P: 40).

In moving from words to deeds, in May 2009, President Obama held talks with President Abbas, seeking to revive stalled peace efforts, after that during the meeting, Obama reassured Abbas that he would not step back from pushing Israel to stop the settlements in the West Bank and, also that the U.S stood with the Palestinians on their demand for statehood (Spetalnick, 2009). To further articulate his vision with regard to final status issues, like the Borders of the Two State, on 19 May 2011, President Obama stated that:

“The borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps, so that secure and recognized borders are established for both states”.(Landler& Myers, 2011).

However, Obama’s vision was built based on UN Security Council resolutions 224 in (1967) and 338 in (1973), related to Israeli-Palestinian Conflict to achieve a Two-State solution (Nakhleh, 2016). Hence, it should be noted that, the 1967 Lines refer to the armistice lines before the Six Day War - Between Arabs and Israel- when Israel captured the Gaza Strip from Egypt and the West Bank and East Jerusalem, among other Arab land, expanding its territory beyond the “Green Line” borders delineated by a 1949 armistice between Israel and its Arab neighbors (Friedman, 2011). The following map is from Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, delineated the border according to agreement of Armistice demarcating Lines (1949-1967).

Figure 1. The border according to agreement of Armistice demarcating Lines (1949-1967)



Source: www.mfa.gov.il

However, the other core Issues of final status agreements “Refugees and Jerusalem” were absent. In effect Obama has pre-position regarding those issues, In Jan.2008, Democratic presidential candidate Obama told The Jerusalem Post and other members of the Jewish and Israeli press on a conference call, that Palestinian refugees belong in their own state and do not have a “literal” right of return to Israel. The outline of any such agreement would involve ensuring that Israel remains a Jewish state (Krieger & Lazaroff, 2008). Therefore, President Obama in his speech, on 19May 2011, re-affirmed the position and stated that:



“Negotiations should focus first on the questions of borders and security”.
“I’m aware that these steps alone will not resolve the conflict, because two wrenching and emotional issues will remain: the future of Jerusalem, and the fate of Palestinian refugees,” According to obama white house. Archives Website

Put differently, Deputy Secretary of State Tom Nides said on May 2012, the U.S policy has been consistent for decades, in both Republican and Democratic administrations, the final status issues - including determination of the number or status of refugees -must only be resolved between Israelis and Palestinians in direct negotiations (Rogin, 2012). From Noura Erakat (2018) viewpoint - George Mason University- The U.S administration’s decision was a move in lock-step with the Israel lobby’s policy on Palestinian refugees, as well as other issues, and the U.S rejected allowing refugees to return to their home in order to maintain Israel as demographic majority Jewish.

AIPAC's Hostility for the Oslo Peace Process

Israel-lobby has been an important factor in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades, with considerable political weight in Washington (Averbukh, 2018, P: 51). In this light, the Israel-lobby in the U.S seeks to shape the conflict by influencing U.S politics (Lintl, 2018, P:6) However, in his article published in 2009, Douglas M. Bloomfield - a former legislative director and chief lobbyist for AIPAC- Mr. Bloomfield quotes sources in AIPAC stating that “One of the topics AIPAC won’t want discussed, is how closely it coordinated with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in the 1990s, when he led the Israeli Likud opposition and later when he was prime minister, to impede the Oslo peace process”. “What they don’t want out is that even though they publicly sounded like they were supporting the Oslo process, they were working all the time to undermine it (Sheizaf, 2010; Bloomfield, 2009), The Lending credence to these allegations is former AIPAC executive director Neal Sher, who has been quoted explaining that, “getting AIPAC to support Oslo...“Was like pulling Teeth.”(Bachmutsky, 2013).

From the beginning, there’s this, Hauser (2013) highlights, when the Oslo Accords were the newest game in town, AIPAC was outright hostile to Israeli prime minister Rabin’s efforts, and actively worked to undermine them. Averbukh (2018, P: 53) notes that, AIPAC sought to generate political pressure using their own means and questionable methods. They fund national-religious media campaigns against negotiations with the Palestinians and support settlement activities in the West Bank. For example, during the Oslo peace process in the 1990s they founded U.S-based branches of the right-wing nationalist Israeli parties in order to



support the latter's political campaign against Prime Minister Rabin. At the same time, the Israeli right-wing Likud has demonized Rabin to undermine the peace process (Schenker, 2006).

