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# **Trends in US Congressional Support for Israel**

**Amnon Cavari with Elan Nyer**

**Mideast Security and Policy Studies No. 121**

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BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY**

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# Trends in US Congressional Support for Israel

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# Trends in US Congressional Support for Israel

*Amnon Cavari with Elan Nyer*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

American political leaders have supported the “special relationship” between the US and Israel since the earliest days of Israel’s existence. Support for Israel is invariably invoked during presidential campaigns and in party platforms. During their terms in office, US presidents regularly address issues relating to Israel and assert their commitment to Israel’s security.

Despite wide interest in the special relationship, the role of Congress has received relatively little attention, with the focus almost exclusively on appropriations bills. Appropriations are the predominant tool by which Congress exerts its influence and are unquestionably a critical factor in the US-Israeli relationship, but they are an insufficient gauge of underlying congressional attitudes. Appropriations for Israel are often dictated by the president and attached to bills that contain appropriations for other countries.

A better gauge of trends in congressional activity with regard to Israel is the sponsorship of bills and resolutions designed to demonstrate support. This study uses such sponsorship to investigate the direction of congressional activity toward Israel over the past four decades. It addresses four issues: the frequency with which members of Congress show support for Israel through legislative action; the correlation of congressional activity toward Israel with wider trends of congressional activity regarding foreign policy; the ways in which Congress’s use of this tool on Israel’s behalf has changed; and the differences in trends between the House of Representatives and the Senate.

This investigation shows that while congressional support for Israel has historically transcended the partisan divide, the parties are growing less cooperative with regard to the means by which to express that support, a development termed here Congressional Dysergia. At the same time, Congress increasingly views Israel as a topic of great importance that warrants regular discussion. These trends fuel debate about Israel and force the White House to consider congressional responses to the administration’s policy decisions. They also spark tension between the branches, as exhibited in conflicts between the Republican-dominated Congress and President Obama. As long as the cost of support for Israel remains low, the growing partisan divisions are likely to remain muted. That can change, however, if the relationship with Israel becomes perceived as a threat to American security and interests.



# TRENDS IN US CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

*Amnon Cavari with Elan Nyer*

## INTRODUCTION

In March 2013, the Obama administration and the international community were focused on pursuing non-military approaches to the Iranian nuclear threat, including sanctions and diplomatic negotiations. During that month, Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) introduced a resolution to support Israel and “its right to self-defense against the illegal nuclear program by the Islamic Republic of Iran” (H.RES.98). Thirty-four Republicans and one Democrat added their names as cosponsors of the resolution.

This resolution has no policy ramifications. It was never brought to the floor for a vote. Even if it had been voted on and passed, it would have had no direct effect on US policy toward Israel. But by simply proposing the resolution amid tension over the negotiations with Iran and their possible effect on Israel, and by getting 35 additional members to declare their support for it, Representative Gosar demonstrated his and his cosponsors’ commitment to the “special relationship” between the US and Israel.

The special relationship, one of the most solid and stable bilateral relationships in modern global affairs, is supported overwhelmingly by the American political leadership. Ever since the establishment of Israel, American leaders have demonstrated strong support for it — by securing military and economic aid; by intervening during military conflicts; by supporting Israel’s interests on the international stage; and in binational relations during peace negotiations.<sup>1</sup> Israel has become such an important issue that it is regularly invoked during presidential election seasons and in party platforms.<sup>2</sup> While in office, presidents routinely discuss issues relating to Israel in their speeches and

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repeatedly vow to maintain its security as well as the close relationship between the US and Israel. Members of Congress refer to Israel in their campaigns and often demonstrate their support for Israel in legislative actions and public statements.

Over the years, an extensive body of scholarly work has addressed the special relationship. Many of these studies offer historical accounts of the relations between presidents and their administrations and Israeli leaders, or conflicts that have arisen in the relationship.<sup>3</sup> Others assess the underlying nature and sources of the relationship and the extent to which it is in the interests of the US.<sup>4</sup> Still others have focused on military support, the role of interest groups,<sup>5</sup> the role of religious groups,<sup>6</sup> and public opinion.<sup>7</sup>

The role of Congress in the special relationship has received less academic attention, with most such studies focused on the consistently generous congressional appropriation of funds to Israel for economic and military support.<sup>8</sup> It must be remembered, however, that while appropriations are certainly central to the relationship between Israel and the US, they are rarely debated in Congress. Because such bills are often routine and set appropriations to multiple countries at once, they are not a useful tool by which to measure congressional support for Israel. Approval of appropriations is, moreover, easy support to provide, as it requires inaction rather than action: the member need only sign on to a bill that has the imprimatur of the president and is already destined to be passed.

By contrast, the sponsorship of bills and resolutions like H.RES.98, discussed above, are proactive measures. They entail direct action on Israel's behalf, and are therefore more effective signals to members' pro-Israel constituencies than appropriations bills. Pro-Israel bills and resolutions are, for the most part, merely declaratory, but can indicate preferred policy or serve as calls for action. And because they have few policy ramifications, support for them is not dependent on policy calculations.

For these reasons, resolutions are more useful than appropriations bills as indicators of trends in congressional support for Israel.<sup>9</sup> This report

uses resolutions as a means of investigating those trends over the past four decades. Four main questions will be addressed: How often do members of Congress demonstrate their support for Israel through available legislative actions? How do congressional actions toward Israel correlate with general trends of congressional actions in foreign policy? Have there been any changes in the way Congress demonstrates its support for Israel using this legislative tool? And are there differences in trends between the House of Representatives and the Senate?

## **THE ROLE OF CONGRESS IN FOREIGN RELATIONS**

The US Constitution is vague on the respective roles of the president and Congress when it comes to foreign policy. This creates what Corwin refers to as an “invitation to struggle for the privilege of directing foreign policy.”<sup>10</sup> In this struggle, the president has the upper hand, but Congress has several tools with which to exert its influence.

The most powerful of these tools is the power of the purse, which gives Congress the ability to decide which and to what extent countries receive aid and which and to what extent foreign programs are funded. While the president and his staff usually draft appropriations bills, Congress makes all the final decisions. Congress also has the option of strategically grouping together several appropriations bills into one large bill, which forces the president to accept legislative provisions that he would otherwise have been tempted to veto.<sup>11</sup>

Congress also influences foreign policy by raising and supporting armies, establishing naturalization rules, regulating international commerce, and punishing offenses on the high seas.<sup>12</sup> It makes use of symbolic actions as well, such as extending invitations to world leaders, sending congressional delegations on missions abroad, conducting congressional investigations or hearings, and proposing declaratory actions. These actions might not have direct policy ramifications, but they demonstrate that Congress is taking a stand on foreign policy issues and can signal a policy preference to the administration.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, Congress is able to get involved in foreign policy by honoring international guests. One example is the two invitations to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to speak to joint sessions of Congress in May 2011 and March 2015. In the latter instance, Speaker of the House John Boehner invited Netanyahu to speak directly to members of Congress and the American people despite public tension between President Obama and Netanyahu on the nuclear deal with Iran. In so doing, he inserted the conflict between the Republican-controlled Congress and the Democratic administration into Israel-related issues.<sup>14</sup>

Congressional influence over foreign policy shifted considerably after WWII. With the advent of the Cold War, Congress went through a period of compliance and cooperation, on the assumption that the best way to fight communism was to unilaterally cede foreign policy decisions to the executive branch.<sup>15</sup> This executive freedom reached a climax during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, when presidents were making decisions without informing Congress at all. However, as the Cold War dragged on and the US became mired in the Vietnam War, Congress began to reassert itself in international affairs — mainly through appropriations.<sup>16</sup> By the early 1970s, Congress had become increasingly involved in foreign policy. This trend led to the War Powers Act (WPA), which was passed by Congress over Nixon's veto.<sup>17</sup>

The end of the Cold War provided even more of an incentive for Congress to participate in foreign relations, to the extent that during the Clinton administration, the president found himself constrained on many foreign policy issues. Congress forced Clinton to resist initiatives such as the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty and the fight against global warming, while at the same time forcing him to accept other policies despite his objections.<sup>18</sup>

The cyclical nature of congressional involvement in foreign affairs can be discerned in the 2000s. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the sudden urgency of the War on Terror, Congress agreed, just as it had early in the Cold War, to cede powers to the president. The object was to ensure maximum efficiency in fighting terrorism,

finding those responsible for the attacks, and protecting the nation from future attacks. However, as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq grew ever more costly and showed little signs of ending, Congress eventually lost patience and began once again to intervene in foreign policy.

