

**TRACING THE ISRAEL LOBBY'S ROLE IN PUSHING UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA STRIKES ON IRANIAN NUCLEAR SITES IN
THE ISRAEL-IRAN WAR 2025**

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

Submitted to the State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya to fulfill one of the requirements for obtaining the title of Bachelor of Social Sciences (S.Sos.) in the field of
International Relations



**UIN SUNAN AMPEL
S U R A B A Y A**

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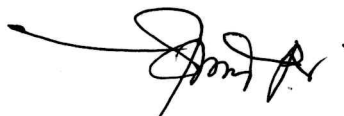
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ABSTRACT

Rayden Muhammad Hariswan 2026, *"Tracing the Israel Lobby's Role in Pushing United States of America Strikes on Iranian Nuclear Sites in the Israel–Iran War 2025."* Undergraduate Thesis, International Relations Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya, 2026.

This study examines the extent to which AIPAC shaped the United States decision to conduct Operation Midnight Hammer limited airstrikes on nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan during the Israel–Iran War of June 2025. Using a qualitative explanatory design with process tracing, grounded in Putnam's Two-Level Game theory and State-Lobby Symbiosis framework, the study traces three causal mechanisms: AIPAC's narrative framing of Iran as a nuclear aggressor, congressional mobilization through House Resolution 521 and neutralization of War Powers constraints, and domestic win-set expansion that reduced executive political cost for intervention. Data was drawn from congressional records, AIPAC action alerts, DoD statements, and campaign finance data. Findings demonstrate that AIPAC did not cause the war but decisively shaped its form, making a limited strike the most politically viable outcome. The AIPAC-skeptical bloc failed to impose binding constraints due to agenda control and electoral deterrence.

Keywords: AIPAC; Two-Level Game; State-Lobby Symbiosis; Operation Midnight Hammer; Win-Set Expansion; Process Tracing; War Powers; Israel–Iran War 2025

MOTTO

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ
الرَّحِيمِ

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الَّذِينَ فَسَدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَحْنُ

مُصْلِحُونَ أَلَا إِنَّمَا هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ

صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ

"And when it is said to them, 'Do not cause corruption on the earth,' they say, 'We are only reformers.' Unquestionably, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive it not."

QS. Al-Baqarah: 11-12¹

"Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand. If he cannot, then with his tongue. If he cannot, then with his heart and that is the weakest of faith."

— **HR. Muslim, No. 49²**

“Trust, but verify!”

— **Russian Proverb**

¹ “Surah Al-Baqarah - 11-12,” Quran.com, accessed April 6, 2026, <https://quran.com/id/sapi-betina/11-12>.

² “Sahih Muslim 49a - The Book of Faith - كتاب الإيمان - Sunnah.Com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم),” accessed April 6, 2026, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:49a>.

PREFACE

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. All praise belongs to Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*, Lord of the worlds, the One who grants knowledge and guidance. By His permission this work reaches completion, and to Him all gratitude. O Allah, send blessings upon our master Muhammad, the opener of what was closed, the seal of what came before, the helper of truth by the truth, and the guide to Your straight path, and upon his family and his companions according to his immense rank and greatness.

The completion of this thesis, submitted as one of the requirements for obtaining the degree of Bachelor of Social Sciences (S.Sos.) in International Relations at Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, would not have been possible without the grace of Allah and the generosity of countless individuals and institutions. I offer my deepest gratitude to:

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10. All counterparts who contributed to this research in ways both visible and unseen may Allah record every act of support as a deed of goodness and reward each one abundantly.

The researcher recognizes that this thesis remains imperfect due to limitations in knowledge, experience, and access to information. Constructive criticism and scholarly suggestions are therefore welcomed to improve this research and contribute to the academic discussion on lobbying, foreign policy, and international security.

Surabaya, 7 April 2026



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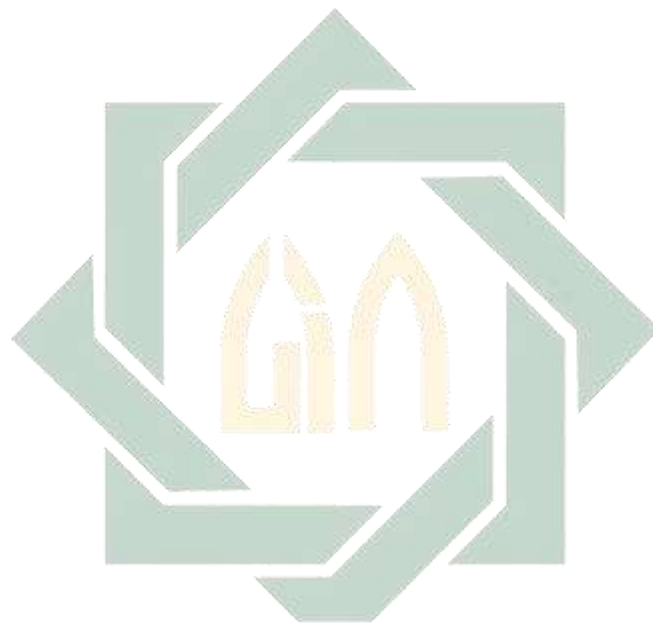
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

The Israel-Iran War of June 2025 marked a critical moment in Middle East security politics due to the escalation from indirect proxy confrontation to open interstate military action. The immediate trigger was Israel's decision to conduct a preemptive direct strike against Iranian nuclear related facilities and associated military personnel³. This escalation occurred amid heightened international concern regarding Iran's accelerated uranium enrichment activities and deteriorating cooperation with international monitoring mechanisms. Despite these happenings served as the war's strategic backdrop, America's reaction during an unstable crisis period was impacted by both domestic political circumstances and regional security concerns when judging the war's importance to US foreign policy⁴.

For Israel, Iran's nuclear program had long been framed as an existential threat requiring decisive action. This security narrative intensified during early 2025 following assessments that Iran had expanded enrichment capacity and reduced transparency toward the International Atomic Energy Agency⁵. Israeli

³ Yonah Jeremy Bob, "IDF Strikes Iran Nuclear Targets, Military Commanders | The Jerusalem Post," The Jerusalem Post | JPost.Com, June 13, 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-857575>.

⁴ Samuel W. Lewis, "The United States and Israel: Evolution of an Unwritten Alliance," *Middle East Journal* 53, no. 3 (1999): 364–78, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4329351>.

⁵ Claire Mills and John Curtis, *Israel-Iran 2025: Developments in Iran's Nuclear Programme and Military Action*, Research Briefing no. 10284 (2025), <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10284/CBP-10284.pdf>.

Government presented these developments as evidence that diplomatic containment had failed. This framing provided the justification for Israel's June 13 strike, which targeted enrichment facilities, research sites, and senior figures linked to Iran's nuclear and missile programs. The operation represented a departure from Israel's prior reliance on covert action and proxy conflict, transforming the strategic environment into an overt bilateral war.

Questions about the United States of America stance were raised as soon as direct hostilities broke out. The Second Trump administration that took office at the start of 2025 placed a strong emphasis on transactional diplomacy and prudence, including resuming negotiations with Tehran. At the same time, the administration reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to Israeli security. Whenever open confrontation broke out, this dual position narrowed the decision space. In what Israeli officials presented as a pivotal security moment, U.S. policymakers had to balance responding to Israel's request for strategic support with preventing regional conflict⁶.

In this setting, domestic political dynamics in the United States became central to shaping foreign policy responses. Support for Israel within American politics has long rested on a dense network of institutional, legislative, and societal actors⁷. Among these, organized lobbying groups occupy a pivotal position by translating Israeli security concerns into domestic political incentives. During the

⁶ Farshad Roomi, "The Iran-Israel Conflict: An Ultra-Ideological Explanation," *Middle East Policy* 30, no. 2 (June 2023): 94–109, <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12687>.

⁷ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *THE ISRAEL LOBBY AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

2025 crisis, these mechanisms operated under severe time constraints, testing the capacity of lobbying organizations to mobilize influence rapidly rather than through long term agenda setting.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee or (AIPAC) occupies a central position within this lobbying ecosystem. AIPAC functions as a policy advocacy organization that maintains sustained engagement with members of Congress, executive branch officials, and affiliated policy networks. Its activities include legislative outreach, policy briefings, donor coordination, and the cultivation of elite consensus on issues related to Israeli security. Although formally nonpartisan, AIPAC's influence rests on its ability to shape bipartisan legislative behavior through political signaling and agenda framing⁸.

In recent years, this influence has expanded through affiliated political action structures. Since 2021, pro-Israel lobbying networks associated with AIPAC have engaged more directly in electoral politics through Super PAC activity. These mechanisms enable the translation of foreign policy preferences into concrete electoral incentives by supporting candidates aligned with pro-Israel positions and opposing those viewed as insufficiently supportive. By the time of the 2024 election cycle, this infrastructure had become a visible component of congressional politics, reinforcing perceptions that deviation from established pro-Israel policy positions carries political costs⁹.

⁸ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt.