The fatal blow to the peace process, on November 4th 1995, occurred when Israeli Prime Minister Rabin who signed peace agreements with Arafat on the White House lawn, was assassinated by a Right-Wing religious who opposed peace policies (Filkins, 2015). Meanwhile, the Brooklyn /Florida Hecht rabbi said Jewish law permitted such an act a long standing, Hecht made headlines in June when he said at a news conference that by conceding land for peace, Israeli leaders fall into the category of "Moser," or people who betray Jews to gentiles...Rabbi added, such people not only deserve the death penalty, but "should be killed before they can perform the deed," According to jta.org.Website.1995.

The Giant Lobby

AIPAC is one of the most influential lobbying groups in America, and Tanya Hsu (2012) (University of Exeter. UK) notes that no politician can be elected into office without AIPAC's support. No president can take the White House without affirming unbreakable allegiance to Israel, and attendance at the annual AIPAC meeting is mandatory. Once in office every member of Congress is expected to act, vote and defend the state of Israel on almost every issue, or face the consequences. Nevertheless, based on the Council for the National Interest CNI Website - Washington (2019) - AIPAC is the most prominent governmental lobbying organization on behalf of Israel. Fortune Magazine typically rates it as the second most powerful lobby in the U.S. AIPAC frequently writes legislation for members of Congress, which extraordinarily large majorities of both parties typically endorse. It has a \$100 million endowment and annual revenue of about \$60 million and spends about \$2-3 million each year in lobbying Congress. AIPAC's annual conventions are typically a who's who of high government office from both parties pledging their loyalty to Israel. For example, based on the Washington report on Middle East Affairs by Janet McMahon (2010, P: 37) the total of Pro-Israel lobby Contributions in Congressional election campaign 2009-2010 was \$2,254,442 million while the total number Contributions during the period of 1978-2010: Around \$50,104,285 million and the total Number of Recipients during the same period was 2,234 candidates.

Deadly Hostility Prevail Over Principles

President Obama entered the White House more deeply informed about and sympathetic to the Palestinian cause than any incoming president before him. He had attended and spoken at numerous events organized by the Arab-American and Palestinian-American communities, in



which he had numerous contacts, and he had repeatedly criticized American policy, calling for a more even-handed approach toward Israel. Yet if there has been a distinguishing feature of Obama's record on Israel-Palestine, it is that, unlike his recent predecessors, he has not a single achievement to his name (Thrall, 2016). But, when it came to Israel and Palestine, however, Obama appeared to largely embrace a right-wing perspective which appeared to place all the blame for the impasse in the peace process on the Palestinians, rather than the Israelis who are still occupying and colonizing the parts of their country seized by the Israeli army more than 40 years ago (Zunes, 2011).

The Israeli peace activist and politics analyst Uri Avnery, summed up his approach in this way: in an essay entitled "No, I Can't!" (2008), which expressed the bitterness of many peace activists around the world for "a speech that broke all records for obsequiousness and fawning." Avnery goes on to observe the irony of how Obama's: "Dizzying success of Obama in the primaries was entirely due to his promise to bring about a change, to put an end to the rotten practices of Washington and to replace the old cynics with a young, brave person who does not compromise his principles. And lo and behold, the very first thing he does after securing the nomination of his party is to compromise his principles, And how! He ran to the conference of the Israel lobby, AIPAC, and made a speech to 7000 Jewish, that broke all records for obsequiousness and fawning, to accept the obeisance of the entire Washington elite. This is because, the Jewish money speaks, and the Jewish votes are important.