The Congressional-presidential foreign policy “struggle” has played an important role in the special relationship between the US and Israel. Despite the doubts of presidents and their administrations, Congress supported the State of Israel even before its establishment. In July 1945, immediately following WWII, Senator Robert F. Wagner (D-NY) sent President Harry S. Truman a letter, supported by 54 senators and 250 representatives, urging England to allow European Jews to emigrate to Palestine *en masse*.<sup>19</sup>

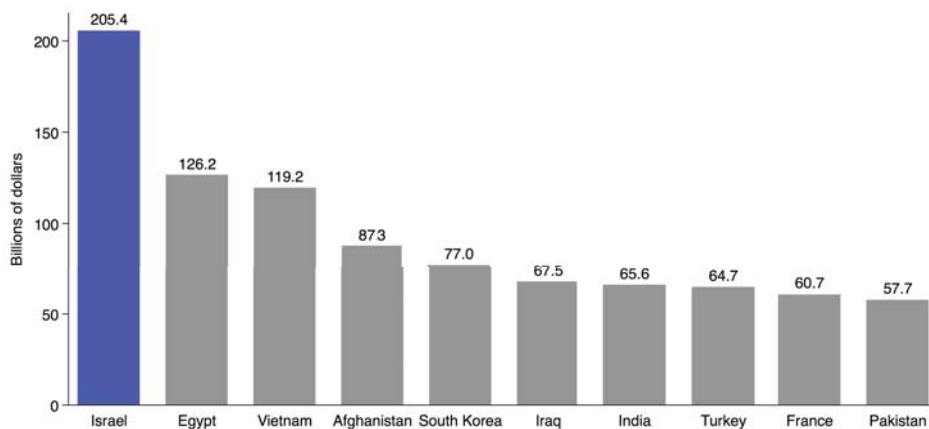
Some of the most intense pressure on Truman came from Democratic leaders who warned that a failure to sanction Zionist goals would cost the party its majority in Congress, if not its hold on the White House.<sup>20</sup> Polls taken in 1947 showed that Americans favored a Jewish state by a ratio of two to one, a preference of which members of Congress were no doubt keenly aware. By exerting pressure on the Jewish state's behalf, those members counterbalanced a suspicious administration, and may well have influenced Truman's ultimate decisions to support the UN partition resolution (Resolution 181 of the General Assembly, November 29, 1947) and recognize the State of Israel as an independent state (May 14, 1948).

Congress soon became very active in expressing its support for Israel through a variety of methods. During the first decades after Israel's independence, Congress consistently supported appropriations bills to aid Israel economically and militarily, and passed resolutions in support of Israel even when this meant acting against the position of the administration. During the 1970s, a handful of scholars examined this consistent support for Israel and the determinants of support among members of Congress. These studies reveal that Congressional support for Israel transcended most political, ideological and demographic differences.<sup>21</sup>

## SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL VIA THE POWER OF THE PURSE

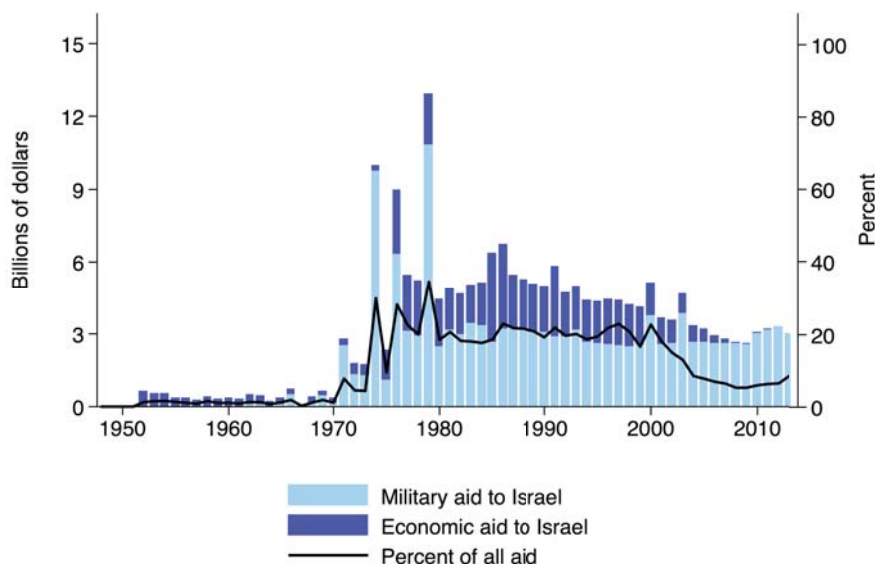
The clearest gauge of congressional support for Israel is foreign appropriations, or the power of the purse. Israel has been the largest recipient of US foreign assistance since WWII, having received \$205 billion from its inception through 2014 (in historical amounts, equivalent to over \$200 billion in inflation-adjusted values).<sup>22</sup> Figure 1 presents the total amount of US foreign assistance among the top ten countries that received assistance between 1948 and 2013 (inflation-adjusted). The next country, Egypt, received in total about 60 percent of the amount Israel received (\$126 billion, inflation adjusted).

**Figure 1: Top Ten Countries to Receive US Foreign Assistance, 1948-2014**



Source: US Overseas Loan and Grants (Greenbook). <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/us-overseas-loans-and-grants-greenbook-usaid-1554> [accessed May 4, 2016]. Bars represent billions of dollars in constant dollars (inflation-adjusted).

Most US aid to Israel is in the form of military assistance, though some is economic. Figure 2 shows the annual amount of US foreign assistance to Israel between 1948 and 2014 (inflation-adjusted), broken down by type of aid (military and economic). The overlaid line is the total amount of aid provided to Israel as a percentage of all US foreign assistance. Appropriations to Israel amount to a large share of US foreign aid, ranging from highs of nearly 40 percent of all aid to about 10 percent in recent years.

**Figure 2: US Foreign Assistance to Israel, 1948-2014**

Source: US Overseas Loan and Grants (Greenbook). <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/us-overseas-loans-and-grants-greenbook-usaid-1554> [accessed May 4, 2016].

The stacked bars reveal that the dominant form of US aid is military. The greatest amounts of military aid were received immediately after the Yom Kippur War (1973) and the Israel-Egypt peace treaty (1979). Since then, annual military funds have stabilized at roughly \$3 billion. Throughout 2009-18, Israel is scheduled to receive \$30 billion for military purposes. In 2016, President Obama's request for Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Israel amounts to 53% of the total FMF requested worldwide, which represents 20% of Israel's overall defense budget. This consistent level of support has allowed Israel to maintain its qualitative edge over its enemies.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, Israel is the only country in the world that is entitled to spend a portion of US aid on domestically manufactured equipment rather than use it solely for the purchase of American equipment. (As of 2016, Israel may spend 26.3% of FMF on equipment manufactured in Israel.) This unique advantage has contributed to Israel's ability to become an exporter of military equipment. It is now one of the top ten military suppliers in the world — including to the US itself.

Apart from military assistance, Israel has also received extensive economic assistance from the US in various forms, though this has declined over time (as can be seen in Figure 2). Economic assistance to Israel has included migration and refugee assistance (\$460 million in 1973-91 and \$559 million in 2000-15); loan guarantees since 2003 that have ranged between \$1.1 billion and \$3.8 billion annually; nearly \$42 million in 2000-14 to Israeli institutions as part of the American Schools and Hospitals Abroad program (the largest such recipient in the Middle East); US-Israeli cooperation in the field of energy totaling \$9.7 million; and various grants for US-Israeli scientific and business cooperation.

The method by which US assistance is transferred to Israel is also significant. While most countries receive US assistance in installments throughout the year, from as far back as 1982, Israel has received its entire allotment in the first month of each fiscal year. In other words, while most countries are required to plan their use of US assistance over the course of a year, Israel can use all its funds at the start of every fiscal year. To accommodate this advantage, the US pays more in interest (\$50-60 million annually) in order to borrow money for the lump sum payment at the beginning of the fiscal year. Economic assistance to Israel thus costs the US more than does assistance to other countries.

Finally, and uniquely in Israel's case, the US transfers economic assistance directly to the government with no requirement of a report on how the money is spent. Israel sends an annual letter describing its payment to the US solely for debt servicing.<sup>24</sup>

## **SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL VIA LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY**

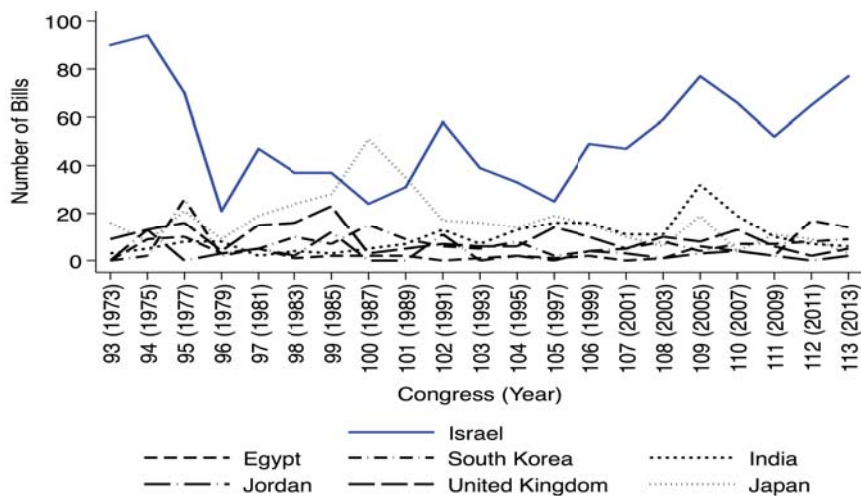
The appropriation of funds by Congress to Israel, while a dominant aspect of the relationship between Israel and the US, does not reflect the full extent of support for Israel among members. Appropriations bills and other actions are contingent on a variety of external factors, such as budget concerns and political agreement between the administration and Congress. By contrast, resolutions — another tool with which members of Congress express their support for Israel — are not constrained by those factors.

