What Makes an Alliance Devoted?

Insights From American-Israeli and Anglo-Israeli Relations

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Abstract

This paper explores the question, "What causes devoted cross-regional alliances?" Using a comparative case study approach, I examine the United States and the United Kingdom's relationships with Israel through the lens of realist and constructivist theories of alliance formation. These theories assess whether alliances are driven primarily by strategic interests or shared identity. By analyzing these relationships during their most pivotal periods, I have determined that while strategic interest is necessary to cultivate an alliance, shared identity and ideological alignment transform them into devoted, unconditional partnerships that transcend regional boundaries. The contrast between the U.S.-Israel "special relationship" and the more conditional Anglo-Israeli alliance highlights the critical role of identity and public opinion in shaping foreign policy. These findings carry significant implications for understanding current U.S. and U.K. responses to the Israeli war in Gaza and the broader discussion on how ideology reinforces strategic alliances.

I. Introduction

On October 7, 2023, the Hamas attack on Israel shocked the world, triggering a cascade of events that reshaped global discourse on alliances and foreign policy. Israel's subsequent military campaigns in the Gaza Strip and West Bank that have killed tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, alongside escalating conflicts with Hezbollah, have drawn intense scrutiny, particularly regarding the role of its strongest ally, the United States.[1] Since the Hamas invasion, the U.S. has sent billions of dollars in aid and weapons to Israel, even amidst domestic and international backlash.[2] In contrast, amidst a declining relationship, the support of the United Kingdom –Israel's former colonizer and another one of America's strongest allies– is much more restrained. This has led many in and outside the U.S. to wonder why the U.S. relationship with Israel is so unconditional compared to other nations. In the broader sense, this raises the question: What causes devoted cross-regional alliances?

In the complex arena of international politics, especially in the conflict-ridden Middle East, intra-regional and inter-regional alliances are crucial to advancing strategic objectives. However, explaining the determining factors behind cross-regional alliance formation and endurance remains debated. Realist theory emphasizes the role of balancing common threats, while constructivist theory highlights the importance of shared ideologies and identities in creating enduring partnerships. This paper bridges this theoretical divide by examining how

[1] "41,788 Palestinians Killed in Gaza Offensive since Oct. 7, Health Ministry Says," *Reuters*, October 3, 2024.
[2] Bilmes, Linda J., William D. Hartung, and Stephen Semler. "United States Spending on Israel's Military Operations and Related U.S. Operations in the Region, October 7, 2023 – September 30, 2024." *Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs*, October 7, 2024. https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2023/2024/Costs%20of%20War_US%20Support%20Since%20Oct%207%20FINAL%20v2.pdf.

strategic interests and shared identity interact to produce alliances that transcend regional boundaries.

To explore these dynamics, I conduct a comparative case analysis of U.S. and U.K. alliances with Israel during two key periods. First, I compare the U.S.-Israel relationship from the emergence of their "special relationship" in 1967 through the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, to their subsequent unconditional relationship from 1991 through the U.S. war in Iraq ending in 2011. My second two cases in this study will be Israel's relationship with its former colonizer, the United Kingdom, from its most amicable period (1956-1967) to the subsequent period from 1967-1974 in which the relationship deteriorated to the apathetic one it is today. The insights from realist and constructivist theories of alliance formation are evident when analyzing these cases. Both the U.S. and Britain aligned with Israel when they recognized Israel as an effective balancer of Soviet influence on hostile Arab states, but the roles of ideology and identity are markedly different in both relationships. Comparing these case studies reveals that the differences in these alliances are rooted in the sense of shared identity and ideology between America and Israel that the United Kingdom lacks. This provides the necessary evidence to conclude that while strategic interests initiate alliances, shared identity and public opinion sustain and deepen them, making them unconditional.

Building on these conclusions, I examine how the U.K. and U.S. governmental and public responses toward Israel's invasion of Gaza following October 7th reflect the trajectories of their respective alliances. While the U.K.'s restrained approach aligns with its turbulent historical ambivalence toward Israel, the U.S. government's unconditional support persists, despite growing polarization within its domestic public. These findings underscore the interplay

of ideology and strategy in international relations and offer critical insights for understanding the future of cross-regional alliances.

II. A Divergent Theories of Alliance Formation: Realist and Constructivist

To answer the question of *what causes devoted cross-regional alliances*, I will examine two competing hypotheses that reflect the realist and constructivist divide in international relations. Firstly, I will use the working definition of "devoted alliance" as an unconditional partnership between two countries that includes military aid, economic aid, a degree of security, and consistently positive public-facing rhetoric regarding the other state.

It is first necessary to define these schools of thought. On the one hand, realist thinkers focus on "strategic interest". I will define that in this paper as the practical benefits a state seeks when engaging in international relations, such as enhancing national security, countering threats, securing vital resources, or advancing political objectives. Stephen Walt posits in his 1985 article "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," and subsequent 1987 book *Origins of Alliances,* that in response to international threats, states work in their strategic interest by either allying with fellow threatened states to balance the threat's power or allying with the threat itself to bandwagon.[3]

Throughout its history, realism focused on the balance of threats that create alliances on a more regional scale because, until the 20th century, international politics focused on a regional scale rather than a wholly international one. However, starting during the First and Second World Wars, an increasing number of threats in international politics are threats to states in more than

[3] Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985): 4, https://doi.org/10.2307/2538540. pp. 6 ; Stephen M. Walt, "Balancing and Bandwagoning," in *Origins of Alliances* (Cornell University Press, 1987).

one region. For example, today, much of America's alliance-making and balancing is against threats across the world, such as China.

Today, China weaponizes its growing power to threaten U.S. and East Asian interests, including their encroachment upon the South China Sea, Taiwan, and the U.S.'s "economic well-being and democratic values."[4] While East Asian states aim to prevent China's dominance for their own security, the U.S. is primarily concerned that China's authoritarian regime and expanding economy could surpass it as the global leader. In response, the U.S. has built alliances with East Asian countries, like Japan and South Korea, to counterbalance China's rise.[5] These countries prefer aligning with the U.S. to safeguard their security and freedom, as it is the only power capable of curbing China's potential hegemony.[6] Thus, China's rise highlights how modern threats can lead to cross-regional alliances.

On the other hand, the two tenets of the constructivist school of thought are "(1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature."[7] In other words, core concepts of international politics –such as identity, interests, and alliances– are socially constructed rather than inherently defined by human nature. The second hypothesis I will examine reflects a constructivist argument: a shared identity between two countries leads to sympathy from the relatively stronger government and its public, which reinforce each other to mobilize virtually unconditional support, creating strong, devoted alliances that transcend geographical distances. My working definition of a "shared

[4] "The China Threat" (FBI, n.d.), https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/the-china-threat.
[5] Wooseon Choi, "New Horizons in Korea-U.S.-Japan Trilateral Cooperation," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 27, 2024, https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-horizons-korea-us-japan-trilateral-cooperation.
[6] Walt. "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power." pp. 5
[7] Alexander Wednt, Social Theory of International Politics, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 67 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

identity" will be two (or more) states with common histories, cultures, ideologies, and characteristics.

