



# Asset or Liability

U.S and Israeli relationship

# Background

- America's commitment to Israel is motivated by morality and ethics
  - the Holocaust, to Western anti-Semitism and to American public apathy before and during World War II that left European Jews to be killed by the Nazis.
- Second, Israel is a democracy with the same values as the United States.
- Third, the United States will never abandon Israel, and will help it keep its military edge over its neighbors.
- Since 2010, arguably earlier, questions as to Israel being a liability or an asset has been asked.

# Asset

- Shared values and moral responsibility remain unshakable foundations of U.S.-Israel relations,"
  - Robert D. Blackwill and Walter B. Slocombe *Israel: A Strategic Asset for the United States.*
- "But the relationship stands equally on an underappreciated third leg: common national interests and collaborative action to advance those interests."

# Asset

- It is to America's advantage to have in Israel an economy that is so closely associated with the USA.
  - innovator in the information and technology field,
  - high-tech medicine, and in
  - green technologies like the electric car.
- The Obama administration made the economic health and well-being of the United States the pillar of its National Security Strategy.
  - Clinton administration, James D. Boyer *Clinton Grand Strategy*

# Asset

- The peace process has been a vehicle for American influence throughout the broad Middle Eastern region.
- An excuse for Arab declarations of friendship with the United States,
  - regardless if Americans remain devoted to Israel.
  - Helped eliminate what might be a zero-sum game

# Asset

- A long list of military-related advantages.
- Israel—through its intelligence, its technology, and the lessons learned from its own experience in counterterrorism and asymmetric warfare
- Israel's unique counterproliferation efforts—destroying nuclear reactors in Iraq (1981) and Syria (2007) Israel's contribution to Western security is greater.
- Bottom line: do a cost-benefit analysis of the U.S. relationship with Israel over the past thirty-plus years and the U.S. relationship with its Arab friends in the Gulf.
  - To secure its interests in the Arab-Israeli arena, the United States has spent about \$100 billion in military and economic assistance to Israel, plus another \$30 billion to Egypt and relatively small amount to other Arab nations.
  - On a state-to-state basis, investment in Israel has paid off in terms of regional stability. pre-2011.

# Reversal

- We had an arms embargo on Israel until Lyndon Johnson 1964.
- In 1973, for reasons of the Cold War, rescues Israel as it battled Egypt.
  - values only to values + (strategic) relationship
- The resulting Arab oil embargo cost the U.S. And also there is all the time we've put into the perpetually ineffectual and now long defunct "peace process."

# Liability

- U.S. domestic partisan politics (2012, 2014)
  - payback ? (1996, 2001, 2005)
- Strategic ally?
  - Turkey (geopolitical ally)
  - Saudi Arabia (U.S. Armed Forces)
  - Bahrain (U.S. navy)



# Liability

- Political costs to the U.S. internationally of having to spend our political capital this way are huge.
- Protecting ally (Israel) from continual and increased international indignation about Israel's behavior
  - grave damage to U.S. global and regional standing.
- Severely impaired U.S. ties with the world's 1.6 billion Muslims not only in the Middle East.
- But it has also cost us much of our followership in international organizations.
  - U.N.

# Liability specifics

- The **conflict foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel.**
- Arab anger over the Palestinian question **limits the strength and depth of U.S. partnerships** with governments and peoples in the AOR and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world.
- Meanwhile, al-Qaeda and other militant groups **exploit that anger** to mobilize support.
- The conflict also gives Iran influence in the Arab world through its clients, Lebanese Hizballah and Hamas.
  - Gen. Petraeus (2010)

# Interests

- Israel and AIPAC have long been pushing the bounds of a relationship: a patron and a supplicant.
- Division of Jewish support and lobby
  - J-Street vs. AIPAC

# Future

- Strength remains in value (special) and security (strategic) strengths.
- Obama and Netanyahu era (2009-2016) showed both sides that other options were available for potential allies in the region.
  - Iran
  - Saudi Arabia
- Dialogue driven (media vs. politicians) and policy orientated.
  - Israeli-Palestinian peace
  - role of U.S. in Middle East = 2050?







# Readings

- Josh Rogan: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/07/21/is-israel-an-asset-or-a-liability-satloff-vs-freeman/>
- Robert Satloff: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/SatloffDebate.pdf>
- Efraim Inbar, "Israel: An Enduring Union," *Journal of International Security Affairs*, No. 11 (Fall 2006), pp. 7-13. [http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim\\_inbar/enduring.pdf](http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim_inbar/enduring.pdf)
- Robert D. Blackwill and Walter B. Slocombe, *Israel: A Strategic Asset for the United States*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Nov. 2011. [http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/Blackwill-Slocombe\\_Report.pdf](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/Blackwill-Slocombe_Report.pdf)
- Israel: Asset or Liability? A Debate on the Value of the US-Israel Relationship, Robert Satloff vs. Chas Freeman," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/SatloffDebate.pdf>
- Anthony Cordesman: <http://csis.org/publication/israel-strategic-liability>
- Dov Waxman, "The Real Problem in US-Israeli Relations," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Spring 2012), pp. 71-87. <http://csis.org/files/publication/twq12springwaxman.pdf>