⁹ Nora Maher, "Balancing Deterrence: Iran-Israel Relations in a Turbulent Middle East," *Review of Economics and Political Science* 8, no. 3 (July 2023): 226–45, <https://doi.org/10.1108/REPS-06-2019-0085>.

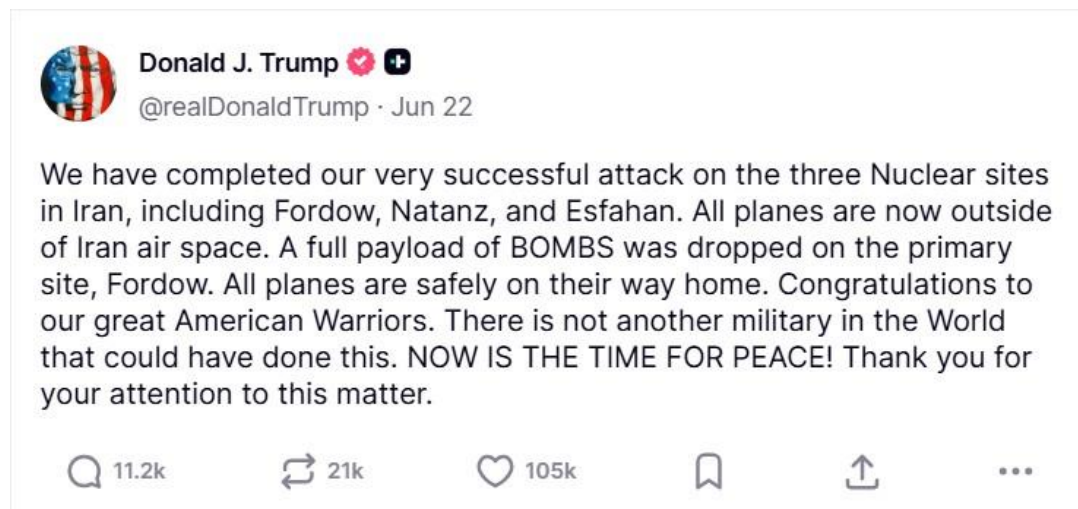


Picture 0.1 "U.S. airstrikes target Iranian nuclear facilities."

Source: <https://understandingwar.org/map/confirmed-us-strikes-in-iran-june-22-2025-at-500-am-et/>

When Israel initiated military operations against Iran on June 13, 2025, AIPAC and aligned advocacy organizations moved quickly to frame the conflict within the United States domestic arena. Public statements characterized Israel's actions as preventive and defensive, emphasizing the alleged global implications of Iran's nuclear progress¹⁰. This framing sought to align Israeli military objectives with broader United States security interests rather than presenting them as narrow regional concerns. Such narratives were designed to resonate with legislators already predisposed toward maintaining Israel's qualitative military advantage.

¹⁰ MEE staff, "How US Leaders, Lawmakers and Civil Society Reacted to Israel's Strikes on Iran," *Middle East Eye*, n.d., accessed September 4, 2025, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/how-us-politicians-lawmakers-and-civil-society-reacted-israel-strike-iran>.



Picture 1.2 U.S. leader confirms strikes via Truth Social.

Source: <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/114724035571020048>

This lobbying effort transforms into congressional action. Within days of the initial strike, members of the House of Representatives introduced resolutions commending Israel's military operation and reaffirming the United States commitment to Israeli security. These measures did not authorize direct military force, yet they signaled legislative approval for expanded support. The speed with which these initiatives emerged reflected the effectiveness of preexisting lobbying channels that enabled coordinated messaging between advocacy groups and lawmakers during a fast-moving crisis.

Parallel dynamics unfolded in the Senate. Senior party leaders publicly emphasized that preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons constituted a core national security priority of the United States. These statements reinforced a bipartisan framing that narrowed the range of politically acceptable responses to the conflict. Notably, congressional leadership refrained from advancing measures

aimed at restricting executive authority over military action. This absence of institutional resistance played a significant role in preserving executive flexibility at a moment when the administration faced pressure to demonstrate resolve¹¹.

Beyond formal legislative action, pro-Israel lobbying networks activated elite signaling mechanisms within the national security community. Policy institutes closely aligned with Israel published open letters and statements endorsed by retired military officers and former intelligence officials. These interventions framed support for Israel as consistent with professional security assessments rather than ideological alignment. The circulation of such endorsements contributed to an atmosphere in which military assistance and direct intervention appeared as prudent extensions of established security doctrine.

This convergence of lobbying activity, congressional alignment, and elite endorsement shaped the domestic political environment confronting the White House. While strategic considerations regarding deterrence and alliance credibility remained relevant, the political costs of non-intervention increased sharply. The administration faced a scenario in which restraint risked being interpreted domestically as abandonment of an ally during a moment of acute threat. Within this context, lobbying efforts did not operate as isolated pressure points but as part of a broader system that structured political incentives during crisis decision making.

¹¹ Josh Christenson, *GOP Leaders, pro-Israel Dems Affirm Support for Israel after Preemptive Strikes on Iran*, June 13, 2025, <https://nypost.com/2025/06/13/us-news/gop-leaders-pro-israel-dems-affirm-support-for-israel-after-preemptive-strikes-on-iran/>.

On June 22, 2025, the United States conducted limited airstrikes against Iranian nuclear facilities, including the underground site at Fordow and infrastructure associated with enrichment at Natanz. The operation was presented as precise and contained, emphasizing its deterrent purpose rather than regime change objectives. President Donald Trump publicly framed the strikes as necessary to neutralize an imminent threat while warning Tehran against further escalation. This messaging sought to reconcile domestic demands for support of Israel with broader concerns about regional stability¹².

Iran's following missile response against United States assets in the Gulf region underscored the risks inherent in the decision to intervene. Although the attack resulted in no casualties, it highlighted how quickly limited military actions could trigger wider confrontation¹³. These developments intensified debates regarding the extent to which domestic political pressure influenced the United States decision to employ force rather than pursue continued diplomatic restraint.

The events of the Twelve Day War thus provide a concentrated empirical setting for examining the interaction between domestic lobbying and foreign policy outcomes. Unlike long term policy trends such as military aid or sanctions regimes, the 2025 crisis unfolded within a narrow temporal window. Decisions were made under conditions of uncertainty, time pressure, and heightened political salience.

¹² Anna Young, Diana Nerozzi, and Steven Nelson, "US Drops 'Bunker Buster' Bombs on Iran's Fordow Nuclear Plant as Trump Declares Facility 'Is Gone,' Says 'Now Is the Time for Peace,'" New York Post, June 21, 2025, <https://nypost.com/2025/06/21/world-news/us-launches-strikes-on-iran-joining-forces-with-israel-days-after-trumps-tehran-warning/>.

¹³ "Iran Informed Qatar in Advance of Strikes on US Bases," Middle East, *Reuters*, June 23, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-informed-qatar-advance-strikes-us-bases-2025-06-23/>.

This environment allows for closer observation of how lobbying strategies operate when rapid mobilization becomes decisive.

Existing literature on the Israel lobby has largely focused on enduring patterns of United States Israel relations. Prominent scholars like Mearsheimer and Waltz argue that organized domestic advocacy plays a significant role in sustaining American support for Israel across administrations¹⁴. Other studies emphasize strategic convergence and shared interests as the primary drivers of alignment, treating lobbying as a reinforcing mechanism rather than a causal force¹⁵. This event offers an opportunity to move beyond this dichotomy by examining how lobbying interacts with strategic considerations during acute escalation.

By focusing on AIPAC and its affiliated network during the Israel Iran War of 2025, this study addresses a gap in the literature on short duration crisis lobbying. It examines how advocacy organizations frame conflict narratives, mobilize congressional support, and shape elite discourse under compressed decision timelines. Rather than presuming lobbying dominance or strategic determinism, the analysis traces how domestic political pressure and foreign policy commitments intersected in producing a limited United States military intervention.

Using a qualitative explanatory approach, this study examines how domestic political pressure generated by the Israeli lobby interacts with existing U.S. Israel security commitments in shaping the United States' decision to intervene

¹⁴ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *THE ISRAEL LOBBY AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY*.

¹⁵ Cameron Moss, "U.S. Support for Israel: Does It Cause More Harm Than Good?" (CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, 2018), scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/5t34sm877.

by June 2025. By focusing on a short-duration crisis, this research offers a distinct contribution to the literature on lobbying and foreign policy, which has predominantly emphasized long-term policy dynamics.

The selection of Israel Lobby with the AIPAC as the case and the Twelve Day War of June 2025 as the empirical ground rests on three analytical considerations.

First, AIPAC holds the largest institutional infrastructure within the Israel Lobby network, with documented capacity for legislative mobilization, campaign finance deployment exceeding one hundred million United States dollars in the 2024 cycle, and direct congressional access through the United Democracy Project. The scale of AIPAC operations produces visible empirical traces suitable for process tracing methodology.