While the literature on this constructivist approach to international relations is more limited than robust realist theory, many scholars recognize shared identity as one of the multiple causes of alliance formation. Walt's *Origins of Alliances* emphasizes the role of "ideological solidarity" alongside traditional realist thinking in explaining alliance formation. The ideological solidarity hypothesis suggests that states with shared political, cultural, or other characteristics are more likely to form alliances.[8] Walt outlines three reasons for this: first, alignment defends shared political principles, second, similar states fear each other less, and third, alignment boosts the legitimacy of weak regimes.[9] While Walt notes that states must publicly frame their allies as having shared values and subordinates this hypothesis to his balance of threat theory, he still considers it valid.[10]

Certain case studies also highlight the role of shared identity as a primary cause for alliance formation. For example, scholars Katzenstein and Hemmer argue that the role of perceptions of identity is "underappreciated" in explaining differences in the U.S.'s behavior toward its North Atlantic and South Asian security partners: "Shaped by racial, historical, political, and cultural factors, U.S. policymakers saw their potential European allies as relatively equal members of a shared community. America's potential Asian allies, in contrast, were seen as part of an alien and, in important ways, inferior community."[11] As a state founded by European

[8] Stephen M. Walt, The Origins of Alliances, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Cornell University Press, 1987), https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt32b5fc. pp. 33
[9] Walt. The Origins of Alliances. pp. 34-35
[10] Walt. *The Origins of Alliances.* pp. 38
[11] Christopher Hemmer and Peter J. Katzenstein, "Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism," International Organization 56, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 575–607.

immigrants, the shared identity of Western European states and the United States is a key factor in their unprecedentedly strong trans-Atlantic alliance.

There is growing evidence in internationalist and constructivist literature that public opinion influences foreign policy. Holsti contrasts early 20th-century views, which dismissed public opinion as too volatile to affect decision-making, with more recent studies highlighting its increasing relevance.[12] One study on U.S. presidential elections from 1952 to 1984 found that foreign policy issues significantly affected voter behavior, with incumbents being rewarded or punished for foreign policy successes or failures.[13] Another study, covering 1960-1974, found a 92% correlation between foreign policy outcomes and public opinion.[14] Holsti's work underscores the growing influence of public opinion on U.S. foreign policy, particularly in decisions aligned with shared ideological values.[15]

The war in Ukraine illustrates the two prongs of this hypothesis – how shared identity and public opinion come together to shape foreign policy decisions. In 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine, Western governments and their citizens framed Ukraine as "at the frontline of the democratic world pushing back against a revisionist wave of authoritarian powers' assault on the rules-based international order."[16] In the U.S., this ideological framing resonated deeply with the public, as government leaders' statements amplified the American public's sympathy toward Ukraine based on shared democratic values and anti-Russian sentiment. This public support permitted the U.S. government to allocate significant aid to Ukraine — $54.9 billion by May

[12] Ole R. Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus," *International Studies Quarterly*, Mershon Series: Research Programs and Debates, 36, no. 4 (December 1992): 439–66, https://doi.org/10.2307/2600734.
[13] Holsti. "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy." pp. 452
[14] Holsti. "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy." pp. 453
[15] Holsti. "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy." pp. 455
[16] Rick Larsen, "2022 - SPECIAL REPORT - UKRAINE'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM & ALLIED AND GLOBAL RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S WAR" (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, December 6, 2022), https://www.nato-pa.int/document/2022-ukraines-fight-freedom-allied-and-global-response-russias-war-report-016-dsc.

2022.[17] At the time, 31% of Americans felt the government was not giving enough to Ukraine, while only 12% believed it was giving too much, indicating robust initial public support.[18]

The U.S. would have provided aid to Ukraine for strategic reasons, such as balancing Russian power, regardless of public sentiment. However, sympathy from the public allowed for unprecedented levels of aid in early 2022. The strength of public sympathy wouldn't have been possible without a shared identity of being defenders of democracy against Russia, an ideological framework first pushed by government officials following the invasion, highlighting how shared identity reinforces public and government support for foreign aid. Ideology is one of the most potent forces in politics, and values such as liberal democracy and territorial sovereignty are shared by countries throughout the world, thus creating ties between countries across regions.

The incentive to balance fosters strong, cross-regional alliances, but as geopolitical threats change and the balance of power shifts, these alliances weaken. In contrast, identity-driven alliances, anchored in shared identities and cultural ties, tend to create unconditional, more enduring relationships. In the following section, I will draw evidence from four cases: the American-Israeli relationship from 1967-1991 and 1991-2001, and the Anglo-Israeli relationship from 1956-1967 and 1967-1974. Through these cases, I will argue that while strategic interest is necessary to cultivate an alliance, when states have a shared identity, with similar histories and ideologies, that identity is likely to be the driving factor behind an unconditional, cross-regional alliance. Additionally, I will examine how the analysis of these

[17] Jonathan Masters and Will Merrow, "How Much U.S. Aid Is Going to Ukraine?," *Council on Foreign Relations*, September 27, 2024.
[18] Richard Wike et al., "US Views of Ukraine Aid, Zelenskyy, and the Russia-Ukraine War" (Pew Research Center, May 8, 2024), https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2024/05/08/views-of-ukraine-and-u-s-involvement-with-the-russia-ukraine-war/.

cases holds when examining current U.S. and U.K. policies toward Israel amid the current war in Gaza, and I will make subsequent predictions as to how these policies will evolve.

III. Case Studies: the American-Israeli and Anglo-Israeli Relationships

The 21st-century U.S.-Israel relationship is unique in its unparalleled support from both the American public and government, despite the absence of a common great power threat (i.e., the Soviet Union) and instances where Israel's actions could have reasonably diminished that support (i.e., the current war in Gaza). This paper examines the foundational motivations of both American society and the U.S. government to understand the reasons behind this support and why the nature of the relationship is so different from that of the U.K. Is the U.S.-Israel relationship driven mainly by geopolitical strategic concerns or a shared identity? To answer this question, I will compare America's 20th-century growing relationship with Israel, driven by both shared identity and geopolitical concerns, to its modern unconditional support for Israel , despite the absence of the Soviet threat in the Middle East. To understand whether modern U.S. support is driven primarily by ideology or geopolitical strategy, it's crucial to compare the U.S.-Israel relationship during periods when the two states confronted a shared great threat with periods when they did not. Specifically, the first American case (1967-1991) began when their relationship turned "special" and ended when the Soviet Union fell, and the relationship thus lacked a great power to balance in the region. The second case I will examine (1991-2011) is when the two lacked a common great threat but remained closely aligned during America's "War on Terror," fighting Israel's neighbor, Iraq.