Ten days after Operation Opera in June 1981, Israel's military action to destroy the Iraqi nuclear reactor in Osirak, Congress offered a resolution supporting Israel and urging the president to veto any UN condemnation.<sup>25</sup> This attitude was not shared by the Reagan administration, which deplored Israel's action, suspended the delivery of F-16 jets to Israel, and backed a Security Council resolution condemning Israel.<sup>26</sup> In the case of the Turkish flotilla incident in May 2010, Congress was quick to show its support for Israel by offering three resolutions with a total of 113 cosponsors.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, President Obama refused to veto any UN Security Council condemnation regarding the incident.<sup>28</sup>

More recently, during the attempts by President Obama to reach an agreement with Iran about its nuclear program, Congress voiced its support for Israel's right to defend itself against that country, which has made threats against Israel's existence since 1979. On May 22, 2013, the Senate passed a resolution with an overwhelming vote of 99-0 stating that "if the Government of Israel is compelled to take military action in legitimate self-defense against Iran's nuclear weapons program, the US Government should stand with Israel and provide, in accordance with US law and the constitutional responsibility of Congress to authorize the use of military force, diplomatic, military and economic support of the Government of Israel in its defense of its territory, people and existence" (113<sup>th</sup> Congress, S.RES.65).

In order to explore trends in congressional legislative and declaratory actions demonstrating support for Israel in Congress,<sup>29</sup> we examined 938 resolutions, comprised of 601 House resolutions and 337 Senate resolutions.<sup>30</sup> (See Appendix for a detailed description of data collection.) To illustrate the extent of congressional interest in Israel compared to other countries, Figure 3 plots the number of resolutions referring to Israel and six additional countries (using the same search criteria). With the exception of the resolutions that referred to Japan in the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress, Israel received significantly more attention.

**Figure 3: Number of Bills and Resolutions Focused on Selected Countries (per Congress)**



Source: Thomas Electronic Archive, Library of Congress. Available online at [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov). Search terms are name of countries.

We further categorized the Israel-related resolutions into ten subcategories: Boycott, Condemning Adversaries, Friendship, Israel Budget, Jerusalem, Joint Venture, Peace, Pro-Jewish, Support Israel, and Vatican. Table 1 defines and gives examples of these subcategories.

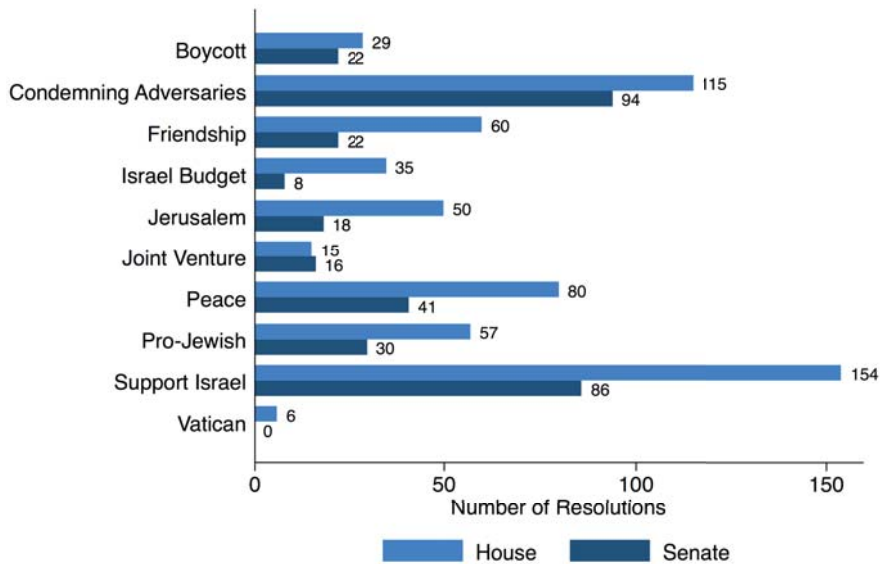
**Table 1: Israel-Related Resolutions**

| <b>Subcategory</b>     | <b>Definition</b>   | <b>Example</b>   |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Boycott                | Resolutions that stand up for Israel in the international community regarding the various boycotts of Israel.   | H.R.2874 (102): "To prohibit the awarding of United States Government contracts to foreign persons that comply with the Arab boycott of Israel."                                       |
| Condemning Adversaries | Resolutions that condemn a state or group engaged in conflict with Israel, blame them for the conflict, and demand that they take the steps needed to end the conflict.   | S.RES.380 (112): "To express the sense of the Senate regarding the importance of preventing the Government of Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability."                         |
| Friendship             | Resolutions that show a friendly connection between the two countries, ranging from the US sending condolences when a prominent member of Israeli society passes away to the US sending a congratulatory letter to Israel for one of its successes.             | H.CON.RES.435 (109): "Congratulating Israel's Magen David Adom Society for achieving full membership in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and for other purposes." |
| Israel Budget          | Resolutions that discuss fiscal matters that pertain specifically to Israel and portray America's financial relationship with Israel. This does not include generic appropriations bills that mention Israel but also deal with a wide variety of other issues. | H.R.5327 (111): "To authorize assistance to Israel for the Iron Dome anti-missile defense system."   |
| Jerusalem              | Resolutions that specifically focus on Jerusalem regarding a variety of issues, such as recognizing it as the capital of Israel or congratulating Israel on the day honoring the reunification of the city.   | S.2508 (100): "A bill to require that the United States Embassy in Israel be located in the city of Jerusalem."  |

| <b>Subcategory</b> | <b>Definition</b>   | <b>Example</b>  |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Joint Ventures     | Resolutions that suggest the creation of joint ventures between America and Israel.   | H.R.2730 (109): "To establish a grant program to fund eligible joint ventures between United States and Israeli businesses and academic persons, to establish the International Energy Advisory Board and for other purposes."  |
| Peace              | Resolutions that call for an end to violence and have Israel and the various peace initiatives as the main topic.   | H.RES.462 (108): "Supporting the vision of Israelis and Palestinians who are working together to conceive pragmatic, serious plans for achieving peace and for other purposes."   |
| Pro-Jewish         | Resolutions that pertain to the connection of international Jews with Israel, and that align with Israel's views and interests. This subcategory includes many resolutions from the Cold War period regarding the status of Jews in the Soviet Union. | H.CON.RES.50 (97): "Expressing the sense of the Congress that the Soviet Union should provide proper medical care for Dr. Viktor Brailovsky and permit him and his family to emigrate to Israel, urging the President to protest the continued suppression of human rights in the Soviet Union and for other purposes." |
| Support Israel     | Resolutions that demonstrate broad support for Israel in the international community and express America's close relationship with and support for Israel.  | S.RES.138 (112): "Calling on the United Nations to rescind the Goldstone report and for other purposes."  |
| Vatican            | Resolutions urging the Vatican to begin diplomatic relations with Israel.   | H.CON.RES.108 (101): "Expressing the sense of the Congress that the Vatican should recognize the State of Israel and should establish diplomatic relations with that country."  |

Figure 4 summarizes the resolutions by plotting the relative frequency of each. The category “Support Israel”, which includes broad statements of support, is the largest. The second-largest category, “Condemning Adversaries”, is sporadic, with large numbers of resolutions during times of tension and a small number, if any, during calm periods. The number of resolutions falling under this category has increased significantly in recent years, as Congress has begun frequently condemning Iran’s efforts to develop nuclear weapons. These two subcategories are closely tied to current events and demonstrate the strong connection between the US and Israel. Other resolutions are more specific, such as the ones expressing the commitment to peace in the region or support for recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

**Figure 4: Total Number of Resolutions in Each Subcategory of Israel-Related Resolutions from 93<sup>rd</sup> Through 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-2013)**



Source: Thomas Electronic Archive, Library of Congress. Available online at [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov). See Appendix for detailed description of data collection.

The rich data — spanning four decades — enable us to assess the development of the relationship, compare congressional actions toward Israel with congressional involvement in foreign policy, and examine trends in partisan support.<sup>31</sup>

## **TRENDS IN CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITY TOWARD ISRAEL**

Our analysis, divided into three parts, demonstrates related trends:

1. Congressional attention to Israel began to increase at the end of the Cold War and rose particularly sharply in the aftermath of 9/11 due to the American shift of interest toward the Middle East.
2. Congressional activity toward Israel follows general patterns of congressional involvement in foreign affairs.
3. Starting from the late 1990s and especially in more recent years, the growing divide between the parties is manifested in a growing partisan divide in congressional activity toward Israel.

