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In the Name of “Israel’s Security”: Retreating US Gives Israel Billions More in Military Funding



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Billions of US tax-payers’ money will continue to be funneled into Israel in the next fiscal year, and for many years in the foreseeable future. Republican and Democratic Senators have recently achieved just that, passing a bill aimed at providing Israel with \$3.3 billion in annual aid.

The Bill, co-sponsored by Democratic Senator, Chris Coons and Republican Senator, Marco Rubio, passed on January 9, only one day after Iran struck US positions in Iraq. Enthusiasm to push the Bill forward was meant as an assurance to Tel Aviv from Washington, that the US is committed to Israel’s security and military superiority in the Middle East.

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Despite a palpable sense of war fatigue among all Americans, regardless of their political leaning, the US continues to sink deeper into Middle East conflicts simply because it is unable – or, perhaps, unwilling – to challenge Israel’s benefactors in all facets of the American government.

The maxim “What’s good for Israel is good for America” continues to reign supreme among Washington’s political elites, despite the fact that such irrational thinking has wrought disasters on the Middle East region, and is finally forcing a hasty and humiliating American retreat.

The latest aid package to Israel will officially put into law a “Memorandum of Understanding” that was reached between the right-wing government of Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu and the Barack Obama administration in 2016. Obama had then offered Israel the largest military aid package in US history.

Senator Rubio explained the passing of the recent Bill in terms of the “unprecedented threats” that are supposedly faced by Israel.

For his part, Senator Coons said that “the events of the past few days,” referring to the US-Iran escalation, were “a stark reminder of the importance of US assistance to Israel’s security.”

Particularly odd in Coons’ statement is the fact that it was not Israel, but US positions in Iraq that were struck by Iranian missiles, themselves a response to the killing of Iranian military commander, Qassem Soleimani.

Yet, the American funding of Israel’s military adventures continues unabated, despite the rapidly changing political reality in the Middle East, and the shifting American role in the region as well.

This further confirms that the blind US support of Israel is not motivated by a centralized American strategy, one that aims at serving US interests. Instead, the unconditional – and, often, self-defeating – American funding of the Israeli war machine is largely linked to domestic US politics and, indeed, the unparalleled power wielded by the pro-Israel lobby in the United States.

According to the public policy research institute of the United States Congress, Congressional Research Center (CRS), between 1946 and 2019 (including the requested funds for 2020) US aid to Israel has exceeded \$142 billion.

The vast majority of this funding – over \$101 billion – went directly to the Israeli military budget, while over \$34 billion and \$7 billion were given to Israel in terms of economic aid and missile defense funding, respectively.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the US no longer possesses a well-defined and centralized strategy in the Middle East, with President Donald Trump changing American priorities from one speech to the next. However, one key phrase that seems consistent in whatever political agenda that is still championed by Washington in the region is “Israel’s security.”

This precarious term seems to be linked to every American action pertaining to the Middle East, as it has for decades under every American administration, without exception. Wars were launched or funded in the name of Israel’s security; human rights were violated on a massive scale; the five-decade – and counting – military occupation of Palestine; the protracted siege on the impoverished Gaza Strip and much more, have all been carried out, defended and sustained in the name of “Israel’s security.”

US aid to Israel continues, despite the fact that all American aid to the Palestinians has been cut off, including the \$300 million of annual US funding to the UN agency responsible for the welfare of Palestinian refugees, UNRWA. The latter, which has provided education, healthcare and shelter for millions of refugees throughout the years is now, bizarrely, seen by both Israel and the US as “an obstacle to peace.”

Inexplicably, Israel receives roughly “one-third of the American foreign-aid budget, even though (it) comprises just .001 percent of the world’s population and already has one of the world’s higher per capita incomes,” wrote Professor Stephen Zunes in the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs.

This massive budget includes much more than the \$3.3 billion of annual funding, but other amounts and perks rarely make headlines. Anywhere between \$500 million to \$800 million are given to Israel every year as part of a missile defense package; approximately, an additional \$1 billion benefits Israel in the form of tax-deductible donations, while \$500 billion are invested in Israeli bonds.

Then there are the loan guarantees, where the US government assumes the responsibility for billions of dollars that Israel can access as a borrower from international creditors. If Israel defaults on its loans, it is the legal responsibility of the US government to offset the interests on the borrowed money.

Starting in 1982, Israel has been receiving US aid as a lump sum, as opposed to scheduled payments as is the case with other countries. To satisfy its obligations to Israel, the US government borrows the money, thus left to pay interest on the loans. Meanwhile, “Israel even lends some of this money back through U.S. treasury bills and collects the additional interest,” Zunes wrote.

US relations with Israel are not governed by the kind of political wisdom that is predicated on mutual benefit. But they are not entirely irrational either, as the American ruling classes have aligned their interests, their perception of the Middle East and their country’s role in that region with that of Israel, thanks to years of media and official indoctrination.

Despite the fact that the US is retreating from the region, lacking strategy and future vision, US lawmakers are congratulating themselves on passing yet another generous aid package to Israel. They feel proud of their great feat, because, in their confused thinking, a ‘secured’ Israel is the only guarantor of US dominance in the Middle East, a theory that has been proven false, time and time again.

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