
Israel and the United States

Six Decades of US-Israeli Relations

Edited by Robert O. Freedman

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ROBERT O. FREEDMAN'S edited volume, *Israel and the United States: Six Decades of U.S.-Israeli Relations*, is a compilation of an interesting assortment of essays by Israeli and American scholars from various fields, contending with different aspects of a complicated and multilayered relationship that comprises not only diplomatic and economic links, but also religious, legal, military and strategic connections as well as common beliefs. The first section of the book articulates the political ties between the United States and Israel since 1948. It contends with U.S.-Israeli diplomatic relations, an enquiry of the progression of the pro-Israeli lobby in the United States, and an analysis of the evolution of U.S. public attitudes toward Israel. David Makovsky's essay, which deals with the U.S. and the Arab-Israeli conflict, emphasizes that the U.S.'s relationship with Israel and the Arab world is not a zero-sum game and that the United States can maintain good ties with both sides. The essay reiterates that Israel has been an asset for the United States rather than a liability, which has been suggested by the likes of John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt. Robert Freedman, in contending with the policies of George Bush and Barack Obama towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, brings to the fore the similarities in their approaches as well as the significant differences, with the former pursuing an episodic approach while the latter has adopted a more continuous line. In his essay on the pro-Israeli lobby in the United States,



Dov Waxman discusses the ruptures and fissures that have emerged within the lobby and concludes that there is no single organization that can persuasively claim to exemplify the vast majority of American Jews; as such, its clout/influence is expected to wane. Amnon Cavari's essay deconstructs the shifting trends in

American support for Israel, contending that a decline in support among college-educated Americans along with an upsurge in support among evangelical Christians could weaken bipartisan backing for Israel.

The second section of the volume explores economic, military, security and legal links between the United States and Israel. It incorporates studies on the evolution of the U.S.-Israeli economic relationship, the influence of military aid and military doctrine, the nuclear threat posed by Iran, and the impact of American jurisprudence on Israeli law. Roby Nathanson and Ron Mandelbaum put forward a detailed analysis of the Free Trade Agreement between the two countries and the numerous bilateral agreements between the United States and Israel, from energy cooperation to research in agricultural complications, predicting a bright future ahead in this sphere. The essay notes that by 2009, Israeli exports to the U.S. were worth more than seven times the amount of military aid that it received from the United States. Stuart A. Cohen elaborates on the comprehensive military association

between the United States and Israel and the resultant dependence on and unquestionable acceptance of the American military doctrine by the Israeli military establishment. He urges the Israeli military to regain its independence of military thought. Steven David unravels the problematic nature of Israeli-Iranian relations, particularly in the context of the situation in the region as a consequence of the revolution in Egypt. In his essay, David explores the possibility of an Israeli attack on Iran and the conditions that could lead to an Iranian nuclear attack on Israel. Pnina Lahav asserts that the Israeli military doctrine is largely influenced by American jurisprudence even though its legal origins were primarily British. Nevertheless, the fundamental difference between the two nations lies in the fact that while the U.S. is a state of its citizens, while is unique in that it is a Jewish and democratic state; however, the United States has perceived the Israeli experience in a different and more empathetic light post-9/11.

The final section of the volume contends with religious and communal issues that affect the U.S.-Israeli relationship. It explores the bond between America's Orthodox Jewish community and the state of Israel, which can be termed as a 'special relationship' between American evangelical Christians and Israel, and the role of the American Jewish peace movement and Israel. Steven Bayne raises a series of critical questions about the future course of Religious Zionism, asking, among other queries, whether Religious Zionists – who are closely linked with American Orthodox Jews – will articulate a humanistic vision that all mankind is created in the image of God, or a binary worldview that divides the world between Jews and others. Neil R. Rubin discusses the evolution of the relationship between American evangelical Christians and Israel. Rubin elaborates upon the split within the evangelical Christian community in terms of its support for Israel

and predicts troubled times ahead for the ties between evangelical Christians and American Jews and for continuing evangelical support for Israel. The concluding chapter of the volume discusses the role of the American Jewish peace movement. Mark Rosenblum and Dan Fleshler are of the opinion that the American Jewish peace movement is most successful when there is an Israeli government that opposes the peace process, dependable Israelis with resilient security credentials advocating peace, genuine Arab interlocutors who are also pursuing peace, and an activist American President willing to nudge both sides towards making an effort at reconciliation.

Robert O. Freedman's edited volume, *Israel and the United States: Six Decades of U.S.-Israeli Relations*, is a comprehensive effort to grasp the various nuances of U.S.-Israeli relations since 1948. It provides for an exhaustive and perceptive set of analyses by well-known specialists that informs and enriches the reader at multiple levels. The volume contends not merely with diplomatic and military connections, but also offers an understanding of the equation between the two allies in the spheres of economics and assistance, the legal system, public sentiments, religious and communal issues, and much more. The collection of essays enables the reader to construe the past, interpret the present and envisage the future of U.S.-Israel relations. The book is important in terms of its timing. The situation in the Middle East today, post-Arab Spring, with sectarian strife in the region taking center stage from the Israel-Palestine conflict, is likely to test the durability of what has been a resilient relationship so far. The supposed Iranian nuclear deal is another significant dynamic that could affect equations between the allies, though apparently, all appears well between the two nations. A careful reading of this in depth study will go a long way in comprehending a relationship which continues to retain its 'individuality.'