AIPAC Plot Imposes Political Restrictions on Obama

In his book titled "The World as It Is: Inside the Obama White House": A Memoir of the Obama White House, released on 5Jun 2018 by Obama's former deputy national security adviser, Ben Rhodes. Mr Rhodes revealed that, after Obama had given his speech calling Israel for a return to the 1967 lines with mutually agreed upon land swaps, the Israeli premier had used that moment skilfully, to turn the American Jewish establishment against the president. It was the perfect way to mobilize opposition to Obama among the leadership of the American Jewish Community, which had internalized the vision of Israel constantly under attack, the adviser adds, Obama felt frustrating, to watch Netanyahu and AIPAC's machinations inflict political constraints on Obama that made it difficult for him to advocate positions he felt were actually in Israel's long-term interests (Cortellessa, 2018).

Then came the challenge which is the focus here, when Obama made the peace process one of his top first-term priorities, quickly a resistance emerged from Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and other members of the pro-Israel lobby in particular AIPAC (Judis, 2014). During the first meeting between president Obama and Netanyahu on 15May 2009, Obama urged Netanyahu to ending settlement activity (Mitchell& Sachar, 2017). After two hours of



talks at the White House, Netanyahu, declined to endorse Obama's call for a Two-State solution to the conflict. Netanyahu said he wanted “To make clear we do not want to govern the Palestinians,” but he did not mention a Palestinian state as the ultimate goal of talks (Wilson, 2009). Later his spokesman Mark regiv told the press that Israel would not stop settlements activity, and would continue to build (Mitchell& Sachar, 2017, P: 137).

In the same thread, regarding to borders of Two-State based on 1967, Netanyahu also, appeared to outright reject Obama’s call on May 2011 that the boundaries in place on the eve of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war serve as a starting point for negotiations, calling the proposed borders “indefensible” and suggesting that the plan would weaken Israeli security and put Jewish settlers at risk (Warrick& Greenberg, 2011). Netanyahu insisted that a negotiated solution on a border must reroute the Green Line- the border that marked the West Bank before Israel captured in the 1967 war- to include blocs of Israeli settlements built since 1967, and take into consideration Israeli national security (Mitnick, 2011).

On the other hand, after Obama’s statement of border, this demand sparked angry amongst the Israel-lobby and their allied congress members from both sides; Republican and Democratic. The Israel-lobby group has been described by AIPAC as “solidly pro-Israel.” (Tibon, 2019). Then the bombshell came - Josh Block – a former spokesman for AIPAC – rejected this statement, stating that, the mentioning of 1967 borders in this way, at this time, was a major mistake that simply repeated the error made when the White House focused on settlements, this strategic error is manifold, and undermines, not advances, the prospects for peace talks (Rogin, 2011). Further to this he demanded that there be a stop to construction of Israeli Settlements and instantly AIPAC, struck back in a fury, mobilizing Congress members, 328 representatives and 76 senators who politely signed letter addressing president to step back from his demand and stop expressing matters related to Israel in public (Ruebner,2016).

Moreover, according to NBC News report on 20 May 2011, the Democratic president quickly come under fire from Republican critics, who accused him of betraying Israel, the closest U.S ally in the region. Similarly, at the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC dinner, Obama's own political ally, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid challenged him on the border issue. “No one should set premature parameters about borders, about building or about anything else, Based on Fox News and Associated Press reported, 23Dec. 2015.

Five weeks later came the Obama speech in Cairo, based on a report by the Washington Post publish on July 14, 2012, by Scott Wilson, on the first closed meeting between President Obama and the influential Jewish leaders on July13, 2009. To explain his thinking about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the leader of Israel-lobby Malcolm Hoenlein - the executive vice



chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (Cop) - told president Obama, “public disharmony between Israel and the U.S is beneficial to neither” and that differences “should be dealt with directly by the parties.” (Traub, 2009), and based on your statement - freeze the growth of Israeli settlements - “you want Israel to take risks”, While, Obama sought to assure the Jewish leaders that he and his administration understood the nuances of the current issues, Abraham Foxman - a former national director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) – said “We believed from that point that we were in for problems”, (Wilson, 2012). According to Wilson, Foxman, expressed concern that Obama was not being “even handed” when it came to asking for sacrifices from Israel and the Palestinians. Thus, Obama responded: Abe, you are absolutely right, and we will fix everything. It was clear to Israel and its supporters that no matter how powerfully Obama spoke in support of Palestinian rights, there would be no consequences for Israel’s continued violation of those rights. (Ruebner, 2016).