### ***1. A Shifting Focus Toward the Middle East***

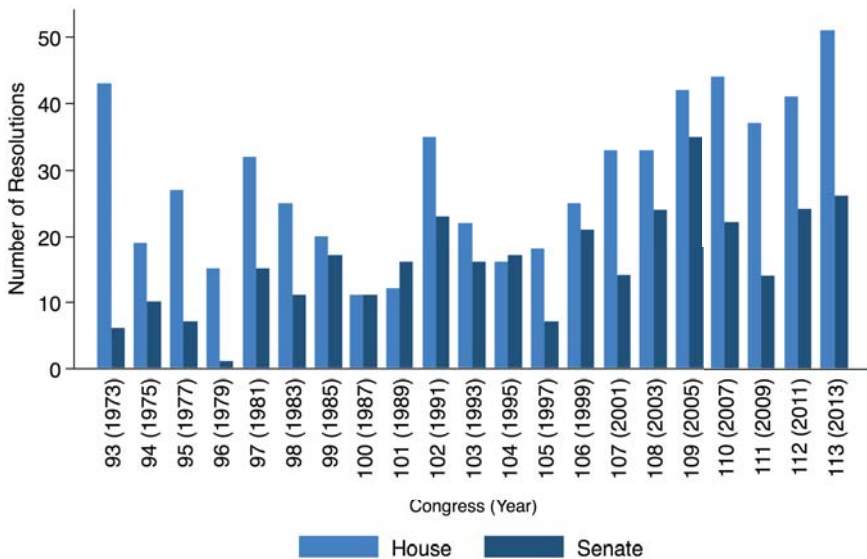
The Middle East has been a concern in American foreign policy since the end of WWII due to its energy resources and Soviet involvement in the region. That concern became urgent during the war of 1973 (the Yom Kippur War), when Soviet arms transfers and training programs to Syria and Egypt turned the region into an active battlefield in the Cold War.<sup>32</sup> The rise of terrorist threats and the instability of some of the Muslim countries in the region — Iran, Iraq, Lebanon — shifted American foreign policy toward the Middle East and intensified its involvement.<sup>33</sup> And yet, with the exception of the Gulf War (1991) and several relatively small events in the region, the vast bulk of US involvement was limited to financial aid.

On September 11, 2001, however, US foreign policy took a drastic turn by declaring the War on Terror its utmost concern. No longer was the Middle East an area the US could try to influence via financial backing or brief spurts of military intervention. By 2003, the US was fighting

one war in Afghanistan and another in Iraq. Moreover, December 2010 marked the onset of the Arab Spring and great turmoil in the Middle East. Israel once again became the only stable country in the region, and the US was forced to reevaluate its foreign policy toward Israel and the Arab countries.

How did these events affect congressional involvement? To illustrate the trends of resolutions over time and examine their correlation with the shifting political and global environment, we plot below the number of resolutions proposed in each chamber by Congress (Figure 5).<sup>34</sup>

**Figure 5: Number of Israel-Related Resolutions from 93<sup>rd</sup> Through 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-2013)**



Source: Thomas Electronic Archive, Library of Congress. Available online at [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov).

The overall number of resolutions proposed in Congress roughly tracks events in the region, reaching highs during the 1973 war, the First Lebanon War, and from 9/11 forward. This is best illustrated in the legislative activity in the House. Figure 5 shows significant fluctuations from the 93<sup>rd</sup> through the 106<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1973-2000). The uncharacteristically high number of House resolutions in the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress (1973-74) was a

direct result of the 1973 War. Twenty-two of the 43 resolutions related to emergency assistance to Israel, calling for peace and other aspects related to the conflict. Congressional involvement in the House declined in the following Congresses, going up again during the War in Lebanon (1982-84). The decline continued until it reached a low point (11) in the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress (1987-88, despite the outbreak of the First Intifada). The abrupt increase in resolutions (35) during the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress (1991-92) is explained by congressional response to the Arab boycott of Israel.<sup>35</sup>

The Senate was relatively uninvolved in the early Congresses, with a low of only one Israel-related resolution in the 96<sup>th</sup> Congress (1979-80). This was followed by an abrupt increase in resolutions (15) in the 97<sup>th</sup> Congress (1981-82), due partially to congressional efforts to put pressure on the Soviet Union to end its persecution of Jews.<sup>36</sup> Like the House, the Senate also experienced an increase in Israel-related resolutions (23) during the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress (1991-92) due to the Arab boycott of Israel.<sup>37</sup> But in the Senate, the number has retreated back to its more stable level.

In contrast to the strong fluctuations in congressional interest and action from the 1970s until the 2000s, starting in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress (1997-98), members of Congress gradually and consistently increased their activity concerning Israel in terms of both the number of resolutions and the number of sponsors and cosponsors. The number of resolutions in the House in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress (2005-06) bypassed the level of every preceding Congress except one (the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress of 1973-74). Similarly, in the Senate, during the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress (2003-04), there were more resolutions (24) than in any previous Congress, bypassing the previous high of 23 set during the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress (1991-92). This trend continued during the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress (2005-06), with a new high of 35 resolutions. However, while the number of House resolutions has stayed relatively stable since the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, the number of Senate resolutions has declined somewhat in recent Congresses.

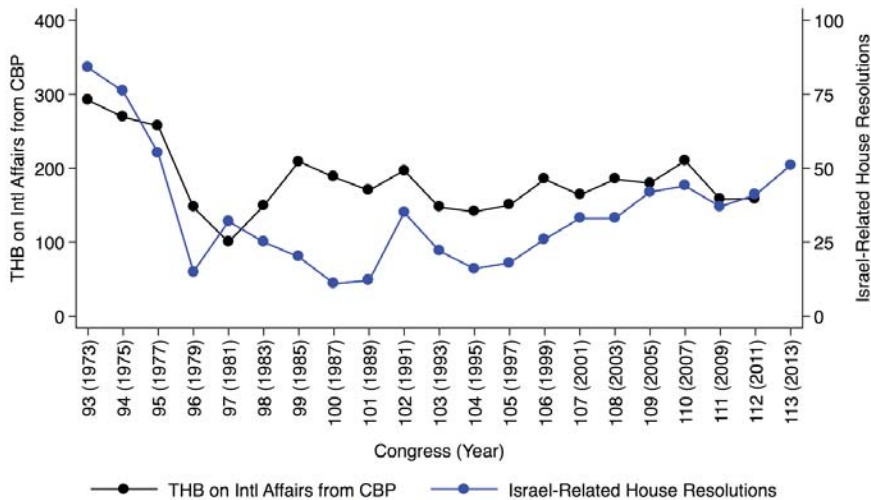
The gradual increase since the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress (1997-98) can be explained by numerous events and conflicts, including terrorist attacks in Israel and the Israeli response to them, the Second Intifada, the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip, the Second Lebanon War, Operation Cast Lead, the Gaza flotilla raid, the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state at the UN, and the imminent nuclear threat from Iran. Yet the trend remains

telling. Congress has become increasingly and consistently active with regard to Israel, proposing over 35 resolutions in the House and, on average, about 25 in the Senate in each Congress.

**2. In Line with Congressional Interest in Foreign Policy**

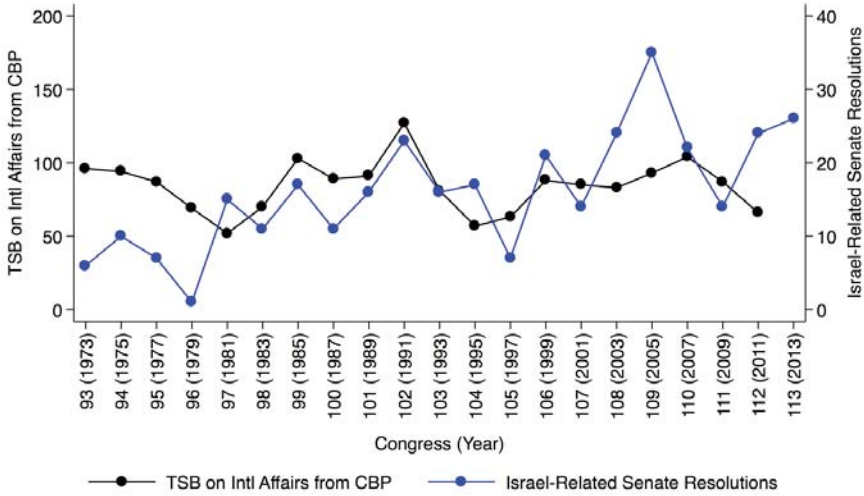
To assess the correlation between the overall involvement of Congress in foreign policy and its particular interest in Israel, we use data from the Congressional Bills Project.<sup>38</sup> This database includes all House and Senate Bills relating to international affairs.<sup>39</sup> Figures 6A and 6B plot both measures of congressional activity for the House and Senate, respectively.<sup>40</sup> A comparison in the House yields a strong correlation ( $r=.76$ ). A comparison in the Senate also yields a positive, if much weaker, correlation ( $r=.27$ ). The findings indicate that congressional activity regarding Israel in the House, and to a lesser extent in the Senate, are associated with broader shifts in congressional involvement in foreign affairs.<sup>41</sup>

**Figure 6A: Comparison of Total House Bills on International Affairs and Israel-Related House Resolutions from 93<sup>rd</sup> Through 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-2013)**



Source: Bills on foreign affairs are from the Congressional Bills Project available online at <http://www.congressionalbills.org>. Israel-related resolutions are from [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov).