Second, the Twelve Day War stretched within a flattened temporal window from June 13 to June 22, 2025, generating concentrated lobbying activity under acute time pressure. This compression isolates lobbying mechanisms from longer term agenda setting effects and permits clear causal observation.

Third, the conflict produced a separate and visible foreign policy outcome through Operation Midnight Hammer, the United States strike on Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. The outcome supplies a defined dependent variable for analytical examination. These three considerations make AIPAC during the Twelve Day War the most suitable case for studying short duration crisis lobbying within the broader Israel Lobby network.

B. Research Focus

The focus of this research can be formulated in the form of a central question:

"To what extent did the Israeli lobby, through its political strategy and advocacy, play a role in encouraging the United States to conduct a limited military intervention on Iran's nuclear facilities during the 2025 Israel-Iran War?"

C. Research Objective

The objective of this study is to examine the extent to which the Israel Lobby, with specific focus on the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, played a role in pushing the United States to conduct a limited military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities during the 2025 Twelve Day War. The examination analyzes how AIPAC lobbying strategies were articulated, mobilized, and translated into support within United States legislative and executive institutions. The examination further assesses how domestic political pressures interacted with existing U.S.-Israel security commitments and concerns over Iranian nuclear proliferation in shaping the executive decision to intervene militarily. The analysis operates through the State-Lobby Symbiosis to characterize the AIPAC and Israel structural bond and through the Two-Level Game to trace the bilateral and domestic dynamics across the compressed crisis window of June 13 to June 22, 2025.

D. Benefits of Research

This research offers significant benefits in both academic and practical realms.

1. Academic Benefits

This research provides benefits for the development of International Relations scholarship by enriching the study of foreign policy and domestic political influence. By examining the role of the Israeli lobby, particularly AIPAC, during the 2025 Twelve Day War, the study offers empirical insight into how lobbying operates under short term crisis conditions. The findings contribute to existing literature that has largely focused on long term patterns such as United States military aid to Israel or enduring alliance structures. This research advances conceptual understanding of how domestic political pressure, lobbying networks, and political action committees shape foreign policy outcomes during periods of rapid escalation.

2. Practical Benefits

This research also offers benefits for policymakers and analysts, especially in Indonesia, by improving understanding of how major power foreign policy decisions are influenced by organized domestic lobbying. The study clarifies that United States actions in the Middle East are shaped not only by strategic and geopolitical considerations, but also by domestic political constraints and advocacy networks. This understanding supports more informed policy analysis and diplomatic assessment when

responding to United States behavior in regional conflicts. The findings also contribute to public awareness by explaining how lobbying affects decisions related to military intervention, which is relevant for policymakers and observers of international security.

E. Literature Review

This section reviews recent previous studies on the Israel lobby and United States foreign policy with a focus on AIPAC, crisis politics, and policy change toward Iran and Israel. The purpose is to position this thesis within the last five years of debate, identify what scholars have explained about lobbying mechanisms, and locate the gap on short duration crisis lobbying linked to executive military action. Each paragraph discusses one work by stating its full identity, its research focus, and its main findings, then clarifies how the present study differs in scope, unit of analysis, and empirical case.

The first one, is a Journal Article conducted by Zeeshan Fida titled *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy towards the Middle East in the Trump Administration*¹⁶. Fida Examined in her Article about the Israel lobby's influence on United States Middle East policy during Donald Trump's first term. The article highlights mechanisms such as campaign finance, congressional pressure, media framing, and executive appointments as channels that sustain pro-Israel policy preferences. It links these mechanisms to key outcomes including the embassy

¹⁶ Zeeshan Fida, "The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy towards the Middle East in the Trump Era," *Pakistan Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 2 (2021): 55.

relocation to Jerusalem, recognition of the Golan Heights, and the administration's peace plan posture. Fida also notes the role of evangelical and neoconservative coalitions as reinforcing actors in the broader pro-Israel alignment. This thesis differs by narrowing the unit of analysis to AIPAC's crisis time strategy during June 2025 and by testing influence on a specific wartime choice, the authorization of limited strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, rather than symbolic or structural policy shifts across an administration.

Second, is A Thesis by Gabriel Cutter entitled *The Pro-Israel Lobby, the United States, and the Iran Nuclear Deal: The Pro Israel Lobby's Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy*¹⁷. In his Thesis, Cutter studies how AIPAC shaped the domestic policy environment around the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the United States withdrawal decision in 2018. He then argues that AIPAC combined campaign support, access to policymakers, and threat framing to portray Iran's nuclear program as a direct danger to United States interests. Cutter's findings clarify how lobbying mechanisms operate across legislative and executive arenas during nuclear diplomacy debates. This thesis differs by moving from nuclear diplomacy and policy reversal to military decision making during an acute crisis, then tracing how the same mechanisms operated under time pressure during the 2025 Israel Iran War.

¹⁷ Gabriel Cutter, "The Pro-Israel Lobby, The United States, and the Iran Nuclear Deal: The proIsrael Lobby's Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy" (University of Oregon, 2019), <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/17bd7698-bc4b-45b4-997c-873a9352f20f/content>.

Third, a Journal Article by Ömer Naim Küçük titled, *Funding in the Shadow of Conflict: AIPAC's Financial Influence on US Congress Post 2023 Israel Hamas War*¹⁸. Küçük focuses on campaign finance patterns linked to pro-Israel legislative behavior after the 2023 Israel Hamas war. The study identifies a relationship between levels of financial support associated with AIPAC aligned networks and congressional sponsorship of pro-Israel resolutions, with attention to members from competitive districts. The central contribution is an evidence-based account of how funding incentives sustain congressional alignment under polarization. This thesis differs by treating finance as one component inside a broader crisis time lobbying package, then tracing how legislative alignment and donor backed signaling intersected with executive calculations leading to the June 2025 strikes.

Fourth, Journal Article by Yosua Saut Marulitua Gultom and Hafidz Zaula Miftah. With the title, *The Role of the Jewish Lobby Toward U.S. Foreign Policy Making on the 2023 Israel Palestine War: Case of AIPAC*¹⁹. This article describes AIPAC's advocacy during the 2023 Israel Palestine war and argues that AIPAC shaped congressional messaging, media narratives, and bipartisan alignment through organized outreach and political support. The authors present AIPAC as a coordinated influence actor inside United States institutions during wartime policy

¹⁸ Ömer Naim Küçük, "Funding in the Shadow of Conflict: AIPAC's Financial Influence on US Congress Post-2023 Israel-Hamas War," *Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalışmaları Dergisi* 12, no. 1 (June 2025): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.26513/tocd.1574363>.

¹⁹ Yosua Saut Marulitua Gultom and Hafidz Zaula Miftah, "The Role of the Jewish Lobby Toward US Foreign Policy Making on the 2023 Israel-Palestine War (Case of AIPAC)," *Hasanuddin Journal of Strategic and International Studies (HJSIS)* 2, no. 2 (June 2024): 38–49, <https://doi.org/10.20956/hjsis.v2i2.34405>.

debate. The study mainly describes how influence works in the 2023 case and centers on diplomatic and political support. This thesis differs by shifting the dependent outcome from support statements and aid posture to executive authorization of direct United States strikes against Iranian nuclear infrastructure in 2025.

Fifth, Journal Article by Sadek Meriem Dalila. *The American Jewish Lobby's Method of Influence on American Politics. Journal article*²⁰. Dalila maps the methods used by major pro-Israel organizations, including AIPAC, to shape United States politics. The article emphasizes financial support, narrative building through media, and congressional engagement as tools that embed Israel related priorities into domestic politics. The contribution is a general model of influence mechanisms across electoral and institutional settings. This thesis differs by narrowing the analytic window to a short duration crisis and by tracing how these mechanisms operated in sequence during June 2025 to produce a specific foreign policy output, limited military intervention against Iranian nuclear facilities.

Sixth, Journal Article by Aleskerova Sara Tahir. (2021). *Jewish Lobby as an Overlooked Power Which Leads to Political Transformations in U.S. Foreign Policy*²¹. Aleskerova argues that the Jewish lobby functions through both material leverage and strategic framing that aligns Israel's priorities with United States

²⁰ Sadek Meriem Dalila, "The American Jewish Lobby's Method of Influence on American Politics," in *Journal of Law, Society and Authority* (University of Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed, n.d.), 2600–6219, <https://www.bustle.com/articles/121572-whatever-happened-to-john-edwards-the-north->.

²¹ Sara Tahir Aleskerova, "Jewish Lobby as an Overlooked Power Which Leads to Political Transformations in US Foreign Policy," *Politicus*, 2021, 117–21, <https://doi.org/10.24195/2414-9616.2021-4.18>.

security goals. The article uses qualitative analysis to show how influence is reinforced by elite discourse and by constraints on public debate regarding lobby power. The work contributes an account of why policymakers become receptive to pro-Israel arguments inside the United States political sphere. This thesis differs by operationalizing influence as observable crisis time behavior by AIPAC and affiliated networks, then evaluating whether that mobilization shaped the executive pathway to authorize strikes during the 2025 Israel Iran War.

