



THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL

Historical Background

- ◆ The United States took a neutral stance after World War I when France and Great Britain divided the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ By the time of World War II, U.S. oil companies and government leaders had begun to view the Middle East as having greater importance.
- ◆ President Truman's advisors held differing views about supporting the creation of a Jewish state, some arguing for and some arguing against the idea.
- ◆ The United Nations proposed a plan in 1947 that would partition the Palestine Mandate into a Jewish state and an Arab state.
- ◆ Israel declared independence effective on May 15, 1948, at 12:00 midnight Jerusalem time.
- ◆ The White House issued a statement recognizing the provisional government of Israel within eleven minutes of the proclamation announcing the existence of Israel.
- ◆ The United States provided neither troops nor arms to Israel during the 1948 War.

The Cold War: The Relationship between the United States and Israel Develops

- ◆ The decline of Great Britain as the protector of the Middle East and the beginning of the Cold War led to an increased role for the United States in relation to Israel.
- ◆ In 1956, Great Britain, France, and Israel sought to drive Gamal Abdul Nasser from power in Egypt in retaliation for Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal. The plan involved Israel invading the Sinai, and French and British troops seizing the canal.
- ◆ The United States intervened, pressuring Great Britain, France, and Israel to abandon the effort.
- ◆ Worried about the possibility of an increased Soviet presence in the region, President Dwight Eisenhower announced the Eisenhower Doctrine, which stated that the United States would support any nation in the Middle East threatened by communism. Arab nationalism was often viewed as being inspired by communism.
- ◆ Israel was seen as a reliable democracy and a bastion of capitalism with strong ties to the Jewish community in the United States.
- ◆ President Lyndon Johnson solidified the alliance between the United States and Israel. During his administration, the United States replaced France as Israel's primary supplier of weapons.
- ◆ After the 1967 War, the flow of aid and weapons from the United States to Israel increased.
- ◆ Over the course of the Cold War, U.S. policy came to focus on maintaining access to the region's oil, limiting the involvement of the Soviet Union, and assuring the security of Israel.

The Relationship between the United States and Israel after the Cold War

- ◆ U. S. policy goals in the Middle East have expanded to include combating terrorism and challenging the development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region. Israel has been treated as an exception to such policies. For example, the United States does not challenge Israel's nuclear weapons capability.
- ◆ Other principles of U.S. foreign policy are also applied selectively in the Middle East. Countries viewed as antagonistic toward the United States are routinely criticized for human rights violations. Yet the U.S. government makes virtually no protest about the second-class status Israel imposes on its Palestinian citizens or about the human rights violations of the occupation.
- ◆ Many people and governments in the Middle East are frustrated by the double standard of the United States that always seems to favor Israel.
- ◆ The United States has used its position and influence at the United Nations, including its veto in the Security Council, to protect Israel from criticisms and actions that challenge Israel's human rights violations.
- ◆ The United States seeks to maintain the role of the sole, or at the least the primary, arbitrator of issues affecting Israel. Even allies of the United States are not normally allowed to play a significant role in the effort to seek peace in the Middle East. For example, the Oslo talks had to be formalized in Washington. The Road Map to Peace put forth by the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations is very much a creation of the United States.
- ◆ Aid to Israel from the United States has some unique aspects, such as waiving the repayment of loans. Israel receives all of its aid in the first thirty days of the fiscal year, unlike other countries that receive aid in three or four installments. Israel often seeks and receives supplemental aid as well.
- ◆ Governments of other countries and the American public are well aware of the depth of the U.S. commitment to Israel. While the United States will occasionally disagree with Israel in public over an issue, that disagreement seldom goes beyond words.





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The Importance of the United States to Israel

- ◆ Since 1976, Israel has been the largest recipient of U.S. aid on an annual basis. Egypt, with a population twelve times that of Israel, is the second largest recipient.
- ◆ From 1948 to 2003, direct U.S. aid to Israel totaled \$89.9 billion. This does not include loan guarantees and cancelled debts.
- ◆ Israel received \$3 billion per year from the United States, divided into \$1.8 billion in military aid and \$1.2 billion in economic assistance, from 1987 to 2000. Supplemental requests often added an additional \$1 to \$2 billion yearly.
- ◆ The total amount of aid has declined slightly since 2000. For fiscal year 2004, Congress authorized approximately \$2.15 billion in military aid, \$477 million in economic aid, \$49.7 million for migrant settlement, \$4.9 million for the Rabin Center for Israel Studies in Tel Aviv, and \$4.9 million for the Center for Human Dignity Museum of Tolerance in Jerusalem.
- ◆ President Bush requested \$2.22 billion in military aid, \$360 million in economic aid, and \$50 million in refugee and migration funds for fiscal year 2005.
- ◆ Aid from the United States equals about 3 percent of Israel's gross domestic product.
- ◆ Israel is required to use 75 percent of the military aid it receives from the United States to purchase weapons and equipment made in the United States. Of the countries in the Middle East, only Israel may purchase the most advanced weapons systems. There is an understanding that the United States will help Israel maintain superiority in military technology and hardware. Israel has often used its weapons against Palestinian civilians despite a U.S. law that prohibits the sale of arms to governments that use them in violation of human rights or international law.
- ◆ Israel can safely assume that it will have the full backing of the United States in the decisions it makes about its own interests and security. Israel is the unique partner of the world's only remaining superpower nation.

Factors Contributing to the Relationship between the United States and Israel

- ◆ The U.S. government's conception of its political, economic, and security interests in the region is the primary factor that has shaped this relationship.
- ◆ The Nazi Holocaust, in which 6 million European Jews and as many or more other Europeans (religious minorities, Roma, homosexuals, and others) were murdered, left many people and nations feeling guilty at having allowed the horror to occur. The United States was among the nations that refused to heed Jewish cries for help before and during the Holocaust. Supporting Israel may be an effort to relieve a national sense of guilt.

- ◆ Politicians in the United States, unwilling to risk losing support from several constituencies, including many Jews and members of certain Christian groups, often vote in Israel's favor on issues related to Israel, the Palestinians, and the Middle East.
- ◆ Israel and its supporters have had great success in using the political system in the United States. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is recognized as one of the few advocacy groups that dominate political action on issues about which they are concerned.
- ◆ Members of the Jewish community in the United States are among the most politically active Americans. Because they work so hard and well on a range of issues in the public arena, their voice is heeded when it comes time to consider policies toward Israel.
- ◆ The stories of ancient Israel create positive images and associations for many Christians in the United States, leading to a predisposition to accept Israel's claim to sovereignty in Israel and the Occupied Territories, even though doing so ignores the nearly 1,900 years in which a Jewish state did not exist. Some fundamentalist Christians believe that only when Israel is restored to the biblical lands will God's final judgment and salvation occur. They view the existence of the present State of Israel as such a restoration.

SOURCES

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