Hence, under the pressure of AIPAC, President Obama stepped back his demand. On February, 2011. He used veto power to UN Security Council resolution that would have declared Israeli settlements in the West Bank illegal (Roth, 2011; Wilson, 2012). In the same thread, the politically hawkish Jews and groups Pro-Israel continuing pounded Obama in news releases. One of Jewish community leader said he had the sense that Obama “took the opportunity to throw Israel under the bus.” Another admitted he had lost faith in the president (Smith, 2011). Immediately, a new dramatic change in the Obama position emerged regarding to the second status issue agreements “Borders”, in his address to AIPAC on 22 May 2011. He clarified further that his reference to the 1967 lines should not have been “taken literally”, by definition it means that the parties themselves – Israelis and Palestinians will negotiate a border that is different than the one that existed on 4 June 1967 (Gold, 2014, P:119). Obama used the AIPAC address to send a numerous messages to both Israel and Israeli-lobby groups inside the U.S. to reassure them of the U.S commitment to Israel's security is “ironclad”, U.S president reemphasized the special relationship between the U.S and Israel, and said his administration “will continue to maintain Israel's qualitative edge.” (Mozgovaya, 2011). Meaning that President Obama bow under the pressure of AIPAC.

Furthermore, on September 2011, when the Palestinians embarked on their campaign for recognition of an independent state in the international arena. (Sherwood, 2011). AIPAC set its machine to work in a more concentrated strategy, buying opposition to statehood in Congress (Cigler et al 2015). It helped persuade four hundred and forty-six members of Congress to co-sponsor resolutions opposing the idea (Bruck, 2014; Abuh, Gabriel & Ogwuche, 2017). Meanwhile, groups of American Jewish, Israel supporters and AIPAC jointly worked to reduce the number of votes in favour of the resolution to recognize Palestine as an independent state (Stone, 2011). Under pressure from the ultranationalist



Israel-Lobby, President Obama taken a position to support the non-recognition of a Palestinian State (Nagan & Haddad, 2012, P: 380). Thus, the bid to join the international body as a full member state failed because of a lack of support in the UNSC. President Obama promised to exercise veto power in the UNSC (Miller, 2011). Moreover, Israel Lobby's power succeeded in passing House Resolution 268 and Senate Resolution 185, essentially authored by AIPAC reaffirmed Congress opposition to the statehood bid and threatened to cut \$550 million annually in aid to the Palestinian authority (PA). In contrast AIPAC has helped secure \$108 billion of cumulative aid to Israel (Ibid, 2011).

According to an Email interview on 4 March, 2019 with Ron Kampeas - Chief Jewish Telegraphic Agency JTA - Washington bureau, Kampeas points out that, the Israel-lobby led by AIPAC, functions principally through Congress, advocating primarily for defence assistance to Israel, which currently stands at \$3.8 billion a year. AIPAC also lobbies for bills that penalize Israel's opponents, and it lobbies generally for foreign aid, seeing aid as a means of maintaining US influence abroad. This is accomplished through multiple means: AIPAC volunteer activists and its professional staff establish relationships with incumbent lawmakers in their home districts. The volunteer activists will volunteer for the lawmaker's re-election campaigns and donate to it. Several times a year, these activist/donors will visit Washington and have meeting with the lawmaker or her staff. Meanwhile, the AIPAC professionals in Washington advise lawmakers on which bills to advance, and how to write a bill so that it has a good chance of attracting support from both parties. That skill should not be underestimated: Little is more valuable in Congress than being able to say that a bill a lawmaker initiated has passed, as this is extremely rare.