Seventh, Journal Article by Yoav Fromer entitled *the “Other” Pro-Israel Lobby: The AFL CIO and Israel (1952 to 1960)*²². Fromer examines how organized labor, especially the AFL CIO, supported Israel during the 1950s through resource mobilization, political advocacy, and framing Israel as aligned with democratic and labor values. The study shows that pro-Israel mobilization historically involved non-Jewish actors and broader coalition building beyond diaspora organizations. This thesis differs in time, actor focus, and policy domain. It centers on AIPAC as the dominant contemporary lobbying actor and evaluates influence in a modern security crisis where policy stakes involved direct United States military action against Iranian nuclear sites.

Eighth, a report by Linda J. Bilmes, William D. Hartung, and Stephen Semler. *United States Spending on Israel’s Military Operations and Related U.S. Operations in the Region, Oct 7, 2023, to Sep 30, 2024*²³. This report estimates

²² Yoav Fromer, “The ‘Other’ Pro-Israel Lobby: The AFL-CIO and Israel (1952–1960),” *Modern American History* 7, no. 2 (July 2024): 228–51, <https://doi.org/10.1017/mah.2024.11>.

²³ Linda J. Bilmes, 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, 2024), 1–23.

fiscal outlays linked to support for Israeli operations and related United States regional operations during the 2023 to 2024 period. It details categories such as security assistance, United States deployments, and arms transfers, then quantifies the total cost and its components. The report strengthens understanding of material commitment as a foundation of the relationship and as a constraint on future policy choices. This thesis differs by using material support as contextual evidence, then focusing on the political process through which AIPAC and allied actors frame commitments to justify escalation toward direct strikes in June 2025.

Ninth, a Journal Article by Dov Waxman and Jeremy Pressman. *The Rocky Future of the U.S. Israeli Special Relationship*²⁴. Waxman and Pressman analyze domestic political change in the United States and argue that bipartisan support for Israel faces strain from polarization, generational shifts, and diversification of pro-Israel advocacy. The article treats AIPAC as a central actor in sustaining congressional alignment while noting emerging competition and fragmentation inside the pro-Israel policy space. The contribution is a long-term political diagnosis of alliance support within domestic institutions. This thesis differs by testing whether AIPAC retained crisis mobilization capacity during June 2025 despite fragmentation pressures, then examining whether that mobilization shaped executive decision making toward a limited strike.

And the last one **Tenth**, and Journal Article by Mamoon Bashir and Shabnam Gul entitled *PARTISAN REALIGNMENT IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY*:

²⁴ Dov Waxman and Jeremy Pressman, "The Rocky Future of the US-Israeli Special Relationship," *Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2021): 75–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2021.1934999>.

*EXAMINING SHIFTS IN SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL DURING THE OBAMA, TRUMP AND BIDEN ADMINISTRATIONS*²⁵. Bashir and Gul (2025) examine the transformation of United States support for Israel through the lens of partisan realignment across the Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations. Using comparative historical analysis, public opinion data, and secondary literature, the authors argue that although commitment to Israel's security remains a constant in U.S. foreign policy, the partisan framing of that commitment has changed significantly.

Republicans have increasingly consolidated unconditional support for Israel, driven by evangelical identity, counterterrorism narratives, and alignment with Israeli right-wing leadership, while Democrats have become more internally divided, with progressive factions emphasizing human rights, international law, and Palestinian rights. The study highlights how presidential leadership choices, ideological shifts within parties, and changes in public opinion have weakened the traditional bipartisan consensus that once underpinned the U.S.–Israel relationship.

The contribution of Bashir and Gul lies in demonstrating that domestic partisan polarization now shapes how Israel related policies are debated, legitimized, and contested within U.S. political institutions. Their findings show that foreign policy toward Israel is no longer insulated from domestic political conflict but increasingly embedded in partisan identity and electoral competition.

²⁵ Mamoona Bashir and Shabnam Gul, "Partisan Realignment in U.S. Foreign Policy: Examining Shifts in Support for Israel during the Obama, Trump and Biden Administrations," *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 12, no. II (December 2025): 51–61, <https://ojs.jass.lcwu.edu.pk>.

However, the study remains focused on long term partisan trends and does not examine how these domestic shifts translate into concrete executive decisions during moments of acute military crisis. In contrast, the present research builds on this insight by narrowing the empirical focus to the June 2025 Israel–Iran War and by analyzing how AIPAC operated within a polarized partisan environment to shape congressional alignment and reduce political constraints on executive use of force. The novelty of this thesis lies in tracing how partisan realignment, as identified by Bashir and Gul, conditioned the effectiveness of lobbying pressure in facilitating a limited U.S. military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities during a short duration war.

Taken together, these prior research shows how pro-Israel influence operates through campaign finance, agenda framing, congressional access, elite signaling, and institutional alignment. The gap lies in crisis time causal tracing that links AIPAC mobilization to executive authorization of direct military action against Iranian nuclear facilities during a short duration interstate war. Most studies emphasize long run alliance durability, aid patterns, or diplomacy decisions, while fewer isolate the compressed sequence of lobbying moves, congressional signaling, and executive choice within days. This thesis addresses that gap by examining the June 2025 decision pathway and by tracing how AIPAC’s advocacy, allied political action committee activity, congressional alignment, and threat framing intersected with executive calculations that produced the limited strikes on Iran’s nuclear sites.

F. Writing Systematic

The thesis entitled *“Tracing the Israel Lobby’s Role in Pushing U.S. Strikes on Iranian Nuclear Sites in the Israel–Iran War 2025”* is systematically organized into five chapters. Each chapter is structured to provide a coherent and comprehensive analysis, beginning with the background of the problem and concluding with the implications and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Chapter I establishes the foundation of the research. It presents the study background by situating the analysis within the escalation of the Israel–Iran conflict in June 2025, with specific attention to Iran’s nuclear program, Israel’s pre-emptive military actions, and the subsequent involvement of the United States. The chapter introduces the relevance of U.S.–Israel relations and highlights the role of domestic lobbying, particularly AIPAC, in shaping U.S. foreign policy behavior. It then formulates the research question, defines the research objectives, and explains the academic and practical significance of the study. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis structure to guide the reader through overall research design.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW AND MAIN ARGUMENT

Chapter II presents the theoretical perspectives and scholarly debates relevant to the study. It discusses the State–Lobby Symbiosis model and Robert Putnam’s Two-Level Game theory as the primary analytical lenses for understanding the interaction between domestic lobbying and international commitments. The chapter reviews recent literature on AIPAC, interest groups, U.S.

foreign policy, and crisis decision-making, with emphasis on studies published within the last five years. Based on this review, the chapter identifies a research gap concerning the limited attention given to lobbying influence during short-duration military crises. The chapter then formulates the main argument and conceptual framework that explains how lobbying strategies shape domestic political alignment and condition executive foreign policy decisions.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter III explains the methodological approach used in the study. The research adopts a qualitative explanatory design aimed at identifying causal mechanisms behind U.S. decision-making during the 2025 Israel–Iran War. The unit of analysis is lobbying organizations, with a focus on AIPAC and its policy network, while the level of analysis is the state, as the outcome concerns U.S. foreign policy action. Data is collected through documentation, including congressional records, policy statements, think-tank publications, and credible media sources. Data analysis follows the stages of condensation, organization, and interpretation, supported by triangulation to ensure analytical rigor.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter IV presents empirical findings and analytical discussion. It outlines the lobbying activities conducted by AIPAC during the escalation, including public statements, congressional resolutions, and coordination with political elites. The chapter then examines legislative and executive responses, focusing on congressional alignment and the presidential decision to authorize limited strikes

on Iranian nuclear facilities. The discussion applies the theoretical framework to show how lobbying activity shaped the domestic political environment, narrowed policy alternatives, and aligned domestic pressures with international security commitments. The findings demonstrate that U.S. intervention was influenced by organized domestic lobbying alongside strategic considerations.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Chapter V concludes the study by directly addressing the research question concerning the role of the Israel Lobby in the U.S. decision to intervene militarily during the 2025 Israel–Iran War. It summarizes the main findings and emphasizes the importance of AIPAC’s lobbying strategies in shaping domestic political alignment. The chapter discusses the theoretical implications for the study of lobbying and foreign policy decision-making and outlines the practical relevance for policymakers and analysts. It concludes with suggestions for future research, including comparative studies of other interest groups and extended analysis of U.S. Middle East policy.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND MAIN ARGUMENT

A. Theoretical Framework

To support the understanding of the research problem and to guide the analytical process, this study employs four interrelated conceptual and theoretical frameworks. These frameworks explain the relationship between domestic lobbying actors and foreign policy outcomes, and they clarify how operates during a short-duration international crisis.

1. Two-Level Game Theory

First, this research employs Robert D. Putnam's Two-Level Game theory as a central analytical framework. Putnam argues that foreign policy decisions are shaped by simultaneous negotiations at two levels: the international level (Level I) and the domestic level (Level II). Leaders must secure outcomes that are acceptable in both areas for a policy to be viable²⁶.