This analysis additionally requires comparing the United States' relationship with Israel to that of the United Kingdom. After their turbulent colonial period, Israel and Britain had a shared Western identity and worked in tandem with the U.S. in the Cold War to balance the

Soviet Union, but their identities and interests largely diverged from there. Thus, the cases I will focus on for this extensive and complicated history are the period when the two states were at their most amicable, from the 1956 Suez Crisis to the 1967 War, and the period from 1967 to 1974 when their relationship took a long-lasting turn for the worse.

The U.S., Israel, and Britain all have relatively interconnected histories and identities, and the U.S. and Britain have always had relatively aligned geopolitical goals. So what are the differences in American and British identity or geopolitical strategy that make the U.S. such a comparatively devoted ally? The U.S. and Israel share remarkably parallel histories: British colonialism and subsequent regional expansion driven by perceived divine exceptionalism. Are these shared values and histories enough to make their relationship so different to that of their former colonizer? By analyzing these four case studies, I will examine how two independent variables –geopolitical strategy and public sympathy driven by shared identity– affect the dependent variable of the strength of cross-regional alliances. The U.S. case illustrates how these variables explain the increasing strength of its alliance with Israel, even without a great power threat, while the U.K. case highlights the decline in Anglo-Israeli relations after 1967. Comparing the impact of these variables in both cases reveals why the U.S. maintains a strong, devoted relationship with Israel, unlike Britain.

To operationalize this independent variable, I used an ordinal scale to measure alliance strength: 1 indicates weak or no support during conflict, 2 indicates international declarations of support and limited aid, 3 indicates strong economic, military, and diplomatic alignment, even during conflict, and 4 denotes unconditional alliances characterized by sustained geopolitical coordination and shared identity, regardless of external threats.

	U.S.-Israel 1967-1991	**U.S.-Israel 1991-2011**	**U.K.-Israel 1956-1967**	**U.K.-Israel 1967-1974**
Independent variables	Shared cultural identities, shared great geopolitical threat (USSR), recognition of Israel as a strategic partner	Increasing cultural ties, shared terrorist experience, lack of great geopolitical threat, Israel's inability to advance U.S. aims in the region	Primary strategic interest of Arab trade and oil, Suez Canal crisis coordination, Western cultural ties, shared great geopolitical threat	Strategic interests lie primarily with Arab states
Dependent variable	3- conditional but increasingly "special alliance"	4- unconditional alliance	2- declaratory, circumstantial alliance	1- weak or no support

Summary Table

a. American-Israeli Relationship (1967-1991)

Since Israel's founding in 1948, its relationship with America has been very complex. After World War Two, the American government's primary interest was appeasing the Arab world to prevent conflict, particularly with the rising power of the Soviet Union.[19] While President Truman heavily sympathized with the Jewish people fleeing Hitler's terror, he did not "want to see a political structure imposed on the Near East that would result in conflict."[20] Any support Truman gave during the founding of Israel was due in large part to frustrating domestic considerations, mainly that of guaranteeing the Jewish vote as an unelected President and the increasingly powerful Zionist lobby.[21] Given the clashing domestic and international interests, Truman kept a posture toward Israel defined by "impartiality."[22] Despite conflicting views and often apathetic policies and actions toward the Jewish state, it was the consensus among

[19] Michael J. Cohen, "Truman, the Holocaust, and the Establishment of the State of Israel," *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 23 (Spring 1982): 79–94. pp. 94; Michael C. Hudson, "To Play the Hegemon: Fifty Years of US Policy toward the Middle East," *Middle East Journal* 50, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 329–43. pp. 331
[20] Cohen, "Truman, the Holocaust, and the Establishment of the State of Israel," pp. 82
[21] Cohen, "Truman, the Holocaust, and the Establishment of the State of Israel," pp. 82; Elizabeth Stephens, *US Policy toward Israel: The Role of Political Culture in Defining the "Special Relationship"* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2006). Pgs. 16-18
[22] Cohen, "Truman, the Holocaust, and the Establishment of the State of Israel," pp. 89

American policymakers and the public in the early years of Israel's existence that it was the moral duty of the U.S. to protect Israel from its Arab enemies.[23] Due to America's supportive actions during this period (despite its ups and downs and varying motivations), the American-Israeli relationship from the 1948 War to 1967 receives a 2 on the alliance scale.

The often turbulent American-Israeli relationship took a historic turn after the 1967 War. This war demonstrated Israel's military strength, shifting U.S. perceptions from viewing Israel as a liability to recognizing it as a strategic partner against Soviet influence and Arab radicalism.[24] The new posture of this relationship was reinforced in 1970, when the U.S. and Israeli militaries worked together during Jordan's Black September to protect Jordan King Hussein's regime from internal instability.[25] From then on, with Israel's strategic position in the region and its impressive and attractive military capabilities, the U.S. and Israel had an increasingly "special" relationship, moving up to be characterized as a 3 on the summary table.

The 1967 pivot in U.S.-Israel relations reflected a strategic shift. By allying with Israel, the U.S. sought to counter both Arab nationalism and Soviet influence, particularly as the USSR deepened its ties with Egypt, the region's dominant Arab power.[26] The Soviets increasingly supported Israel's inherent enemies, the surrounding Arab states, making the Arab-Israeli conflict another Cold War arena. As one of the two global superpowers, the U.S. had a vested interest in protecting its Western influence in the Middle East from Soviet infiltration. Even with

[23] Jerome Slater, "The Two Books of Mearsheimer and Walt," *Security Studies* 18, no. 1 (February 12, 2009): 4–57, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410802678106. pp. 56
[24] Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?," *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 2 (December 17, 2002): 231–62. pp. 232; Stephens, *US Policy toward Israel*, pp. 229; Cohen, "Truman, the Holocaust, and the Establishment of the State of Israel," pp. 334
[25] Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?," pp. 241
[26] Stephens, *US policy toward Israel*, pp. 27

its formidable military, this was difficult to guarantee from across the Atlantic Ocean. Therefore, when the democratic, Western-oriented Israel proved it was able to balance its Arab enemies and Soviet influence, choosing to create a strong alliance with Israel became the obvious choice for the U.S.. This cultivation shows that the strategic interest to balance threats necessary in the realist hypothesis is a crucial foundation for alliance formation.

As American financial and military support for Israel grew exponentially, the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War presented the U.S. with an opportunity to de-escalate the Arab-Israeli conflict, thereby asserting its influence and protecting its interest in regional stability.[27] Secretary of State Henry Kissinger transitioned the regional conflict from active warfare to a process of attempted peacemaking, which ultimately culminated in the Camp David Accords of 1978 under the Carter Administration.[28] The agreement fostered Israeli-Egyptian recognition, solidified massive amounts of U.S. aid to both nations, and reinforced U.S. dominance over the USSR in Middle Eastern diplomacy.