In effect, The Democratic Party cannot liberate itself from AIPAC's influence, However, Any politician who dares to expose AIPAC's influence would incur its wrath (Soros, 2007). At this point, Brzezinski (2013) - President Carter former advisor for national security-revealed that, AIPAC recruited officials from U.S and institutions of research were influential in shaping any peace accord in favour of Israel and extending U.S passivity in Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Therefore, influence of Israel-lobby led by AIPAC on Congress in any matter related to occupation of Israel on lands of Palestinians is undoubted. The same can be seen as legislators in America receive the prime minister of Israel with much warmer greetings as compared to the president of America. Thomas Friedman, a columnist from New York Times, states that Israel lobby paid for and bought these ovations (Plitnick, 2014).

AIPAC and its Influential Tools

There are several strategic tools uses by AIPAC to influence U.S foreign policy to undermine the peace process, including the influence of the Media, Think-Tanks, Monitoring the



Campus, as well as influencing the election campaigns, but, the first and the foremost is influencing Congress members as a decision-makers

“AIPAC influences Congress using Money”

Dem. Rep. Ilhan Omar says (Sullivan & Raju, 2019).

In it, David Ochs, founder of “HaLev association”- which helps send young people to the AIPAC annual conference – said that, without spending money, the pro-Israel lobby isn’t able to enact its agenda. “Congressmen and senators don’t do anything unless you pressure them. They kick the can down the road, unless you pressure them, and the only way to do that is with money,” he explains (Grim, 2019).

Based on Ilhan Omar Tweets, The Guardian examined campaign finance data after Congresswoman Ilhan Omar ignited a controversy with two tweets claiming pro-Israel lobby money influenced American political policy and discourse. The claim led to broad accusations of anti-Semitism from Democrats and Republicans. Finance data was investigated and it was found that the Pro-Israel groups and individuals contributed in total about USD 22 million to US politicians’ campaigns during the 2018 cycle, while, AIPAC makes campaign contributions to candidates, records show it did spend about USD 3.5 million lobbying during the 2018 election cycle. AIPAC has funded the most of the lobby groups, and also is known for funding trips to Israel for freshman lawmakers and senators, as well as states legislators (Perkins, 2019).

That money poured into American politics through a variety of channels, reaching a majority of US politicians. In 2018, money was spent on 269 representatives’ and 57 senators’ campaigns, and given to the Democrats at a two to one ratio, Among the top 2018 recipients were: New Jersey Democrat senator Bob Menendez, \$548,507; Republican Texas senator Ted Cruz, \$352,894; Democratic Ohio senator Sherrod Brown, \$230,342; Democratic Wisconsin senator Tammy Baldwin, \$229,896; and Democratic candidate for Senate in Texas, Beto O’Rourke, who received \$226,690 (according to data available on the Open Secrets site. Top 20 members 2018).

Despite that, it’s difficult to quantify how much money going to political campaigns each election cycle comes from AIPAC members. For example, a prominent AIPAC booster Haim Saban is one of the U.S biggest political donors, having given considerable amounts of money to congressional campaigns and millions to super PACs and other outside groups that spend heavily on elections to support or oppose political candidates. Saban, who funds AIPAC’s semi-annual Saban Leadership Seminar, donated USD 3.3 million to Democratic outside political spending groups during the 2018 election cycle. In the 2016 cycle, Saban and his wife, Cheryl, donated USD 13.8 million to outside political spending groups, while



Republican megadonor Sheldon Adelson and his wife, Miriam, spent USD 123 million on the 2018 midterm elections, all of it benefiting Republicans. Most of that total went to two GOP super PACs (Kotch,2019).

Nevertheless, due to funding of Congressman by Jewish billionaires and tame journalists, perhaps not too surprisingly the U.S government itself has become more firmly in the grasp of the Israel-lobby, as most recently manifested in bills passed by Congress pledging undying love and affection for Netanyahu and all his works. This has been due in large part to the effective lobbying by AIPAC, The congressional love affair with Israel has been accompanied by billions of dollars to Israel per annum plus a de facto commitment to send American soldiers to fight and die for Israel even if Netanyahu starts a war for no reason whatsoever (Giraldi, 2019).