At Level I, state leaders engage with external actors to pursue national interests and manage international commitments. At Level II, those same leaders face domestic constraints arising from legislatures, interest groups, political parties, bureaucracies, and public opinion. A

²⁶ Robert D. Putnam, *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games*, 42 (n.d.): 427–60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2706785>.

policy choice becomes feasible only when it falls within the overlapping win-set between these two levels.

Subsequent studies have applied Two-Level Game theory to a wide range of foreign policy issues, including security crises, alliance politics, and conflict management²⁷.

Other Research have used the framework to analyze crisis decision-making, where time pressure and public visibility intensify the interaction between domestic and international constraints. These applications confirm that Putnam's theory is particularly useful for analyzing situations where foreign policy decisions are made rapidly and under high political risk.

To apply Two-Level Game theory empirically, this study defines specific analytical indicators for each level of interaction. These indicators allow empirical events to be classified systematically as domestic or international constraints and enable tracing how domestic political alignment influenced executive foreign policy choices during the 2025 Israel–Iran War. The interaction between Level I and Level II indicators is examined through the concept of win-set expansion, which captures how domestic political support reduced constraints on executive decision-making.

Table 1. Operational Indicators of Two-Level Game Theory

²⁷ Purwasandi Purwasandi et al., "Pendekatan Two-Level Games Dalam Negosiasi Nuklir Iran: Dinamika Kebijakan Domestik Dan Internasional Dalam JCPOA," *Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Dan Pengembangan (JHPP)* 3, no. 3 (July 2025): 111–20, <https://doi.org/10.61116/jhpp.v3i3.549>.

Level of Analysis	Indicators
Level 1	Trump-Netanyahu bilateral communications, Israeli intelligence transmission on Iranian nuclear sites, Israeli requests for GBU-57 deployment, presidential security statements, executive authorization of Operation Midnight Hammer, alliance commitments under the U.S.-Israel MOU and QME doctrine.
Level 2	AIPAC Stand With Israel alerts, House Resolution 521 and Gottheimer letter, JINSA 73 generals' letter, congressional whipping, United Democracy Project finance deployment, neutralization of the Massie War Powers initiative.
Win-set expansion	Reduced political cost of intervention, bipartisan convergence, marginalization of dissent, narrative consolidation by affiliated think tanks, electoral deterrence from 2024 primary defeats.

2. State-Lobby Symbiosis Model

State corporate symbiosis, developed by Steve Tombs, frames the state's relationship with powerfully organized actors as structural interdependence rather than ad hoc cooperation. This thesis adapts Tombs' concept into state lobby symbiosis to explain state ties with organized interest groups in foreign policy²⁸. Interest groups gain access and influence, while the state gains domestic support that helps sustain

²⁸ Steve Tombs, *STATE-CORPORATE SYMBIOSIS IN THE PRODUCTION OF CRIME AND HARM* (n.d.), accessed November 11, 2025, www.plutojournals.com/scj/.

external objectives. In diaspora politics, these actors often act as intermediaries that translate a foreign state's priorities into a domestic political agenda.

In the United States, state lobby symbiosis appears in the long-standing relationship between Israel and pro-Israel lobbying organizations, especially AIPAC. Israel holds no formal authority inside U.S. institutions, so it depends on domestic actors to advance security priorities. AIPAC functions as a political channel that converts Israeli threat perceptions, especially in Iran, into U.S. Foreign Policy, legislative initiatives, and national security discourse. The relationship persists through repeated interaction, shared narratives, and coordinated advocacy rather than direct control.

This study applies the State-Lobby Symbiosis and the Two-Level Game simultaneously throughout the empirical analysis. The State-Lobby Symbiosis maps the structural bond between AIPAC and the State of Israel, identifying embedded interdependence as the precondition for AIPAC's role as a faithful carrier of Israeli strategic priority within United States political space.

The Two-Level Game traces the operation of this bond through Level 1 bilateral negotiation between Israeli and American executives and Level 2 domestic ratification through AIPAC mobilization in the United States Congress.

The structural framework supplies the Level 2 actor characterization required by the Putnam model, an integration Putnam himself flagged as necessary in his 1988 formulation. Each framework feeds different segments of the empirical analysis. The State-Lobby Symbiosis grounds the institutional description of AIPAC and the linkage analysis between Israel and its domestic intermediaries.

The Two-Level Game governs the temporal sequencing of executive bargaining and the win-set analysis of domestic ratification. The integration operates at the level of analytical division of labor. This integrated application requires a causal inference procedure, which the next sub-section presents through process tracing.

3. Tracing as a Concept

Tracing in this research is employed as a conceptual and analytical approach grounded strictly in process tracing as defined by David Collier²⁹. Process tracing focuses on the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence to reconstruct causal sequences within a single case. Rather than relying on correlation, it examines how outcomes emerge through linked actions, decisions, and responses over time, using fine grained within case evidence to support causal inference.

In this study, tracing is applied to follow the sequential development of lobbying influence from initial framing activities to congressional

²⁹ David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 4 (October 2011): 823–30, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001429>.

positioning and executive decision making. Public statements, congressional records, lobbying outputs, and media interventions are treated as causal process observations that mark key steps in the policy process. This allows influence to be analyzed as an unfolding process rather than as a static background condition

Tracing also serves a theoretical function. By reconstructing causal sequences, it links empirical observations to the explanatory models used in this research. It shows how domestic lobbying operates as a mechanism at Level II and how this mechanism constrains and shapes foreign policy choices at Level I. In line with Collier's framework, tracing here functions as both a method of causal inference and a tool for integrating theory with detailed empirical evidence.

4. Israeli Lobby as Group Actor

To explain Level II dynamics in Putnam's framework, this study defines the Israeli lobby as a network of pro-Israel advocacy actors operating within the United States domestic political system. This network includes lobbying organizations such as American Israel Public Affairs Committee or AIPAC.

Other nodes include the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the American Jewish Committee, Christians United for Israel, the Zionist Organization of America, and the Republican Jewish Coalition, which all of that

collectively promote alignment between United States foreign policy and Israeli security interests.

Rather than a single entity, the Israeli lobby functions as a constellation of actors with varying degrees of influence, coordination, and access to policymakers, each contributing to legislative advocacy, electoral financing, and policy framing³⁰. The coalition of Israeli lobby operates on United States soil and consists primarily of American citizens, including dual nationals, evangelical Christians, donors, lawmakers, and policy professionals.

Within this network, AIPAC is positioned as a central and highly institutionalized actor. Since its establishment in the 1950s, AIPAC has functioned as a bipartisan lobbying organization dedicated to influencing congressional behavior and maintaining long term relationships with political elites. Its activities include legislative advocacy, campaign finance coordination, policy messaging, and sustained engagement with members of Congress³¹.

AIPAC's influence expanded significantly with the establishment of the United Democracy Project in 2021, enabling direct participation in electoral politics through super PAC mechanisms. During the 2024

³⁰ Ivan Franko National University of Lviv and Svitlana Mykolaivna Busheva, "The Analysis of AIPAC as a Socio-Political Unit That Has Strong Impact on the Policy of the United States," *Politicus* 1 (2019): 25–28, <https://doi.org/10.24195/2414-9616-2019-1-25-28>.

³¹ Cy Neff, "What Is AIPAC? How the Group Uses Funding to Support the Israel-US Relationship," *USA TODAY*, accessed April 20, 2026, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2024/05/02/what-is-aipac-meaning/73542842007/>.

election cycle, AIPAC-affiliated spending exceeded USD 23 million, demonstrating its capacity to shape congressional composition and legislative behavior³².

During the Twelve Day War of 2025, AIPAC acted rapidly by issuing public endorsements of Israeli military actions, mobilizing congressional support for House Resolution 521, and promoting unified pro-Israel framing across political and media platforms. These actions illustrate how AIPAC operates within the broader Israeli lobby network as a Level II actor by shaping domestic political preferences and narrowing the range of acceptable foreign policy options. Within this framework, the Israeli lobby, with AIPAC as a central node, contributed to reducing political resistance to United States military involvement, thereby making limited intervention against Iranian nuclear facilities politically viable.

B. Main Argument

The main argument of this study is that the United States decision to conduct a limited military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities in June 2025 was shaped by the interaction between international alliance commitments and organized domestic political pressure. U.S. foreign policy behavior in this case cannot be explained solely by strategic calculations regarding Iran's nuclear program or

³² Chris McGreal, "The Pro-Israel Groups Planning to Spend Millions in US Elections," World News, *The Guardian*, April 22, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/22/aipac-pro-israel-lobby-group-us-elections>.

regional security. Instead, the intervention emerged from a political process in which domestic actors influenced the range of policy options available to decision-makers.

Within the framework of Robert Putnam's Two-Level Game, the President of the United States operated simultaneously at the international level and the domestic level. At the international level, the administration faced pressure to uphold the credibility of the U.S.–Israel strategic alliance and respond to Israel's security framing of Iran as an immediate threat. At the domestic level, the President confronted strong political pressures from Congress, elite political discourse, and organized interest groups. The policy option became feasible only when it satisfied both levels.