Notably, the American-Israeli aid relationship transformed significantly in the 1970s, beginning with the aftermath of Black September in 1970. U.S. aid surged from $140 million (1968-1970) to $1.15 billion (1971-1973), plus a $2.2 billion emergency package during the 1973 War.[29] Following Camp David in 1979, Israel received $3 billion in aid.[30] The U.S. also began providing billions in military aid and arms to Israel.[31] In return, the U.S. benefited from Israel's intelligence on the Middle East, which helped reduce its regional costs, and used Israeli

[27] Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?," pgs. 246-8
[28] Itamar Rabinovich, "Israel's 1973 October War: A 50-Year Perspective," *Brookings Institute*, October 3, 2023.
[29] Martha Wenger, "US Aid to Israel: From Handshake to Embrace," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, June 1990.
[30] "History & Overview of U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," *Jewish Virtual Library*, n.d., https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/history-and-overview-of-u-s-foreign-aid-to-israel.
[31] Bilmes et. al., "United States Spending on Israel's Military Operations and Related U.S. Operations in the Region"

territory to stage troops.[32] This aid reflects the U.S. strategy of leveraging Israel to counter Soviet influence in the region, supporting realist theory.

Nevertheless, the shared identity between Israel and the U.S. was reinforced during this time. After years of prominent media portrayals of Israelis overcoming Nazism to fulfill their own Manifest Destiny, American public sympathy and shared identity with Israel grew exponentially after the 1967 and 1973 Wars.[33] Even during the oil embargo of 1973, Americans blamed Arab states rather than Israel, viewing it as a Western ally opposing mutual, Communist, Soviet-backed threats.[34] "Identification with Israel was reinforced by the ease with which Americans could associate with the victory of a state which they perceived to share their own values."[35]

Like many conflicts during the Cold War, the Israeli victories over the surrounding Arab states in 1967 and 1973 were viewed by Americans as an American victory over the Soviets. During the Cold War, geopolitical concerns morphed with American identity and ideology. Feeling almost hysterically threatened by the expansionist, communist Soviet Union, the American public in the 1970s was highly supportive of the democratic state of Israel, whose citizens, in many people's lifetimes, went from fleeing religious persecution and battling British colonialism, to helping fight for American interests against our greatest geopolitical threat yet. While geopolitical concerns were the most tangible reason for U.S. policymakers to cultivate such a strong relationship during the 1970s, the sense of shared identity that Americans felt

[32] Michael J. Koplow, "Value Judgment: Why Do Americans Support Israel?," *Security Studies* 20, no. 2 (May 26, 2011): 266–302, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2011.572690.
[33] Amy Kaplan, *Our American Israel: The Story of an Entangled Alliance* (Harvard University Press, 2018). pgs. 59-60
[34] Stephens, *US policy toward Israel*, pp. 157
[35] Stephens, *US policy toward Israel*, pp. 155

toward Israel cannot be overlooked. Rooted in similar democratic values, opposition to communism, and remarkably parallel histories, American public support was critical for enabling U.S. aid during the 1970s.

Without this ideological backing, Congress would have faced greater public resistance in justifying such aid, particularly in the politically tumultuous post-Vietnam and Watergate era. Additionally, this ideology and shared identity led pro-Israeli Jews, Evangelical Christians, and other Americans to become a crucial voting bloc for U.S. politicians, and as the Zionist lobby increased in strength, for many politicians, supporting Israel became necessary to maintain power.[36] Thus, between the ideological aspect of shared identity, its influence as a voting force, and the coordination of their geopolitical relationship, both the realist and constructivist hypotheses of alliance formation contributed to strengthening U.S.-Israeli relations in the 1970s.

As the U.S. public continued to strengthen its cultural ties to Israel, the Reagan administration continued to recognize Israel as a strategic ally in the 1980s. To increase his momentum as a presidential candidate, Reagan "defined Israel as a strategic asset and the only reliable friend of the United States in the Middle East because of its democratic values and military power."[37] Furthermore, as president, Reagan offered unseen levels of military and economic assistance and formally recognized Israel's "special status" in the 1981 Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Cooperation, furthering its intentions to cooperate militarily on the threat of the Soviet Union.[38] Through the occasional ups and downs in the early to mid-1980s, the relationship was able to overcome challenges because of its strong cultural bond and shared geopolitical interests.[39]

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[36] Koplow, "Value Judgment: Why Do Americans Support Israel?"
[37] Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?," pp. 252
[38] Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?," pp. 253
[39] Meaning here Israeli attacks on the PLO and Lebanon and Reagan's subsequent temporary suspension of the MOU; Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?," pp. 255

b. American-Israeli Relationship (1991-2011)

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 transformed the entire landscape of international relations. Yet, the relationship between Israel and the United States remained increasingly unconditional. If balancing the threat of the Soviet Union's influence was the driving factor behind the strength of this alliance, in its absence, under the realist hypothesis of alliance formation, this relationship would weaken. Undoubtedly, the U.S. still had major interests in the region; however, without a major common threat for the U.S. and Israel to balance, there must be another explanation behind the continued strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Beyond maintaining its influence as the world's sole remaining superpower, the threats and interests the U.S. had in the Middle East following the fall of the Soviet Union included oil, rogue states, and terrorism—most notably constituting the containment of Iran and U.S. "wars on terror" in Afghanistan and Iraq. In the 1990s, one argument was that Israel could protect these U.S. interests by filling the power vacuum left by the Soviet Union to deter radical Arab regimes that threatened U.S. access to oil, broader American interests, and regional stability.[40] After the first Gulf War, the George H. W. Bush administration used its relationship with Israel—and the new regional and international conditions—to advance the American strategic goal of peaceful regional stability.[41]

While Israel did take part in the short-lived, Clinton-brokered Oslo Accords, Israel was wholly unhelpful in America's conflicts in the Middle East and also partially contributed to them. During both the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars, the U.S. discouraged Israeli involvement, recognizing that any military support from Israel would pose greater political risks than strategic

[40] Koplow, "Value Judgment: Why Do Americans Support Israel?"
[41] Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?," pp. 257

benefits.[42] In the aftermath of the U.S. military retaliation against the September 11 terrorist attacks, "Israel was sometimes seen as a hindrance rather than a help," with Osama Bin Laden citing the strength of the U.S.-Israeli relationship as one of the motives behind the attacks.[43] As argued by realists Mearsheimer and Walt, while Israel could have been considered a strategic asset during the Cold War, the view that it continued to be one during the U.S.'s post-Soviet Middle East conflicts is "at best outdated and at worst simply wrong."[44] As shown in the summary table, because of America's increasingly unconditional support of Israel—despite Israel's inability to help advance American interests in the region—the American-Israeli relationship moved from a 3 to a 4 on the alliance scale.

