

Comparing Foreign Lobbying in the U.S. : Pro-Israel and Pro-Ukraine Advocacy

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Abstract

This paper examines and compares the lobbying activities of Israel and Ukraine in shaping United States foreign policy. Lobbying has become an integral component of democratic governance and is widely recognised as a legitimate means of interest representation in major democracies. In the United States, both the Israel and Ukraine lobbies play significant roles in influencing foreign policy debates, though they differ considerably in their historical development, organisational depth, and strategic approaches. The study analyses these two lobbies by exploring their lobbying strategies, policy outcomes, and structural limitations. It finds that Israel's influence over U.S. policy is longstanding and highly institutionalised, underpinned by strong bipartisan support in Congress, predictable aid frameworks, sophisticated advocacy networks, and deeply embedded political relationships. By contrast, Ukrainian lobbying is relatively recent, gaining prominence particularly after 2022, and relies more heavily on crisis narratives, extensive media engagement, coalition-building, and the mobilisation of emergency legislative measures. Through this comparative analysis, the paper highlights the institutional and strategic differences between the Israel and Ukraine lobbies and assesses their respective capacities to shape U.S. foreign policy. It argues that Ukraine faces greater constraints than Israel in securing sustained military and economic assistance as well as consistent diplomatic backing from the United States. Drawing on think-tank reports, media analyses, scholarly literature, and policy documents, the study investigates the complex processes through which these actors seek to influence legislators, public opinion, and policy outcomes.

Keywords: Advocacy, Ukraine, Lobbying, Israel, Aid Politics

Mearsheimer et al. (2006) argue that the United States has a divided system of government that provides multiple avenues to influence the political process. As a result, interest groups and lobbies can shape policy through various methods, including lobbying elected representatives and members of the executive branch,

making campaign donations, participating in elections, and shaping public opinion. Israel and Ukraine are two among many countries that seek to influence U.S. foreign policy through diverse strategies. Other prominent countries engaged in lobbying efforts include Saudi Arabia, India, Russia, and China.

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Kim et al. (2025) state that Special Interest Groups (SIGs) participate in a wide range of political activities, including supporting, opposing, amending, and monitoring policies. These groups include corporations, labour unions, and advocacy organisations. Foreign lobbies are among the most prominent examples of advocacy groups, assisting different nations in shaping policy decisions in Washington in ways that favour their national interests.

Diplomatic relations between the United States and Israel were established on May 14, 1948, immediately following Israel's declaration of independence. The United States was among the first countries to recognise the newly formed State of Israel. President Harry S. Truman stated:

This government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine, and recognition has been requested by the provisional government thereof. The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de facto authority of the new State of Israel. (Truman Library, 1948).

The U.S.–Israel relationship is grounded in shared democratic values, security interests, and cultural ties. The United States has been Israel's strongest ally, providing extensive military, economic, and diplomatic support. In return, Israel has served as a strategic partner for the United States in West Asia, offering valuable intelligence cooperation and technological collaboration (Firdaus, 2023).

The diplomatic relationship between the United States and Ukraine began after the United States recognised Ukraine's independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. According to the U.S. Department of State (2025), the United States views Ukraine as a key regional strategic partner and recognises its territorial integrity and sovereignty over its land, airspace, and maritime domains. The United States has provided military assistance through mechanisms such as the Presidential Drawdown Authority. It has also engaged in military

equipment sales, supported Ukraine in strengthening border security, conducted joint bilateral military exercises, and delivered broader security assistance. U.S. security initiatives significantly increased following the 2014 annexation of Crimea and further expanded after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The Israel Lobby

The influence of the Israel lobby emerged prominently after the 1967 Arab–Israeli War, when Israel became a central security partner of the United States. Over the decades, organisations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) developed extensive networks of donors, activists, policy experts, and political allies. AIPAC is one of several organisations that aim to strengthen U.S.–Israel relations through sustained lobbying efforts.

According to the U.S. Department of State, one of the key pillars of interdependence between the United States and Israel lies in the realm of security cooperation. The United States has long been a major provider of military assistance to Israel. In 2016, the two countries signed a ten-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) committing \$38 billion in military aid to Israel (2021).

Israel continues to seek the support of the United States to maintain its security architecture. Numerous organisations work to reinforce the bilateral relationship, with AIPAC being the most prominent among them.

Lobbying Strategies

According to Washington Morning (2025), Israel influences U.S. politics through multiple channels. AIPAC remains the most prominent and influential lobbying group, but other mechanisms also play significant roles. These include substantial political contributions amounting to millions of dollars from donors, the involvement of think tanks and research institutes, strategic media and public relations campaigns, strong congressional support, and the mobilisation of Jewish

American associations.

One of the most significant indicators of the durability of the Israel lobby's influence is the ten-year military aid Memorandum of Understanding, which guarantees stable, multi-billion-dollar support irrespective of which administration is in power. This predictable and institutionalised aid framework contrasts with the supplemental and emergency aid model largely applied to Ukraine (U.S. Department of State, 2025).