In this context, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee functioned as a key domestic actor. Through coordinated lobbying, congressional engagement, campaign finance networks, and policy advocacy, AIPAC contributed to the formation of a dominant pro-Israel consensus in Washington. This process narrowed the range of politically acceptable alternatives by increasing the political cost of restraint and reinforcing legislative and elite support for military action. As a result, limited intervention appeared as the most viable option within the domestic political environment.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Type and Problem

This study applies explanatory qualitative research. The focus is not to describe events, but to explain how a specific political outcome emerged. The research examines how domestic lobbying dynamics in the United States contributed to the decision to conduct a limited military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities during the June 2025 Israel–Iran War.

The research problem addressed is the gap between escalation at the international level and authorization of force at the domestic level. Many studies discuss U.S.–Israel alignment, military aid, or long-term strategic partnership. Fewer studies explain how lobbying operates during an acute crisis and shapes the form, scope, and timing of military intervention. This study addresses that gap by tracing how lobbying activity interacted with executive authority and congressional politics during a short, high-pressure decision window³³.

The objective of this research is to identify causal mechanisms linking lobbying strategies to policy outcomes. The study does not aim to generalize across all conflicts or lobbying cases. It seeks to explain how, in this specific case,

³³ Christopher Lamont, *Research Methods in International Relations* (Los Angeles London New Delhi Singapore Washington DC: SAGE, 2015).

lobbying contributed to the emergence of limited intervention as the most politically acceptable option for the U.S. executive.

B. Research Setting

This research is conducted in a document-based research setting. The study does not rely on field interviews or direct observation. All empirical material is drawn from written and recorded sources produced during and immediately after the June 2025 Israel Iran War. The research setting is therefore the political and information environment in which policy decisions, lobbying activity, and public justification occurred.

The primary research setting is the domestic political arena of the United States as The Israeli Lobbies also set up their work in United State also. This includes the executive branch, the US Congress, lobbying organizations, policy institutes, and major media outlets that shape foreign policy debate. These arenas are treated as interconnected spaces where policy preferences are expressed, contested, and stabilized. The study also considers the international security context in which these domestic processes unfolded, especially Israeli military actions and Iranian responses, as part of the Level I environment in the Two-Level Game framework³⁴.

The time scope of the research is deliberately narrow. The core period of analysis runs from early June 2025 until the formal ceasefire at the end of the

³⁴ Putnam, *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games*.

Twelve Day War. This window captures the escalation phase, the peak of military confrontation, and the decision-making process leading to Operation Midnight Hammer. Supporting documents from late 2024 and early 2025 are used to establish background conditions, including prior lobbying positions, congressional alignments, and threat narratives related to Iran's nuclear program.

This limited time frame is chosen to maintain analytical focus. The study concentrates on crisis decision making rather than long term alliance history. By restricting the scope, the research can trace sequences of actions and reactions with greater precision, especially the timing of lobbying interventions, congressional signaling, and executive statements. This setting allows the analysis to connect specific documents and political actions directly to the research question without introducing unrelated developments outside the crisis period.

C. Level of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this research is an interest group, namely the American Israel Public Affairs Committee as a pro Israel lobbying organization. Referring to the Level of Analysis framework proposed by Mochtar Mas'oed, this study is placed at the group level of analysis. This level is applied when research seeks to explain how organized social or political groups influence policy outcomes, rather than focusing on individual decision makers or treating the state as a single actor³⁵.

³⁵ Mohtar Mas'oed, *Ilmu hubungan internasional: disiplin dan metodologi*, Rev. ed (Jakarta: Penerbit PT Pustaka LP3ES, 1994).

The group level of analysis is appropriate because AIPAC functions as a collective political organization with structured strategies and coordinated actions. Its influence is exercised through donor networks, congressional lobbying, policy advocacy, and narrative promotion in the public sphere. These activities reflect institutional behavior rather than personal initiatives, making AIPAC a relevant analytical unit for examining domestic sources of foreign policy influence in the United States.

Although the analysis centers on group level dynamics, the policy outcome examined in this study remains at the state level, namely United States foreign policy decisions related to limited military strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities in 2025. The state is therefore not treated as a monolithic entity, but as a decision-making arena shaped by interactions among domestic political actors. By linking the group level represented by AIPAC with the state level represented by US foreign policy, this research explains how lobbying activity intersects with international decision making during a crisis.

D. Instrument and Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique in this research is based on systematic document analysis³⁶. All data were obtained from publicly accessible written and digital sources that record political communication, lobbying activity, and foreign policy decision making related to the 2025 Israel–Iran War. The research did not

³⁶ Glenn A. Bowen, “Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method,” *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (August 2009): 27–40, <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>.

employ interviews, surveys, or field observation. It relied entirely on documentary evidence produced during and immediately surrounding the conflict, allowing the study to directly observe political processes as they unfolded.

Primary data consist of official documents and statements from United States political institutions and key actors, including congressional resolutions, voting records, press releases, White House and Department of Defense statements, and policy documents related to Operation Midnight Hammer. Publications issued by AIPAC, including policy memoranda, action alerts, and advocacy communications, are also treated as primary data because they reflect direct lobbying strategies and political messaging. Secondary data are drawn from reputable news media, policy research institutions, and academic literature, including investigative reporting on lobbying and campaign finance, think tank analyses, and scholarly studies on the Israel lobby, Two Level Game theory, and interest group influence in United States foreign policy.

The document collection process followed three steps: identifying materials through targeted keyword searches, screening documents for relevance to the research question and time frame and classifying selected documents into thematic categories such as legislative action, executive response, lobbying advocacy, media framing, and political opposition. All documents were archived digitally and arranged chronologically to support process tracing analysis and to reconstruct the sequence of interactions between lobbying activity and policy decisions.

E. Data Analysis.

Data analysis in this research follows a qualitative and process-oriented approach³⁷. The analysis explains how lobbying activity interacted with United States foreign policy decision making during the 2025 Israel Iran War. The analysis does not measure influence numerically. It traces sequences of actions, signals, and responses across institutions to identify how policy outcomes emerged.

1. Data Reduction

The first stage of data analysis is data reduction, which involves systematically narrowing the initial data set to material that is directly relevant to the research problem. The initial collection included congressional records and resolutions, executive branch and Pentagon statements, AIPAC publications and action alerts, major media reporting, think tank analyses, and academic literature on lobbying and U.S.-Israel relations. Since not all collected material directly addresses lobbying influence during the crisis period, reduction was conducted according to two criteria: temporal, selecting documents produced within the prewar, active conflict, and immediate post-ceasefire periods of late 2024 through June 24, 2025; and thematic, retaining only content related to AIPAC advocacy strategies, congressional signaling, executive decision-making, elite threat framing, and War Powers dynamics. Documents meeting both

³⁷ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, Edition 3 (Los Angeles London New Delhi Singapore Washington DC: Sage, 2014).

criteria were archived chronologically to support the process tracing analysis that follows.

2. Data Presentation

After reduction, the selected data are organized and presented in a structured form. The researcher arranges the material chronologically and institutionally to show how events unfolded across Congress, lobbying networks, media, and the executive branch. Data are grouped into thematic categories such as AIPAC advocacy strategies, framing of Iran's nuclear threat, congressional signaling, War Powers debates, and executive decision making. This presentation allows the researcher to observe continuity, escalation, and shifts in political positions and to identify how lobbying inputs entered formal policy arenas.

3. Verification

The final stage is verification and interpretation. At this stage, the researcher reexamines the organized data to assess whether the reconstructed sequences support the research argument. The analysis traces how lobbying activity influenced congressional alignment, how congressional signals shaped executive calculations, and how these dynamics affected the decision to conduct Operation Midnight Hammer.

Interpretation is guided by Putnam's Two-Level Game to assess how domestic alignment at Level II constrained and enabled choices at Level I, and by the State Lobby Symbiosis concept to explain structural alignment between Israeli threat perceptions and AIPAC advocacy. Conclusions are

drawn by matching empirical sequences with theoretical expectations to evaluate the role of lobbying in shaping the domestic conditions for limited United States military intervention.

F. Data Validation Technique

To ensure the credibility, reliability, and analytical rigor of the findings, this study applies multiple data validation techniques appropriate for qualitative, document-based research. Given that the research relies on publicly available documents and digital sources rather than field interviews, validation is conducted through systematic peer review, source cross-checking, and internal consistency control.

First, open-source intelligence verification is used as the primary validation mechanism. Empirical data related to military actions, lobbying activity, and political statements are verified through comparison with materials discussed and examined within OSINT-focused research communities. These communities function as informal expert environments where claims, timelines, and source credibility are routinely scrutinized. Information such as strike chronology, public statements, and advocacy materials is checked against parallel reporting, archival captures, and community-based verification practices to ensure factual accuracy and chronological consistency³⁸.