Despite this contradiction, public support held strong, and after a dip in support at the beginning of the Second Intifada, the shared identity between the U.S. and Israel was reinforced by the September 11 terrorist attacks.[45] "Identification with Israel sharpened the sense that the two countries shared a unique position in the world."[46] The portrayal of Israelis as resilient victims of terrorism resonated deeply, offering Americans a framework to process their own losses and a model of military vigilance against threats. This shift in public sentiment is evident in polling data: between August and September 2001, sympathy for Israel rose significantly, from 41% to 55%, while support for Palestinians dropped from 13% to 7%.[47] The American public was now able to understand and sympathize with the Israeli plight more deeply than before, as both nations had been viciously and directly attacked by the "evil" forces of Islamic

[42] Slater, "The Two Books of Mearsheimer and Walt," pp. 34
[43] Stephens, *US policy toward Israel*, pp. 233; "US Support for Israel Prompted 9/11 Attacks, Says Bin Laden Video," *France 24*, September 14, 2009, https://www.france24.com/en/20090914-us-support-israel-prompted-911-attacks-says-bin-laden-video-.
[44] John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007). pp. 50
[45] "Middle East," *Gallup*, October 16, 2024. https://news.gallup.com/poll/1639/middle-east.aspx.
[46] Kaplan, *Our American Israel: The Story of an Entangled Alliance*, pp. 239
[47] "Middle East," *Gallup.*

extremism. Thus, not only did 9/11 further merge the identities of the Israeli and American public, but "America's war on terror merged with Israel's war against the Palestinians both in rhetoric and practice, with each legitimating the other."[48]

Amidst the ill-fated wars on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan, President George W. Bush supported Israel's superiority "as a strategic American tool, and as a deterrent to regional powers which sought to play major roles in the region and threaten American and Western interests," continuing to give Israel billions of dollars in military and economic aid.[49] However, in critical retrospect, this logic did not hold. If Israel was supposed to be playing a major role in advancing our interests, why was it counter-effective in the multiple wars the U.S. was fighting with its neighbors? Why would the U.S. government keep giving Israel billions of dollars in military aid to protect American interests, when it was spending billions of more dollars fighting a losing war in part driven by its alignment with Israel? Although the alliance was initially strengthened to balance shared threats, that original major threat no longer existed. However, by the time the U.S. was engaged in the War on Terror in 2001, amidst so much instability and fear, the shared identity between the American public and government with Israel had become so strong and overwhelming that their ideological sentiments of the public and government officials reinforced each other, solidifying an unconditional, inescapably powerful relationship with Israel.

The lack of strategic factors isolates the fact that America's relationship with Israel has always been in the context of the American public's shared identity and the subsequent need for elected officials to appeal to the Jewish and Evangelical Christian vote, many for whom support

[48] Kaplan, *Our American Israel: The Story of an Entangled Alliance.* pp. 244
[49] Osama Anter Hamdi, "American Foreign Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Strategic Transformations," *Insight Turkey*, The Gulf on the Verge Global Challenges and Regional Dynamics, 20, no. 2 (Spring 2018): 251–72. pp. 252

of Israel was a deciding factor in their vote.[50] Over the years, Americans were able to identify the parallel history between the founding of the American state and that of Israel–independence of British colonialism and subsequent "settler colonialism expressed in biblical narratives of exceptionalism"—the common ideology of liberal democracy, and the common threats both faced.[51] American government officials aroused this ideological sympathy to guarantee support for Israeli aid to protect its geopolitical interests in the region—a balance of power logic that ordinary Americans might not always understand.Subsequently, American voters (and lobbyists) ensured that any anti-Israel elected official would either change their views or get voted out.[52] Therefore, in the absence of the Soviet threat, ideological sympathy through shared identity was the primary factor behind unconditionally supportive U.S. policy toward Israel in the 21st century. Moreover, when determining the driving factor of unconditional, devoted cross-regional alliances in the abstract, the U.S.-Israeli relationship is a prime source of evidence that it is ideological. However, to prove this abstract question with certainty, it is necessary to examine the Anglo-Israeli relationship and why it is not as strong as America's.

c. Anglo-Israeli Relationship (1956-1967)

Even though British interest in the Palestine mandate was originally driven by a strategic interest in the Suez Canal, by the time the British left in 1947, they had created a somewhat hostile relationship with the soon-to-be state of Israel, and its relationships with their Arab allies–crucial to their geopolitical strategy and oil access–were harmed immensely.[53] As Britain fled its failed colonial project, it had to determine how to restrategize and regain hold of its interests. Approximately 85% of British petroleum came from the Middle East during this

[50] Koplow, "Value Judgment: Why Do Americans Support Israel?"
[51] Kaplan, *Our American Israel*, pgs. 4-5
[52] Koplow, "Value Judgment: Why Do Americans Support Israel?"
[53] Jonathan Spyer, "An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 8, no. 2 (June 2004). ; David Fromkin, "The Settlement of the Middle Eastern Question," in *A Peace To End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East*, 1989.

period, and the British had robust trade relationships with Arab states, so it had to cultivate a strategy that balanced these interests.[54] As briefed in the summary table, this included recognizing Israel and incorporating it into the Western order against the Soviet Union threat on one hand; but on the other hand, it maintained a relatively weak relationship, with many Israelis still resentful of the British and the British concerned with Arab interests, thus characterized as 1 on the alliance scale.[55]

Because of Britain's complex and clashing interests, the main goal of its presence in the Middle East has always been to maintain the fragile peace, particularly preventing the Arab-Israeli conflict from erupting.[56] Despite this, the British-initiated Suez Crisis was a rare instance of major Anglo-Israeli geopolitical coordination, especially in the face of U.S. opposition. It began when Egyptian President Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956, detrimentally harming Britain's ability to trade in the region. To regain access to the Suez, the British Foreign Minister proposed a top-secret plan for British "intervention" if Israel invaded Egypt, with the central Israeli demand that the British destroy the Egyptian air force as soon as possible after war had broken out."[57] Thus, the Israelis invaded and the British and French "intervened" while U.S. President Eisenhower planned to impose sanctions on Israel in the UN.[58]

[54] Spyer, "An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel"
[55] "UK's Inconsistency over Arms Sales to Israel Could Make It Complicit in Gaza Deaths and Destruction-Oxfam," *Oxfam*, April 12 2024, https://www.oxfam.org.uk/media/press-releases/uks-inconsistency-over-arms-sales-to-israel-could-make-it-complicit-in-gaza-deaths-and-destruction-oxfam/.
[56] Moshe Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War, June 1967: From Support to Hostility," *Contemporary British History* 8, no. 1 (August 5, 2006): 54–77, https://doi.org/10.1080/13619460420002173O1. pp. 55
[57] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67*. pp. 55
[58] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67.* pp. 55 and 75

The British decision on the sanction vote was indicative of its situation in the region after the Suez Crisis. On the one hand, if Britain voted on the side of the Arabs, it would be seen as a sell-out to the Egyptians for the Suez, show their subservience to the U.S., and cause conflict with Israel which could expose them for initiating the plan; however, on the other, voting for Israel would harm Britain's relationship with Arab nations crucial to their political and economic wellbeing.[59] Therefore, the British abstained from the vote.