On another note, the Majority of Academic staff¹ interviewed from several Universities (Palestine, Jordan and Malaysia) during the period of 27 Feb to 10 Apr. 2019, confirm that, the American Jewish community is the main source powerful to support Israel-lobby particularly AIPAC, this community is very successful, they have money and they are willing to put that money to their cause, so they influence the voters during election campaigns, and in return, when one of those candidates become a President or congress member, there is a reciprocal expectation with regard to supporting the AIPAC agenda. In this manner, AIPAC succeed in passing draft resolutions to support and protect Israel.

In this context, according to Law Library - American Law and Legal Information- AIPAC staff maintain an active presence in the halls of Congress, attending committee sessions and reviewing legislation that may affect the relationship between the U.S and Israel. AIPAC estimates that it monitors 2,000 hours of congressional hearings annually. Its research staff members analyze periodicals and documents in five different languages, amassing a large archive of information on hundreds of issues, including foreign aid, antiterrorism initiatives, and programs that promote U.S-Israel strategic cooperation. AIPAC staff members also work with key officials in developing legislation and policy, presenting concepts and information that are moved into the legislative process. AIPAC lobbyists hold one thousand meetings

¹ Hasan AL- Bararry - International Relationship School, University of Jordan. Amman 14 Mar.2019

Mohammad Ishtayah - PhD in International Law and PhD in Criminal Law, the Manager of Strategic Studies center - Al-Istiqlal University- Palestine. 10 April, 2019.

Mohammad Mizan Aslam Malaysian research institute strategic (MYRISS) Lecturer at University Malaysia Perlis. Malaysia, Perlis 28 Feb.2019.

Mohd. Kamarulnizam Abdullah, Lecturer at the College of law. Government and international studies (COLGIS). UUM. Utara 27February 2019



annually with congressional offices. Moreover, AIPAC has also maintained congressional support for Israel's position in the Middle East peace process.

AIPAC's influence is also due to its large national membership, which exceeds 100,000 members, this grassroots base allows AIPAC to cultivate relations with congressmen and senators in their local districts, Waxman (2019) assert, after attending the annual pep rally/policy conference of AIPAC, we observers thousands of pro-Israel activists from across the country swarm the U.S. Capitol Hill, energized and armed with talking points they will surely be met with a warm welcome, they will stride through the open doors of congressional offices expecting to find an attentive, sympathetic audience. And with good reason: when it comes to pro-Israel lobbying, AIPAC is second to none. Over all, the so-called Israel lobby has an almost mythic status, Diersing (2013) said, A survey of Capitol Hill aides places it as the most powerful lobbying group and, Support for Israel, is an assumed Prerequisite for any successful Presidential campaign and almost any Congressional candidacy.

However, to understand how this can happen, it is useful to look at Israel-Lobby activism within the U.S Congress, to reveal more details about the strategy of Israel-lobby to influence Capitol Hill to submit AIPAC drafted bills. These details revealed by Jeff Klein (2013) - a writer and speaker on Middle East issues; Ron Kampeas (2018) - the Washington, D.C. bureau chief of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency – And Eli Lake (2017) - a former senior national-security correspondent for The Daily Beast:

First: By this time before AIPAC conference, AIPAC usually has a list of legislative actions or letters to submit drafted bills, when AIPAC ascend to Capitol Hill. However AIPAC prefer reliable members of Congress from both parties like Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Republican, and Sen. Chris Coons, a Democrat to submit bills (Kampeas, 2018).

Second: The attendees of AIPAC conference, just before departing for Washington try to attract co-sponsors from Capitol Hill to support AIPAC bills. Although it does not seem necessary as the majority of the legislators are already eagerly waiting to join them, but still it is done to keep balance for bi-partisan (Klein, 2013). And,

Third: When Israel-lobby ask senators to do something, lawmakers of both parties are happy to oblige. Not just some of them. All of them. On crucial Capitol Hill votes, measures favoured by AIPAC, often pass unopposed (Lake, 2017).