**Figure 6B: Comparison of Total Senate Bills on International Affairs and Israel-Related Senate Resolutions from 93<sup>rd</sup> Through 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-2013)**



Source: Bills on foreign affairs are from the Congressional Bills Project available online at <http://www.congressionalbills.org>. Israel-related resolutions are from [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov).

Two periods during which the strong correlation in the House is clearly visible are from the 93<sup>rd</sup> through the 96<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-80) and from the 107<sup>th</sup> through the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress (2002-12). The first period appears to be explained by wars in different parts of the world that involved similar American interests: the Vietnam War and the Yom Kippur War, which seem separately to have contributed to the large number of total House bills relating to foreign policy and Israel-related resolutions in the 93<sup>rd</sup> through 95<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-78). However, in actuality, both wars fell under the umbrella of the Cold War. As mentioned above, Soviet arms transfers (and training programs) to Syria and Egypt exacerbated their conflict with Israel, pushing America to support Israel during the Yom Kippur War.<sup>42</sup>

The second period to display a strong correlation is that following 9/11. During that time, US foreign policy was focused on the Middle East, and congressional action concerning Israel followed the broader government interest.

The correlation is weaker in the Senate. During the Cold War, the Senate was significantly more involved in international affairs in general than it was specifically in Israel. After 9/11, the Senate ramped up its interest in Israel beyond its interest in international affairs.

### ***3. Polarization Amid Strong Support***

Existing work on congressional actions toward Israel indicates that support for Israel in Congress transcends conventional partisan divisions. This follows general patterns of bipartisan agreement on foreign policy that have led observers to the conclusion that “politics stops at the water’s edge.” Garnham points out a difference in the ideologies of liberals and conservatives during the post-Vietnam period, claiming that “the foreign policy positions of domestic liberals are generally more limitationist (dovish), while domestic conservatives are relatively more interventionist (hawkish).”<sup>43</sup> However, he asserts that those differences are small, and that both groups contain individuals who take similar stances on a variety of foreign policy issues.

More recent work reveals that bipartisan agreement has eroded since the end of the Cold War. Among both the elites and the masses, attitudes now diverge according to party on how they approach foreign affairs, their support for international intervention, and the goals they seek to achieve with foreign policy, with Republicans of all economic stripes voicing more vocal and clear support for Israel than Democrats. This change is considered to be primarily attributable to the War on Terror and the war in Iraq.

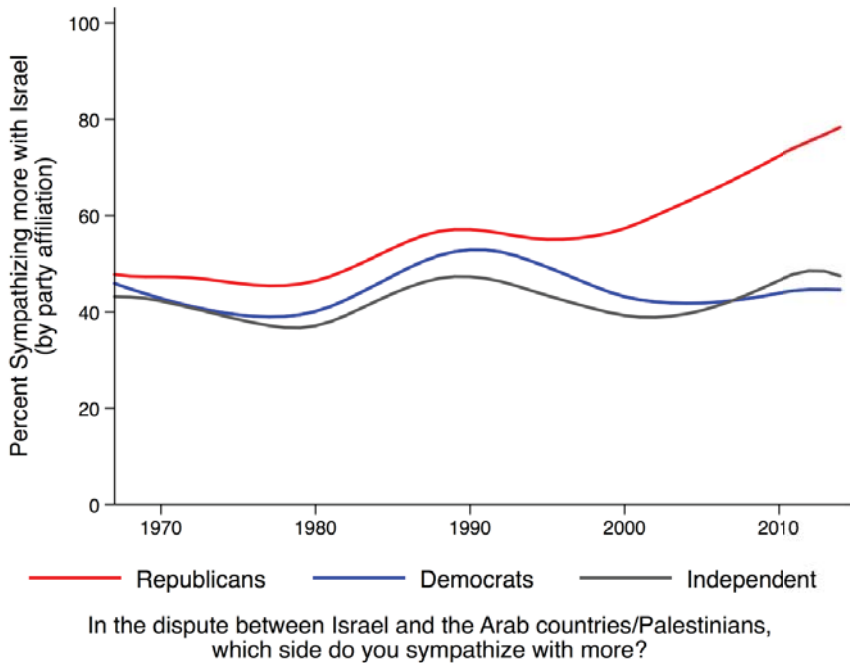
On questions relating to the War on Terror, Republicans usually present a strong interventionist view. Democrats, in contrast, are strikingly more dovish and isolationist — far more than they were in the second half of the twentieth century — yet have not retreated to complete isolationism. They object to the War on Terror and democracy promotion overseas, but support the promotion of human rights around the world, the limiting of global warming and the fight against global poverty. When Republicans think about foreign policy, they usually think about military threats, especially from terrorists or terror-associated regimes. Democrats generally see a different world that is facing economic and humanitarian dangers.<sup>44</sup>

The polarization of the parties on foreign policy inevitably affects legislative actions regarding Israel. Israel-related issues are associated with underlying factors that lend themselves to a strong partisan divide. Republicans find more alignment with Israel in its fight against terror, whereas Democrats tend to be more concerned about violations of human rights in the conflict. The differences are subtle: both parties are concerned with human suffering, the harm created by the ongoing conflict and the use of terror, but they paint the issue in partisan colors.

Another aspect that widens the partisan divide is the alignment of specific religious groups — particularly Christian Evangelicals — with the parties. Beyond their theological interest in Israel, Evangelical Christians tend to be relatively hawkish, especially with regard to Islam, the fight against terrorism and the Middle East conflict.<sup>45</sup> Today, a larger share of Republican and a smaller share of Democratic voters are Evangelical Christians. Given their hawkish views on foreign policy and their strong support for Israel, this alignment is expected to have the effect of increasing support for Israel among Republicans.

With regard to public opinion toward Israel, several studies reveal a change from once-bipartisan support to an increasing partisan divide. Figure 7 shows the differences between the partisan groups—Republicans, Democrats and Independents—over time. Until the end of the 1990s, the trends are similar for both parties. Republican sympathy with Israel starts at 50 percent and rises to nearly 60 percent; Democratic sympathy for Israel starts at the same level, rises slightly around 1990, but returns to about 50 percent. Independents follow a similar trend, ending with somewhat lower sympathy for Israel (40%).

This changes completely at the turn of the century: Republican sympathy for Israel peaks dramatically, reaching nearly 80 percent in 2014, whereas the sympathy of Democrats and Independents remains steady at about 45 percent.

**Figure 7: Partisan Gap in American Sympathy Towards Israel**

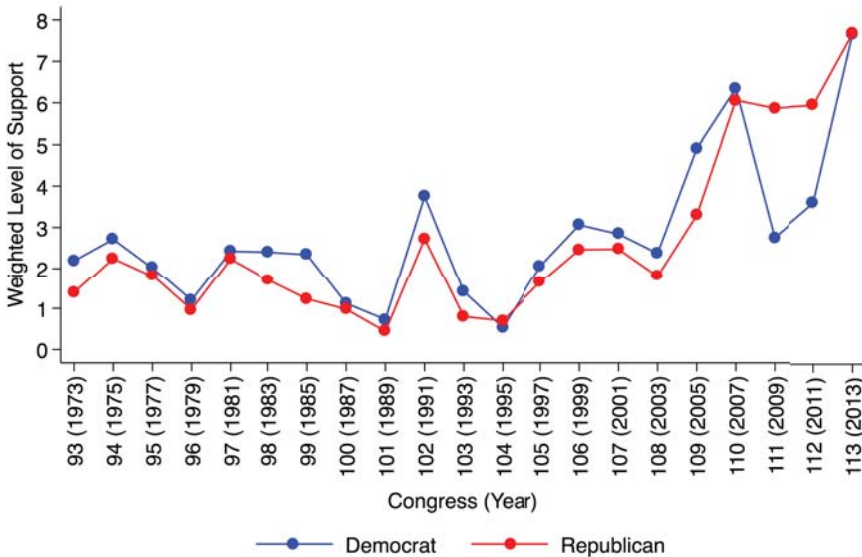
Source: American Public Opinion Toward Israel project, <http://apoi.idc.ac.il>.

These trends suggest that members of Congress will project the party divide onto their legislative actions toward Israel. A 2005 study cautiously suggests that partisanship has expanded to the America-Israel relationship, thus dampening the broad congressional support that Israel once enjoyed.<sup>46</sup> The study focuses on the contours of support for Israel in the House of Representatives from 1997 to 2002. By analyzing votes, sponsorship and cosponsorship decisions in the 105<sup>th</sup> through 107<sup>th</sup> Congresses, it demonstrates that as violence escalated between Israel and the Palestinians, the House increasingly considered resolutions that directly addressed the conflict and forced legislators to take a side. It further shows that after controlling for different competing explanations, party identification has a strong effect. In the main, Republicans were more supportive of Israel than Democrats during the period.