Nevertheless, in the wake of this collaboration and regional developments in 1956, "Israel and Britain enjoyed a warm and friendly relationship characterised by Britain's absolute commitment to Israel's survival."[60] After Israel's stunning performance in the Suez conflict, it was clear to Britain that Israel was the strongest fighting force in the region. Hence, it was in British strategic interest to ensure Israel's strength to prevent the "further toppling of traditional and halting the spread of anti-Western Pan-Arab nationalism" which harmed crucial British oil and trade access in the region.[61]

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Britain's support for Israel manifested in two key ways: public declarations of Israeli support and the establishment of a limited arms trade. First, Prime Minister Macmillian explicitly backed Israel's right of passage through the Straits of Tiran in a speech to the House of Commons in early 1957.[62] Second, the British lifted its 1953 arms embargo on Israel in 1958.[63] While this did not include the sale of top-of-line Chieftain tanks that Israel requested—due to Britain's Arab interests—it did include the slightly less sophisticated

[59] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67.* pp 75
[60] Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War, June 1967: From Support to Hostility." pp. 54
[61] Spyer, "An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel."
[62] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67.* pp. 76
[63] In the context of a bettering relationship, the lifting of the embargo was a direct consequence of the 1958 Iraqi Revolution; Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War." pp. 56 ; "UK's Inconsistency over Arms Sales to Israel Could Make It Complicit in Gaza Deaths and Destruction-Oxfam," *Oxfam*, April 12 2024.

Centurion tank.[64] Thus, starting after the Suez Crisis, the Anglo-Israeli alliance could be moved up to a 2 on the alliance scale.[65]

Although Britain and Israel shared elements of a Western, democratic identity in their opposition to Soviet communism, British officials emphasized that their support for Israel was driven by strategic interests rather than ideological alignment. Rather, as said by the British Ambassador to Israel Michael Haddow, "We do not give the Israelis arms because they are pro-western or because we admire their achievement. We give them arms because our interests in the Middle East are to keep the place quiet, and to prevent war. Anything which makes war in the Middle East more likely is against the interests of the Western powers."[66] Further, in 1958 as the UAR was forming, Israel Prime Minister Ben-Gurion wanted to enter a "tacit alliance similar to its alliance with France," and the British declined for "obvious reasons."[67] These reasons were that while supporting Israel was beneficial for the time being, Britain knew that, especially given their complex and vested interests in the reason, this could change, and they did not want to get into a commitment that would harm their interests in the future. Even more, in 1966, Haddow stated clearly that while the British were the closest thing Israel had to "family," this was a position the British were very reluctant to accept as it came with many disadvantages.[68]

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[64] Simon C. Smith, "Centurions and Chieftains: Tank Sales and British Policy towards Israel in the Aftermath of the Six-Day War," *Contemporary British History* 28, no. 2 (June 20, 2014): 219–39, https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2014.930348. pp. 220

[65] At the time of the Suez Crisis in late 1956, this relationship fits the criteria of a 3 since they were in direct conflict and Britain provided declared and physical support; however, since this was a brief and standout period in the Anglo-Israeli relationship, I am operationalizing their bettering relationship as a 1 to a 2.

[66] Spyer, "An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel.

[67] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-1967*. pp. 131

[68] Arieh Kochavi, "George Brown and the British Policy Towards Israel in the Aftermath of the Six-Day War," *Israel Studies* 22, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 1–23, https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.22.1.0. pp. 3

This low-level, non-devoted alliance from 1956 to 1967 was driven primarily by geopolitical interests of balancing the regional threats of Arab nationalism and the global threat of Soviet expansion. Some could classify this as evidence for the realist hypothesis of alliance formation; however, a final analysis of this evidence cannot be determined until compared to the factors leading to the relationship's demise in 1967.

This short period of improving Anglo-Israeli relations came to a halt after the 1967 War. As established in 1957, the British explicitly supported free Israeli passage through the Straits of Tiran, and, per the 1957 Settlement, Israelis had free passage of the Gulf of Aqaba.[69] Therefore, when Nasser announced over the radio these waterways were closed, war became inevitable.[70] "Not only was Nasser challenging Israel, but he was challenging those Western powers, including Britain, that had pledged to defend the right of free passage in the Straits."[71] Eventually acknowledging that there was no possibility of a diplomatic resolution—or one that involved the British—Britain was hoping for an Israeli victory, but couldn't do much to aid them in it.[72] A victory for the Arab states would increase Nasser's prestige, Soviet support, and the possibility that the UAR would be consolidated and British oil and trade interests in the region would be harmed; however, "the harm that such an open identification with Israel might do to British political and economic interests in the region was clear."[73] So, following their interests to the best of their ability, the British watched Israel invade Egypt and Syria's airfields from afar on June 5, 1967, and win a decisive victory in just six days.

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[69] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67.* pp. 245
[70] Jonathan Isacoff, "Writing the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Historical Bias and the Use of History in Political Science," *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 3, No. 1 (2005) pp. 79
[71] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67.* pp. 245
[72] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67.* pp. 249- 251
[73] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67.* pp 254; Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War."; Spyer, "An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel."

d. Anglo-Israeli relationship (1967-1974)

After 1967, Britain shifted its stance against Israel to regain Arab favor and protect its interests, responding to accusations of collusion, the closure of the Suez Canal, and an oil embargo.[74] Moreover, with this decisive victory and the subsequent increase in U.S. support, Britain knew that lessening its support to regain Arab trust would not put Israel in any serious danger.[75]

Thus, in the days and weeks following the war, Britain began its appeals to Arab states claiming it had not supported Israel during the war, it demanded Israel withdraw from occupied territories, and that it sympathized with the suffering, displaced Arab population.[76] The British government saw that Israel had become overly confident and refused to consider the interests of its allies, with its extremism and expansionism increasingly radicalizing the Arab world.[77] Britain's aim in the Middle East was to maintain a peaceful status quo to protect its interests of oil, trade, and investment with the Arab world, and Israel was a major threat to these interests. Further, the British believed that the Soviet strategy for regaining influence in the region after the defeat was eliminating Western influence by identifying the U.S. and Britain with Israel. While the U.S. strategy to counter this was drawing closer to Israel and exacerbating support, Britain wanted to make its divergence with the U.S. strategy clear, as the Foreign Office was determined to keep as much influence as possible with the Arabs.[78]

[74] Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War." pp. 62
[75] Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War." pp. 63
[76] Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War." pp. 64
[77] Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War." pp. 64
[78] Kochavi, "George Brown and the British Policy Towards Israel in the Aftermath of the Six-Day War." pp. 2, 4

Between 1967 and 1973, British policy shifted toward pro-Arab positions to safeguard oil supplies and trade, even as Israel's security concerns intensified, underscoring its prioritization of geopolitical interests over ideological alignment.[79] While arms sales to Israel did not cease until the embargo of 1973, the Arab states were also major clients of British arms sales and trade. Further, as Israel fought the low-grade war of attrition with Egypt, skirmishes with Syria, and operations against the PLO, British Middle East policy favored Arab states. Thus, starting with Britain's posture toward Israel in the 1967 War, as outlined in the summary table, the relationship decreased to a 1 on the alliance scale.