³⁸ Devan Leos, "Think Like a Spy: How Open Source Intelligence Can Give You a Competitive Advantage," *Entrepreneur*, February 28, 2023, <https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/thinking-like-a-spy-how-open-source-intelligence-can-give/444634>.

Second, cross-checking of sources is applied to validate empirical claims. Key events, statements, and lobbying activities are verified using at least two independent sources whenever possible³⁹. For example, congressional actions are cross validated using official congressional records and reputable media reporting. Advocacy materials issued by AIPAC are cross-checked against congressional responses and public statements by lawmakers to ensure that lobbying claims are linked to observable political behavior rather than treated as isolated advocacy. This process reduces the risk of relying on single-source narratives or unverified interpretations.

Through these validation practices, the study ensures that its findings are grounded in verifiable evidence, logically consistent interpretation, and transparent analytical judgment. This approach reflects the author's research orientation toward careful verification and structured reasoning when analyzing politically sensitive and rapidly evolving international events.

³⁹ Jeff Rose and Corey W. Johnson, "Contextualizing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research: Toward More Rigorous and Trustworthy Qualitative Social Science in Leisure Research," *Journal of Leisure Research* 51, no. 4 (August 2020): 432–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2020.1722042>.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Key Events and U.S. Intervention Chronology

The Israel–Iran War of June 2025 lasted twelve days. It marked a shift from shadow conflict to direct interstate strikes. The war began on 13 June 2025 when Israel launched preemptive airstrikes against targets linked to the IRGC Quds Force and facilities tied to Iran’s missile and nuclear infrastructure. Israeli officials framed the strikes as necessary to prevent an imminent escalation and to counter what they described as Iran’s de facto nuclear breakout condition⁴⁰.

This section reconstructs the war in chronological order and applies Putnam’s Two-Level Game as an analytical lens. Level I tracks escalation dynamics on the ground and in the region, including threat perception, retaliation cycles, and alliance signaling. Level II tracks the United States domestic arena, including congressional signaling, lobbying mobilization, and elite messaging that shaped what U.S. options became politically feasible. The goal is not narrative. The goal is process tracing. The timeline identifies decision points where battlefield developments, domestic pressure, and executive planning moved together and narrowed choices toward limited U.S. intervention.

⁴⁰ Salman Parviz, “A Timeline of the Iran-Israel War,” Politics, *Tehran Times*, July 8, 2025, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/515363/A-timeline-of-the-Iran-Israel-war>.

1. Escalation Phase Pre-13 June 2025

Israel Iran relations deteriorated after 1979 into sustained hostility. Both sides used indirect instruments for decades, including covert action, cyber operations, targeted killings, and proxy warfare. Iran's leadership often portrayed Israel as illegitimate and aligned with U.S. regional dominance. Israel treated Iran as a primary strategic threat due to Iran's support for armed groups and its nuclear and missile trajectory⁴¹. This long pattern created a durable escalation structure, not isolated episodes.

Several prewar signals tightened the ladder. In early 2024, Israel conducted a major air operation in Damascus targeting IRGC linked facilities and personnel tied to Iran's proxy infrastructure in Syria. Tehran interpreted the strike as a shift in Israeli operational reach in the Levant⁴². Not longer, Iran then launched Operation True Promise I and Operation True Promise II, increasing missile and drone activity through Iran aligned networks while using information operations to project deterrence and demand retaliation for Damascus⁴³. These moves raised the expectation of a direct exchange beyond proxy friction. Chart 4.1 situates these escalation signals and threat assessments as the prewar conditions that enabled rapid transition into direct strikes on 13 June 2025.

⁴¹ "Timeline of Iran's Foreign Relations | The Iran Primer," Archive.Ph, May 23, 2012, <https://archive.ph/4dqt>.

⁴² Patrick Wintour and Patrick Wintour Diplomatic editor, "Iran Vows Revenge after Two Generals Killed in Israeli Strike on Syria Consulate," World News, *The Guardian*, April 1, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/01/israeli-airstrike-on-iranian-consulate-in-damascus-kills-irgc-commander>.

⁴³ "Mapping the Iranian Strikes on Israel - The Washington Post," accessed November 21, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/04/14/mapping-wide-scale-iranian-drone-missile-attacks/>.

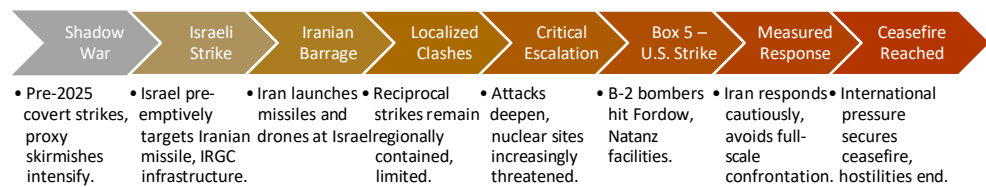


Chart 4.1 Timeline Brief of the 12-Days War

Source: <https://12daywar.org/>

From 7th October 2023 until early June 2025, Limited War between Hamas and Israel makes spillover conditions across the Levant and the Red Sea. Iran aligned actors increased operational tempo. Hezbollah intensified pressure along the Lebanon Israel border. Iraqi and Syrian militias increased attacks and probing actions against U.S. linked positions. The Houthis escalated drone and missile activity in the Red Sea⁴⁴. Israeli Governments increasingly interpreted these actions as coordinated escalation rather than low level disturbance⁴⁵. This interpretation mattered because it linked the Gaza front to a wider Israel Iran contest and increased the perceived urgency of preemptive options.

Israeli narrative on Iranian nuclear threat accelerated the crisis. In early 2023, international inspectors reported uranium particles enriched to

⁴⁴ “The Long Global Shadow of October 7 | German Marshall Fund of the United States,” accessed November 21, 2025, <https://www.gmfus.org/news/long-global-shadow-october-7>.

⁴⁵ “The State of Israel’s National Security,” INSS, n.d., accessed November 25, 2025, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/policy-2025/>.

83.7 percent at Fordow, near the weapons grade threshold often associated with 90 percent. By mid 2023, the IAEA reported that Iran held more than 400 kilograms of uranium enriched up to 60 percent, and that overall stockpiles exceeded JCPOA limits by more than ten times, with sufficient material for several weapons if further enriched⁴⁶. U.S. officials also assessed a sharp reduction in breakout time, from about one year in 2018 to about twelve days in worst case scenarios by 2023 to 2024. These indicators fed Israel's framing of Iran as a nuclear threshold state in practice and raised the perceived cost of delay⁴⁷.

These Level I dynamics interacted with Level II divisions in Washington. After Donald Trump's Comeback to the White House in 2024, Hawkish faction gained influence inside the Republican Party and emphasized deterrence plus coercive pressure. At the same time, America First figures warned against another Middle East war and opposed open ended commitment⁴⁸. This split shaped how escalation advocates framed policy. They emphasized limited, discrete action rather than sustained war. This framing created a political pathway for a narrow strike option.

⁴⁶ General Director, *Verification and Monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in Light of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015)*, Official GOV/2023/21 (International Atomic Energy Agency, n.d.), 1–17, accessed November 10, 2025, <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/documents/gov2023-24.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Claire Parker et al., "Netanyahu Says Israel Damaged 'Component' of Iran's Nuclear Program in Oct. Strikes," *The Washington Post*, November 18, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/11/18/israel-war-news-lebanon-iran-hamas-gaza-palestine/>.

⁴⁸ Eric Bradner, "MAGA Movement Divided over Trump's Move to Bomb Iran | CNN Politics," CNN, June 22, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/06/22/politics/maga-movement-divided-trump-iran>.

Within this environment, AIPAC along with allied pro-Israel Lobby in United States strengthened readiness for rapid mobilization. Their materials and briefings focused on three claims. Iran in nearing possession of nuclear warhead. Israel's security aligned with U.S. national security. Donald Trump's middle way against restrictive War Powers constraints. This preparatory activity mattered because it positioned Congress for fast signaling once hostilities began and lowered the political friction for limited intervention later in the timeline.

2. Chronology of the Day-by-Day 12-Days War

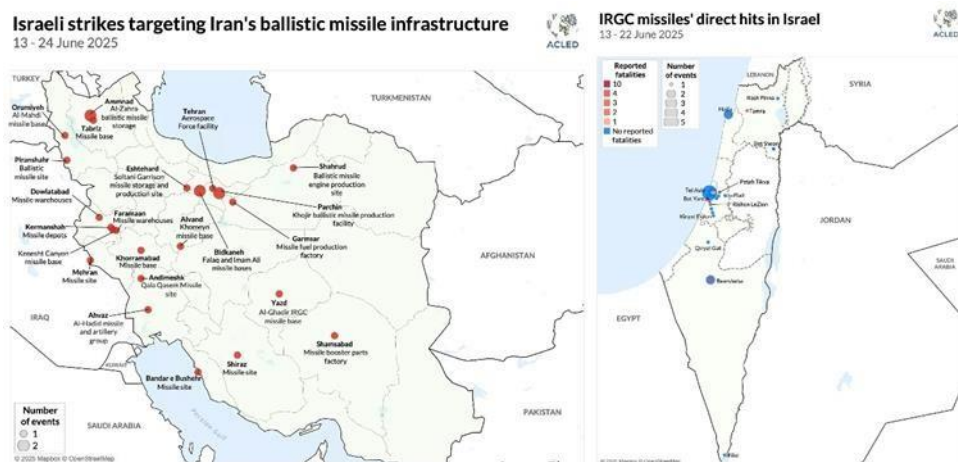
The conflict entered its overt phase on 13 June 2025. On Day 1, Israel launched precision airstrikes against IRGC Quds Force assets, missile units assessed as preparing launches, and facilities connected to Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Israeli officials described the operation as preemptive and defensive. The stated objective was to disrupt an imminent multi front escalation and to degrade Iran's nuclear and missile capacity before it crossed an irreversible threshold. Iran rejected this framing and declared the strikes unlawful aggression⁴⁹.