A 2009 study by the same authors examines support for Israel through sponsorship and cosponsorship in the Senate from 1993 to 2002.<sup>47</sup> It finds that in the 103<sup>rd</sup> through 107<sup>th</sup> Congresses, conservative and Republican Senators are more likely to support Israel than their liberal and Democratic counterparts. However, the difference in levels of support from Republicans and Democrats narrowed significantly in the later years of the study.

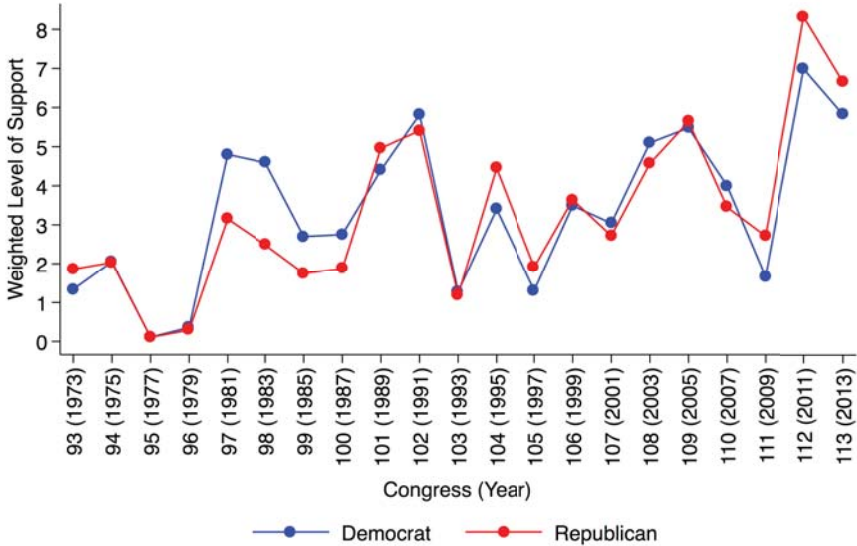
Our data, which consists of resolutions proposed over four decades, provide us with the ability to investigate change over time. To assess the changing trends in partisan involvement over those decades, we plotted the weighted number of sponsors and cosponsors of Israel-related resolutions per Congress in the House and Senate, respectively (Figures 8A and 8B below). For each Congress, the weighted number was calculated by using the total number of sponsors and cosponsors from each party divided by the number of seats each party held in the respective Congress.

**Figure 8A: Weighted Level of Support for Israel in the House from 93<sup>rd</sup> Through 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-2013)**



Source: Thomas Electronic Archive, Library of Congress. Available online at [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov).

**Figure 8B: Weighted Level of Support for Israel in the Senate from 93<sup>rd</sup> Through 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-2013)**



Source: Thomas Electronic Archive, Library of Congress. Available online at [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov).

We find no significant partisan cleavages in the House between the 105<sup>th</sup> and 107<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1997-2002) or in the Senate between the 103<sup>rd</sup> and 107<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1993-2002), and no evidence during those periods of significant shifts in the relationship between support for Israel and party in either the House or the Senate. In fact, if anything, House Democrats showed more support for Israel than House Republicans until the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress (2009-10); while in the Senate, levels of support were very similar from the two parties until that Congress. This analysis includes only aggregate data, but for the polarization argument to hold, one would need to show that there was an actual increase in the level of support for Israel among Republicans in Congress.

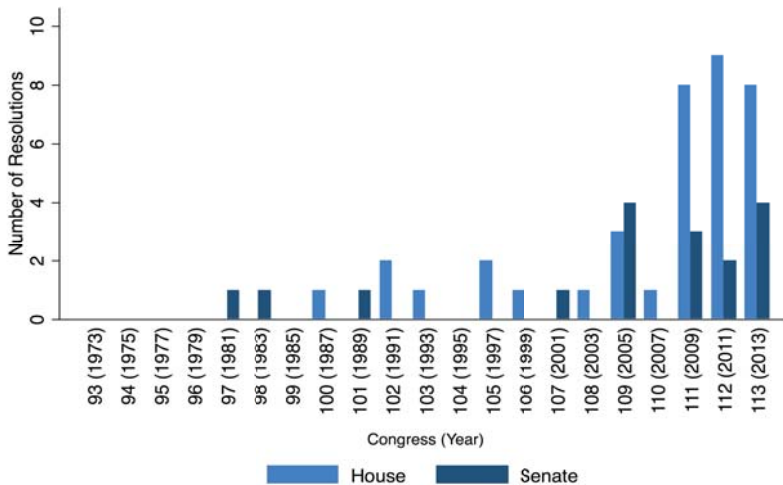
Starting in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, we find some evidence of partisan differences, with Republicans increasingly supportive of Israel and Democrats declining to their pre-9/11 levels in the House. However, the level of support from Democrats rebounded to an unprecedented level in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (2013-14), closing the gap with Republicans. In the

Senate, both Republicans and Democrats have climbed to unprecedented levels of support for Israel, but Republicans to a greater extent.

These recent developments do not support the popular argument that congressional actions towards Israel have become more partisan, but we find this change to be more subtle than is suggested by existing scholarly work. Support for Israel offers much potential political gain and little political cost, so it is not limited to one party — especially when congressional action is mostly declaratory, as is the case with regard to most resolutions referring to Israel. Rather than polarizing on this relatively consensual, no-cost issue, members of Congress appear to have shifted from submitting bipartisan resolutions to resolutions that are sponsored by members of one party. In other words, members from both parties share support for Israel, but do not agree on the necessary course of action.

To demonstrate this, we examine the change in the number of resolutions that express partisan support. We define a resolution of partisan support as a resolution that is supported (sponsored and cosponsored) by members of only one party. Because resolutions with only a handful of cosponsors highlight close relationships between members of Congress but not partisanship, we dropped all partisan resolutions that had fewer than five cosponsors.

**Figure 9: Israel-Related Resolutions Offered with Five or More Cosponsors from a Single Party from 93<sup>rd</sup> Through 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-2013)**



Source: Thomas Electronic Archive, Library of Congress. Available online at [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov).

Figure 9 plots the number of resolutions that fit our partisan standard in each Congress (both House and Senate). The figure shows the change in the way members of Congress approach the issue of Israel. Only eight House resolutions and four Senate resolutions from the 93<sup>rd</sup> through the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-2004) fit the partisan criterion, whereas 29 House resolutions and thirteen Senate resolutions fit the criterion in the 109<sup>th</sup> through the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (2005-14).

In the House, 11 of the 12 resolutions — five of which focus on peace — that fit the partisan criterion from the 93<sup>rd</sup> through the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-2008) are unanimously Democrat. In the 111<sup>th</sup> through the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (2009-14), 21 of the 25 resolutions are unanimously Republican, while only four are unanimously Democrat. The four Democratic resolutions again focus on peace issues (addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, encouraging the US to continue promoting peace, and commending efforts to teach the history of both Israel and the Palestinians to students in Israel and the West Bank in order to foster mutual understanding).

The Republican resolutions display a more hawkish approach to matters concerning Israel. Five of the 21 resolutions support Israel's right to defend its sovereignty and citizens and to use any means necessary to confront and eliminate nuclear threats posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Other unanimous Republican resolutions concern withholding funds from the UN intended to investigate the flotilla incident or until the UN retracts the final report for the "United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict." The remaining unanimous Republican resolutions relate to condemning enemies, Jerusalem, and supporting and facilitating Israel in maintaining defensible borders.

In the Senate, the breakdown of resolutions that fit the partisan criterion from the 93<sup>rd</sup> through the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-2004) is evenly split, with two unanimously Democrat and two unanimously Republican. The two Democrat resolutions focus on peace issues, while the Republican resolutions focus on supporting Israel and condemning enemies. In the 109<sup>th</sup> through the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (2005-14), 12 of the 13 resolutions that fit the partisan criterion are unanimously Republican. They too take a more hawkish approach in demonstrating support for Israel, with many of them expressing the right of Israel to defend itself and condemning its

enemies. The one Democratic resolution that fits the partisan criterion focuses on efforts by the US to promote peace.

Though partisan resolutions occur with increasing frequency, they make up a small share of the total resolutions dealing with Israel that were proposed between the 111<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (2009-14): they amount to only 25 of the 129 resolutions in the House and 13 of the 121 resolutions in the Senate. In the remaining resolutions, Republicans and Democrats work together to express support for Israel. These resolutions include supporting Israel against the boycott, funding Iron Dome, reaffirming unequivocal support for the alliance and friendship between the US and Israel, recognizing the right of Israel to defend itself from Gaza, reducing the Iran threat, and promoting peace. In sum, the parties increasingly work alone but maintain an overall bipartisan support for Israel on many issues.

The collaborative resolutions, alongside the growing divide between the parties, illustrate that despite their differences, the parties continue to support the special relationship between the US and Israel. We call this development Congressional Dysergia, wherein the parties increasingly work independently to express common support.<sup>48</sup> This condition, in which members of both parties support Israel but find it difficult to work together or agree on the means to do so, characterizes the growing divide between Congressional Democrats and Republicans.