Traditionally. Any other amendment or bills presented in the mid of the year are also presented by AIPAC. (King& Mitnick, 2016). According to a former Senator, Hegel, the Israel-lobby intimidated Congress and did some “dumb things”. Thus, Pat Buchanan once stated that Congress in U.S is an “Israeli-Occupied Territory” and Prime minister of Israel



can bypass the U.S president and in some cases may present the bill directly at Capitol Hill or at conference by AIPAC (Cornwell, 2013).

As stated in an Interview with Saeb Eriakat- Jericho 7 March 2019, regarding the final status negotiation (Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, construction Israeli settlements and the idea of the border based on 1967), Netanyahu want Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, refugees are out of the negotiation table, also the illegal settlements are out of the negotiation table, and Gaza is separate from the west Bank, and there is no recognition of the border based on 1967. In addition, Ashrawi pointed out that, while AIPAC adopts and supports Netanyahu positions, the Israel-lobby attacked Obama, undermined his efforts and insulted him, also Netanyahu humiliated Obama in the white House, he lectured him as cameras rolled after a bilateral White House meeting, when he refused his vision to stop the construction of settlements. She added, there is no other lobby in Washington, not one, that has that kind of power. That was obvious when the Congress invited Netanyahu to participate in a Comprehensive Plan of action without telling the White House, and so on there is many stories explained the weakened of Obama in a confrontation the power of AIPAC (Personal Interview with: Dr Hanan Ashrawi. Ram Allah 4 April 2019).

As a result, no one is surprised that negotiations did not materialize. Despite the statements and all of the efforts, it took both sides long months to enable even the appearance of warming up. On 22 Sep,2009, the meeting between Netanyahu and Abbas was just mainly for a photo-opportunity with President Obama, the negotiations barely progressed past a ceremonial dinner at the White House, and the process quickly collapsed (Rothem, 2014, P: 75).

If the appointment of Mitchell as special envoy for Middle East peace was a profession of objectivity in his first term, Obama dispensed with any pretence of even-handedness in his second term by naming Martin Indyk his special envoy for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. A former researcher at AIPAC, founder of its spin-off think tank, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Clinton administration peace process veteran, and former U.S. ambassador to Israel, Indyk embodied the revolving door between the Israel lobby and U.S. policy-making on Israeli-Palestinian issues that vitiates U.S. claims to be an honest broker (Ruebner, 2016). Finally, but perhaps most importantly, President Obama was seen as the last and best hope for a two-state solution, deeply ironic given how little he accomplished to advance that goal during the term of his office. Not only did he fail to live up to the high expectations he set out at the start of his administration, Obama is on his way to becoming the first U.S. president in more than four decades to break no new political ground in terms of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In fact, his legacy could well be the death of the Two-State solution itself (Elgindy, 2016)



Conclusion

The debate on the influence of Israel-lobby led by AIPAC is posed as the main reason for the undermining of the peace process in the middle east that led to the death of two-state solution. This debate is still open and many scholars present different opinions and useful insights that are valuable. From a sceptic's point of view, the success of any step of the peace process have been difficult to predict because it is impossible for the Israel-lobby to allow it to happen. However, from another point of view, the obstacles are numerous, and the lack of trust and willingness to compromise have prevented the success and implementation of this solution.

This paper focussed on the role of Israel-lobby regarding the Oslo agreement since its beginning, and complications of Obama's position against the two-state solution, and how the lobby influenced congress members to torpedo any efforts by the Obama administration to revive the peace process, despite the fact that peace would have been an advantage for everyone. From our analysis, we conclude that AIPAC is an obstacle to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

However, Obama deserves praise for articulating Palestinian rights more forcefully and cogently than any other president. The quotes and references made throughout this paper show how his discourse undoubtedly reflected changes which made it more permissible to criticize Israel. However, at the same time, Obama merits criticism for woefully falling short in devising any coherent strategy for translating such sentiments into policy changes that would effectuate those rights. Obama's inability to move beyond the realm of rhetorical shifts was most evident in his unwillingness to challenge the Israel lobby led by AIPAC and in his refusal to consider sanctioning Israel for challenge his policy goal of freezing Israeli settlements and acceptance formulation of a two-state solution based on 1967 armistice lines. The result is that AIPAC won, President Obama folded and the Two-State solution is dead.

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