When Egypt and Syria invaded Israel in 1973, the British government decided the best course of action was to impose an arms embargo on both the Arabs and Israelis to not sacrifice its ability to influence future regional peace initiatives and Arab oil policy.[80] Even further, the USSR supplied Arab states with weapons, making the embargo effectively one-sided.[81] The U.S. pushed Britain to reconsider supporting Israel, but the British refused to condemn the aggression against Israel or allow the U.S. to resupply Israel from British bases.[82]

This is not to say that public opinion and many Labour MPs in Parliament did not have ideological sympathies toward Israel– the Foreign Office and the ruling Conservative Party faced a major domestic backlash that factored into their 1974 election loss.[83] Nevertheless, because of the relative weakness of this ideological support and shared identity, the insulation of the Foreign Office from public opinion, and the strength of British geopolitical interests in maintaining

[79] Geraint Hughes, "Britain, the Transatlantic Alliance, and the Arab-Israeli War of 1973," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2008), https://muse-jhu-edu.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/article/237150.
[80] Smith, "Centurions and Chieftains." pp. 231
[81] Smith, "Centurions and Chieftains." pp. 231
[82] Smith, "Centurions and Chieftains." pp. 231; Robert Philpot, "The Yom Kippur War and British Politics," *Fathom Journal*, June 2020.
[83] Philpot, "The Yom Kippur War and British Politics."

relations and influence with Arab states, ideological sympathy played little to no role in influencing the British's increasingly hostile relations toward Israel.

The situation following the 1973 War continued on the path of rocky, weak relations between the two countries. Most, if not all, British support toward Israel has been pushed by its alignment with the U.S. Additionally, both the British public and government have followed the European mood of increased sympathies toward the Palestinians and increased hostility toward Israel.[84] This evolution proves once more that if there are any vestiges of ideological sympathy or shared identity in Britain, they have not shaped foreign policy decision-makers to cultivate a devoted alliance with Israel, Instead, Britain's weak relationship with Israel stems primarily from its regional geopolitical interests. Moreover, contemporary policies that diverge from U.S. positions reflect ideological apathy toward Israel and growing sympathy for the Palestinians.[85]

The Anglo-Israeli relationship weakened due to shifting strategic interests, while the American-Israeli relationship strengthened into an unconditional alliance, even in the absence of a shared strategic threat, due to its shared identity. This contrast helps answer the question of *what causes devoted cross-regional alliances:* shared identity, ideological alignment, and the support of an ideologically driven voter base. Importantly, this does not suggest that ideology alone drives alliances. Instead, the key distinction between the U.S. and U.K. relationships with Israel lies in the U.S.'s shared identity with Israel, which fosters a devoted alliance, unlike Britain's more tenuous connection through the United States.

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[84] Spyer, "An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel."; BenLevi, Raphael, Amnon Cavari, and Lesley Terris. 2019. "Global Public Opinion toward Israel: Mapping and Assessing the Determinants of Public Attitudes in 45 Countries." *Israel Affairs* 25 (6): 1006–25. doi:10.1080/13537121.2019.1670442.
[85] Stephen Castle and Mark Lander, "U.K.'s Policy on Israel, Long Aligned With America's, Veers Away," *New York Times*, July 25, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/25/world/europe/uk-israel-gaza-war-policy.html.

e. Current postures toward Israel

Amidst Israel's current assault on Gaza, this argument still holds but has nonetheless shifted in the U.S. case. Following the October 7, 2023 invasion of Hamas–which killed 1,200 and made 250 hostages– the Israeli military invasions into the Gaza Strip and subsequently the West Bank have killed over 40,000 Palestinians and wounded almost 100,000.[86] Israel's destruction of Palestinian territory would not have been possible without Western support, particularly the controversially high levels of aid and weapons from the U.S.

Since then, as of September 2024, the U.S. government has approved at least $17.9 billion in security assistance for Israeli military operations in Gaza and elsewhere.[87] On top of that, the U.S. has approved billions of dollars of weapons transfers, much of the reporting of which is decentralized or classified.[88] This monstrous amount of money and weapons is unlike any aid the U.S. has provided to Israel or any other nation. High levels of U.S. support in 2023 were initially driven by reinforcing, ideological U.S. government and public support; however, the American public's unprecedented decline in support toward Israel complicates this argument.

When Hamas attacked Israel and subsequently invaded, Israeli support amongst the American public was relatively high: an Economist/YouGov poll just a week after the invasion marked 48% of Americans more sympathetic to Israel, only 10% more sympathetic to Palestinians, and 23% sympathetic to both.[89] Further, a few months into the war, 58% of

[86] "Israel/OPT: One Year on from 7 October Need to Ensure a Ceasefire and Release of Hostages More Pressing than Ever," *Amnesty International*, October 7, 2024, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/10/israel-opt-one-year-on-from-7-october-need-to-ensure-a-ceasefire-and-release-of-hostages-more-pressing-than-ever/. ; "41,788 Palestinians Killed in Gaza Offensive since Oct. 7," *Reuters*

[87] Blimes et. al. "United States Spending on Israel's Military Operations and Related U.S. Operations in the Region."

[88] Blimes et. al. "United States Spending on Israel's Military Operations and Related U.S. Operations in the Region."

[89] David Montgomery, "What Americans Think About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" (The Economist/YouGov, October 4, 2024), https://today.yougov.com/politics/articles/50639-what-americans-think-about-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict

Americans said Israel's reasons for fighting Hamas were valid, compared to 22% for Hamas.[90] This support was evidence of a continuation of the narrative of shared identity and ideological solidarity, as there was little strategic reasoning for such astronomical U.S. support. As it has been historically, the common notion after the invasion was that the U.S. needed to protect Israel from its Islamic terrorist neighbors. This initial, ideologically-driven public sentiment allowed for such strong support from the U.S. government.