### **CASE IN FOCUS: THE NUCLEAR DEAL WITH IRAN**

On July 14, 2015, following nearly two years of negotiations, the US, together with five countries (China, France, Russia, and the United Kingdom) and the European Union (the P5+1), signed an agreement with Iran to restrict its nuclear program and submit it to international oversight (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action). From the outset, the public and congressional debate about the issue took on a partisan perspective. Popular support for the 2013 interim agreement (signed in November 24, 2013) demonstrated a strong partisan gap: 33 percent support among Republicans and 62 percent support among Democrats. This gap widened during the negotiations and the eventual signing of the agreement. In August 2015, support for the agreement was

at 72 percent among Democrats but remained at 33 percent among Republicans.<sup>49</sup>

In Congress, Republican leaders vowed to kill the agreement first during the negotiations, then following the interim agreement, and again even as it was signed. They issued an explicit public denunciation of the agreement, invited Prime Minister Netanyahu to a joint session of Congress to speak against it, and passed a bill that required that the agreement be brought to Congress for approval (The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015, PL407; passed with a veto-proof majority).

We examined the extent to which members of Congress expressed their views of the agreement with Iran in relation to Israel. From 2013, when negotiations began, until the end of the congressional review period, members of Congress sponsored 124 bills and resolutions mentioning Israel and Iran (House and Senate). While several of these mention Israel and Iran (or one of them) only in passing, 33 deal with the implications of one on the other. This includes, for example, bills and resolutions expressing the right of Israel to self-defense against the Iranian nuclear program, and the US commitment to stand by Israel if Israel decides to act (S.Res.65; H.Res.98; S.Con.Res.27). Another example is bills and resolutions reaffirming the US-Israel alliance and calling for the extension of sanctions against Iran because of the danger it poses to Israel (H.Res.431; S.2673; S.Res.40; S.21119). Yet another series of bills and resolutions directly addresses the deal and demands that Iran affirm the right of Israel to exist before the administration signs (S.Res.328).

Our argument is supported by the partisan balance in sponsorship of the bills, twenty-two of which were sponsored by Republicans versus only 11 by Democrats. The rate of cosponsors demonstrates a similar Republican advantage, with about three Republicans to every two Democrat cosponsors (on average). This difference can be attributed to the partisan nature of the debate about the agreement and the desire to avoid embarrassing the Democratic administration, yet Republicans have used this controversy well to demonstrate their unwavering commitment to Israel.

## CONCLUSION

Although the pendulum has swung substantially in the direction of the president, Congress has involved itself in questions regarding Israel at various degrees of intensity throughout modern American history and has shown consistent support for Israel. Legislative actions referring to Israel have largely contained few policy ramifications, but have demonstrated strong support for Israel — support that transcended conventional partisan divisions.

For most members of Congress, support for Israel carries little cost. Groups representing anti-Israel interests are negligible and are usually poorly organized. In contrast, the strength of organized interest groups in support of Israel and the overwhelming public support for Israel make it beneficial for members of Congress to demonstrate similar support.<sup>50</sup> This suggests that members of Congress can reflect pro-Israeli public sentiment without the common limitations of their leadership or party coalitions.

Trends in congressional support for Israel follow several discernible patterns. First, Congressional interest in Israel intensified as the focus of American foreign policy shifted toward the Middle East. The first stage of involvement in the region is seen during the Yom Kippur War (1973), a period when America assisted Israel in defeating Communist-backed Egypt. Shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union, we find a steady increase in American involvement in the Middle East and Israel. The sharp rise in support in more recent Congresses coincides with the era following 9/11, when America became directly involved in the War on Terror and issues of joint interest arose between the two countries, including the Iranian nuclear threat and the Middle East peace process.

Second, there is a clear correlation between congressional involvement in foreign policy and actions regarding Israel. With some exceptions, congressional actions toward Israel dovetailed with the involvement of Congress in foreign policy. When Congress asserts its role in foreign policy, it tends to increase its attention toward issues concerning Israel.

Third, while bipartisan support does continue, we find a recent lack of cooperation between the parties in expressing that support, a development we call Congressional Dysergia. The two parties

agree on the grand strategy of American support for Israel, but have different views and act independently. Republican resolutions often take a hawkish approach towards the sensitive issues in the region; Democrats shy away from signing onto those resolutions. In contrast, we find just five “only Democrat” resolutions referring to Israel in recent Congresses — all of which focus on the peace process. Despite these emerging differences, it is important to note that only a small share of Israel-related resolutions demonstrate partisan cosponsorship, indicating that the issue remains strongly bipartisan.

The evidence suggests that Israel is becoming a central issue on the congressional agenda and that conventional divisions are slowly starting to affect support for Israel. Rather than only discussing Israel in the aftermath of specific events such as the Yom Kippur War or Operation Opera, in recent years Congress has increasingly viewed Israel as a topic of great importance that warrants regular discussion.

These trends have significant policy implications for both the US and Israel. The increased support for and discussion of Israel in Congress help to fuel debate about Israel, and forces the White House to consider how Congress will react to the administration’s policy decisions. This is especially important in the context of elections, because increased attention to Israel in Congress is either a direct response to, or a direct cause of, shifting public opinion on the subject. Either way, politicians seeking election will pay great attention to Israel to win votes. In the context of the increased polarization witnessed in Congress in recent years, public opinion also plays a role. Americans have tended to show more support for Israel overall in recent years, but with significant differences among Republicans and Democrats. An additional ramification of these trends is that funding decisions are increasingly placed in the hands of bureaucracy.

Finally, an important implication of the increasing polarization of the parties with regard to Israel is that the issue sometimes generates tension between the branches. This was illustrated in the tension exhibited between the Republican-dominated Congress and the Democratic executive over the Israeli prime minister. The rise in Congressional support for Israel offered an access point for the Israeli government, and particularly Netanyahu. He made use of that state of affairs, delivering

widely publicized speeches to joint sessions of Congress in May 2011 and March 2015. His comments on the peace process and the Iranian nuclear threat — some of which directly challenged the positions of President Obama — were met with standing ovations.

As long as the cost of support for Israel is low, such divisions are likely to be muted. This can easily change if the US finds its policy in the Middle East, and especially its close relationship with Israel, to have a negative impact on American security and interests.

**APPENDIX:**  
**DATA COLLECTION, SPONSORSHIP OF BILLS AND  
RESOLUTIONS CONCERNING ISRAEL, 1973-2013**

The focus of this study is trends in Congressional activity in support of Israel over time. We therefore searched for all bills and resolutions (hereinafter “resolutions”) from the 93<sup>rd</sup> through the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (1973-2013). To complete this search, we used Thomas, a web-based archive of the Library of Congress.<sup>i</sup>

Our search terms included one or several of the following terms: “Israel,” “Middle East,” and “Palestinian.”<sup>ii</sup> From the list of all resolutions that included the search terms, we included in our data only resolutions that met two criteria: (1) Israel is the dominant issue; and (2) the resolution expresses support — declaratory, monetary or military — for Israel or condemns its foes.

The first criterion forced us to ignore all major appropriations bills, arguably the most important acts of Congress and those with the strongest effect on the relationship between Israel and the US. An example is H.R.5522 from the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress (2005-06), entitled “Making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007 and for other purposes.” The bill refers to numerous countries and issues, but our interest was in identifying support for Israel. Despite the fact that Israel is mentioned 27 times, including references to intense economic assistance and military support, Israel is still just one of many countries discussed, a strategy used by Congress to exert its influence on foreign appropriations.<sup>iii</sup> As a result, we were not able to determine whether a representative’s support for the bill was pro-Israel or not. Even though there is clear financial support for Israel in the bill, an individual legislator’s support could have been associated with the general budgetary issue rather than with Israel specifically.<sup>iv</sup>

The second criterion required that resolutions demonstrate support for Israel. Resolutions that we categorized as ‘anti-Israel’ (33) were dropped from the data. These resolutions are few and far between. While we categorize them as anti-Israel, they do not necessarily demonstrate congressional opposition

to Israel. Often, they show Congress simply not wanting to get involved in the Middle East. Twenty-one of the 33 documented anti-Israel resolutions were offered in the 94<sup>th</sup>, 95<sup>th</sup> and 96<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1975-80), and 20 of those 21 opposed the sale of certain military aircraft or weapons to Israel. Furthermore, the majority of these resolutions had no cosponsors, and the 33 resolutions had a combined total of only 244 cosponsors, with just two resolutions accounting for 159 of those cosponsors. The very low number of resolutions and cosponsors indicates that opposition to Israel is not a significant phenomenon in Congress.

