

Talking About Israel. The Relationship with Israel is Poison for the United States

By [Philip Giraldi](#)

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A [recent article](#) by Andrew Sullivan in the New York magazine considers how one might discuss the issue of Israel and its powerful domestic lobby without being accused of anti-Semitism. Sullivan is a keen observer of the dynamics of American political power and the article pretty clearly lays out why the relationship with Israel is poison for the United States, but he cautions that words matter and one has to be careful about the packaging surrounding any critique of the Israel Lobby and its American Jewish supporters.

Sullivan begins with:

“Let’s get this out of the way first: Using the phrases ‘all about the Benjamins’ and ‘allegiance to a foreign country’ when referring to the [Israel lobby in D.C.](#), as freshman Democratic [representative Ilhan Omar recently did](#), is anti-Semitic. It should be possible to criticize Washington’s relationship with Israel without deploying crude and freighted language like this.”

And that is precisely where some critics of the Israel-America relationship might have a problem with observers like Sullivan as what for him passes as “crude and freighted” is for others frankness. Okay, “all about the Benjamins” is slang and the implication is that Jewish money is what has corrupted American politics and the media to stifle any honest discussion on Israel-Palestine and to skew U.S. government activity in the Middle East so that it favors [what Israel perceives to be its own interests](#). This process operates right out in the open with Israel-firster Jewish billionaires Sheldon Adelson and Haim Saban respectively serving as principal donors for the Republican and Democratic parties.



From left to right: Haim Saban, Sheldon and Miriam Adelson. Credit: Milsteiff.org

This flood of [pro-Israeli money into foreign policy generation](#) has done incalculable damage to the actual interests of the United States as Sullivan, to his credit, makes clear in his article. The point is that politics in America is all about money and Ilhan Omar was quite right to make that connection. Most congress-critters do not love Israel because they honestly like the hordes of lobbyists that it is able to send their way. In fact, many of them privately complain about the pressure, but they do love the campaign donations and the lucrative sinecure jobs in the financial services industry that come with their retirements. And they also know that if they cross Israeli interests while in office they will soon be unemployed.

And as for the “allegiance to a foreign country,” how else does one describe doing

everything possible to favor a foreign state at the expense of the nation where one lives? Sullivan himself provides ample evidence in his article that the one-way relationship with Israel inflicts major damage on the United States and that the enabling of that process comes from a disciplined and well-funded lobbying effort that operates at all levels of government and also through the media. Is that not allegiance to a foreign country?

After expressing the “thou shalt nots” regarding Israel, Andrew Sullivan pulls no punches in his article, which should be read *in extenso*. He writes “The basic facts are not really in dispute. A very powerful lobby deploys the money and passions of its members to ensure that a foreign country gets very, very special treatment from the U.S.” and then goes on to detail exactly how Israel is a major liability to America. He discusses the \$3.8 billion it receives annually in spite of the fact that it is a wealthy country, its failure to support U.S. foreign policy objectives, its unwillingness to curtail a brutal occupation of the West Bank, its humiliation of President Obama because he entered into an agreement with Iran, and its nearly complete subjugation of Congress, congressional leaders and the White House.

Sullivan fails to mention how Israel also spies on the United States, steals U.S. developed technology and benefits hugely from beneficial trade agreements that kill American jobs. And there are also the “suspected but not proven” issues like Israel’s role in 9/11, its apparent manipulation of Jewish American officials in the Pentagon to start the disastrous 2003 war with Iraq, and its current clandestine agitation for Washington to attack Iran. Jewish billionaires also are the prime sources of “charitable” contributions that feed the illegal settlement outposts on the West Bank populated largely by fundamentalist Jews whose prime mission is to make the lives of their Palestinian neighbors so miserable that they will emigrate. That is sometimes referred to as ethnic cleansing. Jared Kushner, Jason Greenblatt, and David Friedman, the key components of the Trump Administration Middle East “peace” team, are all passionate about Israel and have all supported the illegal settlements. Friedman, in particular, has sought to eliminate the word “occupation” from official U.S. government descriptions of the Israeli activity in Palestinian areas.

Image on the right: Andrew Sullivan. Image credit: [Geoff Livingston/ flickr](#)



And then there is the Israeli predilection to use unarmed Palestinian demonstrators for target practice and to bomb schools and vital infrastructure in Gaza, which once upon a time most Americans would have considered war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Sullivan does mention how Congress is willing to pass legislation to restrict freedom of speech if such speech involves criticism of Israel, noting that the very first bill to come up in the Senate after the recent shutdown was supporting the punishment of those who advocate nonviolent boycotting of Israel. He might have added how Israel’s friends at state and local levels are pushing to rewrite world history texts to eliminate any references to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. And holocaust study is becoming mandatory in many U.S. school systems without any suggestion that the standard narrative might be in large part bogus. And then there are the holocaust museums springing up like mushrooms at the taxpayers’ expense. Is it all driven by money and enabled by the power that money buys to propagandize for Israel? And is it maybe just a bit of allegiance to a foreign country? Yes indeed, thank you, Ilhan Omar, for saying so.

All of this warm and fuzzy feeling about Israel did not happen by magic. By one estimate

there are 600 Christian and Jewish organizations in the United States that have at least part of their agendas the promotion of the relationship with Israel. Christian Zionists are formidable in numbers but the money, as well as the political and media access that drive the so-called Israel Lobby process, is Jewish. The directors and presidents of those organizations meet regularly and discuss what they can do to help Israel. How does one describe such collusion? Some might prefer to call it a conspiracy.

So how should one view the dystopic nature of the relationship with Israel? No one has ever described it better than America's first president George Washington. In his Farewell Address he wrote:

"The nation which indulges towards another a habitual hatred or a habitual fondness is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest...So likewise, a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favorite nation of privileges denied to others which is apt doubly to injure the nation making the concessions; by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained, and by exciting jealousy, ill-will, and a disposition to retaliate, in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld. And it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation), facility to betray or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even with popularity; gilding, with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation."

Andrew Sullivan concludes with some optimism and also a warning, which should be heeded: "Can our current controversy lead to a less inhibited debate? I sure hope so. Will that actually happen? All I can say is that AIPAC will wield all the power it can muster to prevent it." It is, to be sure, [AIPAC versus all decent Americans](#) and one has to hope that this time the voice of the people will be heard in defense of the [actual interests of the United States of America](#) rather than those of Israel.

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Philip M. Girdi is a former CIA counter-terrorism specialist and military intelligence officer who served nineteen years overseas in Turkey, Italy, Germany, and Spain. He was the CIA Chief of Base for the Barcelona Olympics in 1992 and was one of the first Americans to enter Afghanistan in December 2001. Phil is Executive Director of the Council for the National Interest, a Washington-based advocacy group that seeks to encourage and promote a U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East that is consistent with American values and interests. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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