Policy Outcomes and Limits

The U.S. Department of State (2025) reports that Washington has delivered \$3.4 billion in funding for missile defence systems, including \$1.3 billion for Iron Dome support beginning in 2011. Since 1992, the United States has provided \$6.6 billion worth of military equipment to Israel. Furthermore, Israel has been designated as a "Major Non-NATO Ally" of the United States under U.S. legislation.

Compared to Ukraine, Israel faces relatively fewer policy limitations. While Israeli advocacy is deeply institutionalised and longstanding, Ukrainian lobbying is more recent and gained significant momentum only after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Pro-Ukraine Advocacy

Before 2022, Ukraine's lobbying presence in the United States was relatively fragmented. However, Russia's full-scale invasion created an immediate moral and geopolitical crisis. In response, Ukraine undertook unprecedented efforts to influence U.S. policy (Mathews, 2022). The pro-Ukraine advocacy ecosystem includes Ukrainian government lobbyists, diaspora organisations, human rights NGOs, national security think tanks, advocacy groups formed after 2022, and defence industry stakeholders. Unlike the Israel lobby, these actors had not previously functioned as a cohesive coalition but rapidly coordinated their efforts following the invasion (Hudson, 2024).

Lobbying Strategies

Cohen (2022) highlights Ukraine's strategic use of moral narratives, framing the conflict as democracy versus authoritarianism, emphasising civilian suffering, and portraying the war as an existential threat, to generate urgency for assistance from democratic Western nations.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's direct virtual addresses to the U.S. Congress created powerful symbolic moments that galvanised bipartisan support. Ukraine effectively leveraged extensive news coverage to sustain high levels of public awareness. Humanitarian groups, military representatives, and diaspora organisations coordinated messaging to maximise impact (Hudson, 2024). Influential diaspora organisations in the United States include the American Coalition for Ukraine and the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America.

Cancian (2023) notes that aid to Ukraine also revitalised segments of U.S. defence production, creating institutional and economic incentives within the United States to sustain support.

Policy Outcomes and Limits

Ukraine secured tens of billions of dollars in U.S. assistance, representing one of the fastest mobilisations of American military support for a non-treaty partner in decades. However, following political changes in Washington, support for Ukraine showed signs of fluctuation. Military aid became increasingly debated, and discussions emerged about conditional assistance, including proposals linking aid to access to Ukraine's rare earth mineral resources.

Comparative Analysis

Durability

Israel maintains long-standing relationships with donors, think tanks, and research institutions in the United States. These organisations produce policy research, host events, and provide expertise to lawmakers, thereby shaping legislation and public opinion (Washington

Morning, 2025). Ukraine, in contrast, lacks an equally extensive and institutionalised network of research institutes and policy organisations supporting its cause, relying more heavily on diaspora mobilisation and crisis-driven advocacy.

Crisis Management

According to the U.S. Department of State (2025), the U.S. Congress has approved \$4.65 billion in Foreign Military Financing for Ukraine to date. Meanwhile, the Council on Foreign Relations (2025) reports that Israel is the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign aid since its founding, having received over \$300 billion in total economic and military assistance (adjusted for inflation).

This disparity highlights the structural gap in foreign aid allocation and reflects the long-term, institutionalised commitment of the United States to Israel, in contrast to the more crisis-driven and time-bound support extended to Ukraine.

Media Framing

Israel invests significantly in media and public relations campaigns to shape public opinion and sustain policy support. This includes advertising initiatives, media engagements by Israeli officials (including ambassadors) and advocacy by aligned organisations.

Ukraine was able to generate widespread support in U.S. and European media following the 2022 invasion. However, it does not possess a comparably entrenched presence within the U.S. media and policy ecosystem.

Conclusion

This research provides a comparative analysis of two prominent lobbies influencing U.S. foreign policy. The Israel lobby reflects the strength of organisational depth, institutionalised research networks, established media relationships, and coordinated funding mechanisms. These factors contribute to Israel's position as a durable and stable partner of the United States, particularly in terms of receiving sustained diplomatic and

financial support from bipartisan legislators.

In contrast, pro-Ukraine lobbying has been largely contingent upon external aggression and ongoing conflict, making it more crisis-driven and conditional rather than structurally embedded as a long-term alliance like that of Israel. Ukraine has influenced American legislators through moral narratives, appeals to democratic values, a strong diaspora presence, and high-visibility public diplomacy, including direct virtual addresses to Congress. This study demonstrates the advantages of established, institutionalised networks and stable aid mechanisms in comparison to emergent, crisis-driven advocacy efforts. By examining these differences, the research contributes to existing literature by highlighting the structural dynamics of foreign lobbies in the United States and their varying capacities to shape foreign policy outcomes.

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