#### Appendix notes:

- i The Thomas archive and search engine is a commonly used tool in studies examining congressional actions. See, for example: Fisher, D. R., Waggle, J. & Leifeld, P. (2013). Where Does Political Polarization Come From? Locating Polarization Within the US Climate Change Debate. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57 (1), 70-92. For more details, see: <http://thomas.loc.gov>.
- ii We also searched variations on these terms.
- iii Sinclair, B. (1995). *Legislators, Leaders and Lawmakers: The U.S. House of Representatives in the Postreform Era*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- iv Our search resulted in a total of 749 House resolutions and 349 Senate resolutions. Because of a limit that was in effect until the 96<sup>th</sup> Congress on the number of cosponsors allowed on each House resolution, some of the House resolutions are proposed more than once to account for additional cosponsors. In the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 46 identical resolutions are combined to five. In the 94<sup>th</sup> Congress, 65 identical resolutions are combined to eight. In the 95<sup>th</sup> Congress, 29 identical resolutions are combined to eight. After removing multiple submissions of the same resolution, we are left with 622 House resolutions and 349 Senate resolutions, or a total of 971 resolutions.

## NOTES

- 1 Efraim Inbar, "US-Israel relations in the post-Cold War era: The view from Jerusalem," in *US-Israeli Relations in a New Era*, ed. Eytan Gilboa and Efraim Inbar (London: Routledge, 1st pub. ed., 2009), 33-50.
- 2 The issue has been mentioned and discussed in presidential debates in every presidential election since 1976, and every Democratic and Republican party platform since the 93rd Congress (1973) has included a section mentioning the special relationship between Israel and the United States and promising continued American support of Israel.
- 3 Robert Freedman, *Israel and the United States: Six Decades of the U.S.-Israeli Relationship* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2012); Herbert Druks, *The Uncertain Friendship* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001); George W. Ball and Douglas B. Ball, *The Passionate Attachment: America's Involvement with Israel, 1947 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co Inc., 1992).
- 4 Steven Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israel Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Abraham Ben-Zvi, *Decade of Transition: Eisenhower, Kennedy and the Origins of the American-Israeli Alliance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Warren Bass, *Support any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the U.S.-Israel Alliance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Herbert Druks (ibid.); Michael Thomas, *American Policy Toward Israel* (New York: Routledge, 2007); David Schoenbaum, *The United States and the State of Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Gabriel Sheffer, *U.S.-Israeli Relations at the Crossroads* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1997); Abraham Ben-Zvi, *The United States and Israel: The Limit of the Special Relationship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Ball, G. W., & Ball, D. B. (ibid.).
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- 24 David R. Mayhew, “Congress: The Electoral Connection,” in *Yale Studies in Political Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).
- 25 H.CON.RES.150 was offered in the 97th Congress On 17 June 1981 by Rep. Ed Markey [D-MA] with bipartisan support of 31 cosponsors consisting of 21 Democrats, nine Republicans and one Independent.
- 26 Herbert Druks (ibid.), p. 225.
- 27 From the 111th Congress: H.R.5501, H.RES.1440, and H.RES.1532.
- 28 Aluf Benn and Natasha Mozgovaya, “Under U.S. pressure, Netanyahu may ease Gaza blockade,” in *Haaretz*, June 3, 2010.
- 29 To gain a broad understanding of the role of Congress in the special relationship, we refer to all legislative actions regarding Israel. This includes five types of bills and resolutions pertaining to actions of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

- (1) House bills (H.R.) and Senate bills (S.) are legislative proposals brought before Congress, which if passed in both chambers of Congress and signed by the president, would become a law.
- (2) House Joint Resolution (H.J.RES.) and Senate Joint Resolutions (S.J.RES.) are similar to bills in that they need to be voted for in both chambers and signed by the president to become a law. Joint resolutions are generally used for specific matters, which can be resolved with a single resolution.
- (3) House Concurrent Resolutions (H.CON.RES.) and Senate Concurrent Resolutions (S.CON.RES.) need to pass in both chambers and do not require the president's signature or have the force of law. They are generally used to congratulate another country on behalf of Congress or to create and amend the work of both chambers.
- (4) House Resolutions (H.RES.) and Senate Resolutions (S.RES.) address internal matters within the prerogative of the House of Representatives and the Senate, respectively. Neither the other chamber nor the president is asked to vote on them or sign them and they do not have the force of law.
- (5) House Amendments (H.AMDT) and Senate Amendments (S.AMDT). These refer to existing bills and may convey a change in policy.

By including all resolutions, we broaden the scope of the data and introduce more variation than a dataset with only House and Senate Bills. Indeed, most of these resolutions have no policy ramifications, but they tell us a great deal about the representatives themselves and whether they support Israel. These resolutions are practically the same as most proposed bills. The vast majority of the thousands of bills introduced in each Congress have no chance of ever becoming law from the get-go. In fact, the majority of bills are automatically referred to committees and ultimately shelved without being further acted upon.

- 30 This ratio is characteristic of the fact that the House in general is significantly more active than the Senate, whether regarding Israel-related resolutions or otherwise. For example, during the 110th Congress, the ratio of resolutions proposed in each chamber was the same (approximately double) for Israel-related resolutions, for bills related to international affairs, and for all bills overall (these figures are based on data collected by the Congressional Bills Project). The House proposed 44 pro-Israel resolutions while the Senate proposed 22. Similarly, the House proposed 210 bills related to international affairs, while the Senate proposed 104. The same trend holds true for total bills, with 7,340 proposed House bills and 3,741 proposed Senate bills overall.

- 31 R. Y. Shapiro and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, “Ideological Partisanship and American Public Opinion toward Foreign Policy,” in M. H. Halperin, *Power and Superpower: Global Leadership and Exceptionalism in the 21st Century* (NY: The Century Foundation Press 2007), 49-68; Amnon Cavari and Elan Nyer, “From Bipartisanship to Dysergia: Trends in Congressional Actions Toward Israel,” in *Israel Studies*, 19 (3), 2014, 1-28; Oldmixon, Rosenson, and Wald (ibid.), 407-426; Rosenson, Oldmixon, and Wald (ibid.), 73-91.
- 32 Nancy Kassop, “The War Power and Its Limits,” in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 33 (3), 2003, 509-529.
- 33 Steven R. David, “The Continuing Importance of American Interests in the Middle East after the Cold War,” in G. Sheffer (ibid.), 94-106.
- 34 Fowler notes that prior to the 96th Congress the House had a 25 cosponsors limit on all legislation. As a result, from the 93rd through 95th Congress no resolution relating to Israel had more than 24 cosponsors. All cosponsors on resolutions signed the very same day the resolution was proposed by the sponsor. In order to create an equal comparison between all resolutions before and after the 25 cosponsors rule in the House, we collapsed all repeated resolutions from the 93rd through the 95th Congress with the same sponsor and combined the total number of cosponsors. See: J. H. Fowler, “Legislative cosponsorships network in the U.S. House and Senate,” in *Science Networks*, 28, 2006, 454-465.
- 35 Nine of the total 35 resolutions relate specifically to the Arab boycott of Israel.
- 36 Four of the total 15 resolutions relate specifically to the Soviet Union’s policies regarding Jews and Israel.
- 37 Nine of the total 23 resolutions relate specifically to the Arab boycott of Israel.
- 38 The Congressional Bills Project provides data up to and including the 112th Congress. The data used here were originally collected by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, with the support of National Science Foundation grant numbers SBR 9320922 and 0111611, and were distributed through the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin. Neither NSF nor the original collectors of the data bear any responsibility for the analysis reported here.
- 39 The topic of International Affairs is very broad. The Congressional Bills Project includes the following subcategories: General International Affairs and Foreign

Aid Issues, U.S. Foreign Aid, International Recourses Exploitation and Resources Agreement, Developing Countries Issues, International Finance and Economic Development, China, Soviet Union and Former Republics, Eastern Europe, Western Europe and Common Market Issues, Africa, South Africa, Latin America (South America, Central America, Mexico, Caribbean Basin, Cuba), Panama Canal Issues and Other International Canal Issues, Asia, Pacific Rim, Australia, Japan, Middle East, Human Rights, International Organizations other than Finance, Terrorism, Hijacking, U.S. Diplomats, U.S. Embassies, U.S. Citizens Abroad, Foreign Diplomats in the U.S., Passports and other International Affairs and Foreign Aid Issues.

- 40 Unlike the bills and resolutions data we collected for Israel, this dataset includes only House bills (H.R.) and Senate bills (S.). However, because the purpose of the comparison is to identify trends, the fact that we are comparing only bills from this dataset with Israel-related bills and resolutions from our own data does not invalidate the comparison.
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- 48 The term is borrowed from the field of medicine. Dysergia is the lack of harmonious action between muscles concerned in executing a definite voluntary movement.
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- 50 Amnon Cavari, "Religious Beliefs, Elite Polarization and Public Opinion on Foreign Policy: The Partisan Gap in American Public Opinion Toward Israel," in *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 25(1), 1-22; Eytan Gilboa, *American Public Opinion Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Lexington: Lexington Books, 1987; Mearsheimer and Walt (ibid.).

A previous version of this study, which includes only House bills and resolutions, was published as: Amnon Cavari and Elan Nyer, "From Bipartisanship to Dysergia: Trends in Congressional Actions Toward Israel," in *Israel Studies* 19(3), pp. 1-28, 2014.

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