Nevertheless, as Israel continued killing tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, American public support for Israel decreased dramatically. In the same Economist/YouGov poll that has continued since the outbreak of the war, as of November 16, 2024, American sympathy for Israel has dropped to 31%, while sympathy for both has risen to 30% and sympathy for Palestinians has risen to 16%.[91] This shift was particularly prominent among members of the Democratic Party, a plurality of which (34%) sympathized with Israel in the October 2023 Economist/YouGov poll, with a minority (15%) sympathizing with Israel in the subsequent November 16, 2024 poll.[92] The failure of the U.S. government, the Biden Administration, and the Democratic Party to reflect this ideological shift, continuing to give billions of dollars in aid and weaponry, some argue, contributed to the Democratic Party's loss in the 2024 election.[93]

Compared to the United States, the U.K. has provided significantly less support for Israel. In the 21st century, influenced by European postcolonial public opinion and greater sympathy toward Palestinians, the U.K.'s declaratory stance has been neutral, emphasizing respect for

[90] Laura Silver et al., "Majority in U.S. Say Israel Has Valid Reasons for Fighting; Fewer Say the Same About Hamas" (Pew Research Center, March 21, 2024), https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep58485.
[91] Montgomery, "What Americans Think About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict"
[92] Montgomery, "What Americans Think About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict"
[93] Peter Beinart, "Democrats Ignored Gaza and Brought Down Their Party," *New York Times*, November 7, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/07/opinion/democrats-israel-gaza-war.html.

international law.[94] As of October 2024, a majority of the British public (60%) believes Israel's military actions in Gaza have gone too far, compared to just 12% who view the response as appropriate.[95] Further, when asked about responsibility for the conflict, the British public slightly favored blaming the Israeli government over Hamas by a margin of 2%.[96] Reflecting this public sentiment, the U.K. has provided Israel with only a fraction of the military support given by the U.S., accounting for less than 1% of Israeli defense imports in 2022 and even less in 2023; moreover, as of September 2024, the U.K. suspended 30 arms export licenses to Israel, including components for F-16 aircraft and targeting systems.[97]

Britain's lack of ideological sympathy for Israel continues to shape its foreign policy, driven instead primarily by geopolitical interests and a degree of postcolonial apathy. In contrast, the U.S. faces unprecedented polarization in public and government attitudes toward Israel. In the face of such fragmented ideology and lack of strategic interest in providing mass amounts of support to Israel, what is driving this unconditional, unprecedented American support to Israel? Given the factors that have shaped U.S. policy toward Israel to date, the only explanation for America's resource-depleting, interest-harming, international law-defying, devoted, support toward Israel in 2024 is the remnants of such potent ideology and shared identity that have tied the U.S. and Israel together.[98] Despite the shifts in American public opinion, support for Israel is still strong, especially compared to that of our Western allies like the U.K. and EU. That potent

[94] Efraim Sicher, "The Image of Israel and Postcolonial Discourse in the Early 21st Century: A View from Britain," *Israel Studies* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.2979/isr.2011.16.1.1. ; Raphael BenLevi, Amnon Cavari, and Lesley Terris, "Global Public Opinion toward Israel: Mapping and Assessing the Determinants of Public Attitudes in 45 Countries," *Israel Affairs* 25, no. 6 (October 1, 2019): 1006–25, https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2019.1670442.
[95] Kelly Beaver, Gideon Skinner, and Keiran Pedley, "UK Attitudes toward the Conflict in Israel and Gaza" (Ipsos, October 4, 2024), https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/uk-attitudes-toward-conflict-israel-and-gaza.
[96] Beaver et. al., "UK Attitudes toward the Conflict in Israel and Gaza"
[97] Louisa Brooke-Holland, "UK Arms Exports to Israel," *UK Parliament*, October 23, 2024, https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9964/.
[98] Jon Hoffman, "Israel Is a Strategic Liability for the United States," *Cato Institute*, March 22, 2024, https://www.cato.org/commentary/israel-strategic-liability-united-states.

ideology of shared identity and sympathy, and the belief that it will be a make-or-break issue for voters still evidently holds strong within the American government, even if it is irrational and came at a political cost to President Biden and Vice President Harris in the 2024 election.

IV. Conclusion

Britain's weakening relationship with Israel after the 1967 War, driven by strategic interests and a lack of shared identity, contrasts with America's strengthening alliance, even as Israel's strategic value diminished after the Cold War. This demonstrates that while alliances require a strategic foundation, a sense of shared identity makes them truly devoted. This has profound implications for the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the broader discussion of alliance formation and longevity.

America and Israel are in unprecedented, some might say irrational, times, and since the Trump administration is a staunch supporter of Israel, it is unlikely that this support will slow.[99] Nevertheless, the international community continues to condemn Israel's human rights violations, and the U.S. public is becoming increasingly critical of such. In the short term, as the Trump administration takes the reins on the conflict, it is unlikely America's general support toward Israel will wane or the relationship will become any less special.

However, in the long term, as the Trump administration implements a stance that will swell American frustration, if and when the ideology of shared identity subsequently weakens, the "special relationship" will likely fall through. If that time comes, Israel will not have unconditional support from the great U.S. power, and it will be forced to adapt militarily and politically. Although the United States has always wanted to be the peace broker of the

[99] Liam Stack, "Trump Has History of Strong Support for Israel," *The New York Times*, November 6, 2024, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/06/world/middleeast/trump-israel-support.html.

Arab-Israeli conflict, without the encouragement and economic and military support from the world's strongest power, Israel—, facing a lack of resources and international support—will be forced to cultivate a peaceful solution to its conflicts with the Palestinians and neighboring Arab states. On the other hand, if American public backlash subsides and the U.S. government continues on its current trajectory, the consequences for the Palestinian population will continue to be detrimental. Nevertheless, the question remains, how did the American public get tasked with the role of constraining its increasingly irrational and harmful foreign policy establishment? Will Americans step up to the task? Only time will tell.

To predict the future, we must look at the past. The relationships between Britain, the United States, and Israel provide some of the most valuable insights into great powers and alliances in recent centuries. Notably, the former and current great powers, the U.K. and the U.S., share a "special relationship" of their own. As a former British colony, the U.S. and Britain had a close but sometimes rocky relationship until the World Wars of the twentieth century.[100] Amid shifting power dynamics in the twentieth century, they forged an unconditional alliance based on strategic interests and a shared identity. Reflecting on this history in the context of Israel's rise to power raises a key question: how might these past patterns influence the future of their alliances with Israel?

Outside of this particular conflict, this explanation of alliance endurance and formation has a unique place within international relations scholarship. Instead of emphasizing one theory over another, my argument constitutes that as alliances evolve and strengthen, the application of realist alliance theory gives way to constructivist theory. This unique approach begs further questions: outside of the context of America's robust, often ideologically-driven alliances, do

[100] "The Evolution of US-UK Relations," *Geopolitical Futures*, July 3, 2020, https://geopoliticalfutures.com/the-evolution-of-us-uk-relations/

other states behave this way? As rising powers have the increasing ability to make their threats global, and ideology becomes more potent and polarized across the world, will alliances like that of the U.S. and Israel continue to form? Here I encourage one to research and cultivate scholarship that examines constructivist theories of alliance formation that do not include the United States to isolate whether this is an international phenomenon caused by the U.S., or if it just constitutes multiple strong examples.

No matter the conclusion to these questions, this analysis shows that in the ever-changing world of international relations and alliances, with the force of ideology increasing, policymakers and citizens alike must critically examine whether the alliances they devote so much time and resources to are accomplishing their initial strategic objectives or if ideology has taken over and is doing both states more harm than good. It is human nature to align with those who share our histories and values, but doing so while disregarding other crucial factors is a process we must learn to control for the sake of our country and our allies.

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