Netanyahu initiated direct calls to Trump within hours of the opening Israeli strikes⁵⁰. Israeli intelligence transmitted targeting data on Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan to American counterparts. The Israeli request

⁴⁹ Helen Regan Fox Lauren Izso, Tamar Michaelis, Nadeen Ebrahim, Kara, "Israel Hits Iran's Nuclear Program and Military Leadership in Unprecedented Strikes," CNN, June 13, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/06/12/middleeast/israel-iran-strikes-intl-hnk>.

⁵⁰ "Trump, Israeli Premier Speak by Phone as Iran Launches Retaliatory Strikes," Anadolu, accessed April 26, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/trump-israeli-premier-speak-by-phone-as-iran-launches-retaliatory-strikes/3597691>.

focused on deployment of the GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator, a munition only the B-2 Spirit platform is configured to deliver. No non-American actor possesses this delivery capacity⁵¹.



Picture 4.1 Visualizing the 12 Days War

Source: <https://acleddata.com/qa/qa-twelve-days-shook-region-inside-iran-israel-war>

On Days 2 and 3, Iran escalated through Operation True Promise III. Iranian forces launched roughly two hundred ballistic missiles in successive waves, combined with armed drones, targeting Israeli air bases, military infrastructure, and urban areas in northern Israel and the Tel Aviv metropolitan region. Israel's layered air defense systems intercepted most projectiles, yet several missiles penetrated defenses and struck populated areas near Haifa and surrounding cities⁵².

⁵¹ Haley Britzky Robinson Lou, "Israel Has Pushed the US to Use Its 'Bunker Buster' Bomb on Iran. Here's What the Weapon Can Do | CNN Politics," CNN, June 18, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/06/18/politics/bunker-buster-weapon-explained-dg>.

⁵² Future Internet, "Technical Analysis: True Promise 3 Operation," accessed November 1, 2025, <https://www.ecssr.ae/en/home>.

Civilian casualties and infrastructure damage followed. While the material damage was limited relative to the volume of fire, the psychological and political impact was significant. Media coverage framed the barrages as a qualitative escalation that tested Israeli deterrence and normalization of missile warfare against cities⁵³.

Between 16 and 18 June, equate to Days 4 to 6, the war intensified. Israel expanded its target set beyond missile units and nuclear linked facilities to include command and control nodes and politically sensitive sites inside Iran. On Day 4, Israeli strikes hit Iran's state broadcasting headquarters in Tehran, disrupting live transmissions and signaling a psychological warfare component⁵⁴. Additional strikes affected Farabi Hospital in Kermanshah and caused explosions near Mashhad airport and government facilities in Tehran. Iran responded with sustained missile salvos toward Tel Aviv and Haifa, causing further civilian casualties and forcing temporary shutdowns in industrial areas.

On Day 5, Israel widened strikes to missile storage and launch sites across Isfahan, Tabriz, and Tehran. One strike killed Major General Ali Shadmani, the acting chief of staff of the Iranian army. This marked a significant escalation in leadership targeting⁵⁵. Iran retaliated with new

⁵³ "IDF: Dozens of Rockets Fired by Iran in Previous Barrage, Some of Them Downed," *The Times of Israel*, June 13, 2025, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-dozens-of-rockets-fired-by-iran-in-previous-barrage-some-of-them-downed/.

⁵⁴ David Gritten, "Israel Bombs Iran State TV during Live Broadcast," BBC News, June 17, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3w46pw2xn0o>.

⁵⁵ "Iranian General Was Chased down and Killed by Israeli Agents, Daughter Says," July 29, 2025, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202507286588>.

missile and drone waves. Some penetrated air defenses and caused additional casualties.

The escalation peaked on Day 6. More than fifty Israeli aircraft conducted predawn strikes against Tehran's military industrial belt. Targets included a centrifuge production facility, missile manufacturing plants, and IRGC affiliated institutions such as the Khojir complex and Imam Hossein University. Iran responded with another large missile barrage, bringing the total number launched since 13 June to roughly 350. These strikes caused further deaths and injuries in Haifa, Bat Yam, and nearby areas. In Tehran, fear and uncertainty drove residents to flee the city or shelter in metro stations⁵⁶.

As the conflict moved into Days 7 to 9, Israel expanded operations against deeper nuclear related infrastructure, including centrifuge research and production facilities. Iran responded with additional missile strikes and increased cyber operations against Israeli energy and transport systems. European governments and Russia urged de escalation. Simultaneously, hawkish U.S. legislators and pro Israel advocacy networks increased pressure on the White House to move beyond defensive assistance⁵⁷.

At Level I, this phase reflected a security dilemma dynamic. Each side's efforts to strengthen deterrence intensified the other's threat

⁵⁶ I. S. W. Press, "Iran Update Special Report, June 18, 2025, Morning Edition," *Institute for the Study of War*, June 18, 2025, <https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-june-18-2025-morning-edition/>.

⁵⁷ I. S. W. Press, "Iran Update Special Report, June 20, 2025, Morning Edition," *Institute for the Study of War*, June 20, 2025, <https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-june-20-2025-morning-edition/>.

perception. At Level II, domestic political alignment in Washington shifted. Pro-Israel networks worked to ensure that a transition from defense to limited U.S. offense would face minimal resistance. This interaction set the conditions for the U.S. decision that followed.

3. Operation Midnight Hammer

Although the United States military role during the Twelve Day War was limited in duration, it developed through a sequence of identifiable decision points rather than a single abrupt choice. From the outset of the conflict, the administration maintained a public posture of restraint. U.S. officials emphasized that Washington was not involved in Israel's initial strikes and that the immediate priority was the protection of American forces, facilities, and regional partners. This public framing, however, coexisted with parallel internal processes that gradually expanded the range of acceptable policy options. Figure 4.3 summarizes the causal linkage

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between military developments mobilization, and executive authorization that culminated in the U.S. strike.

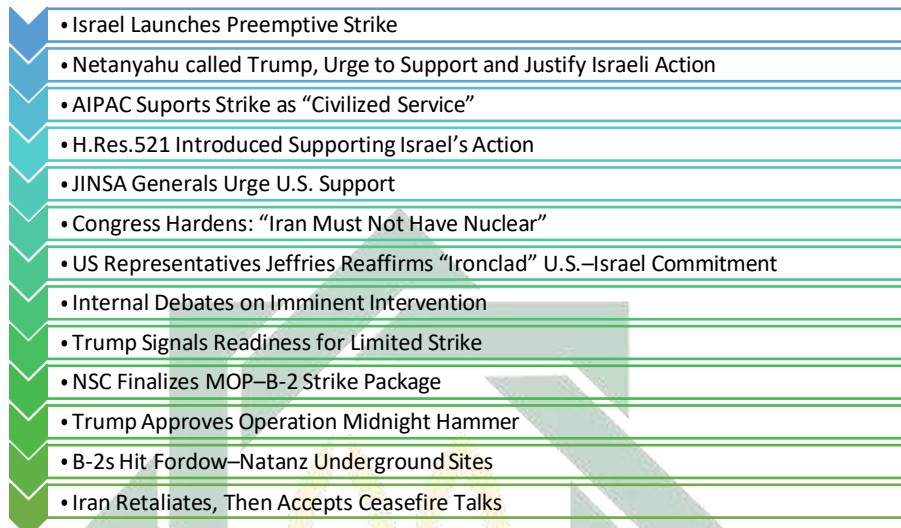


Chart 4.2 Key Decision-Making Milestones Leading to Operation Midnight Hammer During the 12-Day Israel–Iran War (June 2025).

In the first days after 13 June 2025, internal assessments within the National Security Council and the Department of Defense intensified. Intelligence reviews focused on Iran’s nuclear status, enrichment timelines, and the survivability of hardened facilities such as Fordow and Natanz. Contingency planning examined the feasibility of limited strikes using stealth platforms and bunker penetrating munitions, with an emphasis on avoiding a prolonged campaign. These preparations indicate that the option of direct U.S. involvement was present early, even while officials publicly denied any intention to escalate⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ Barak Ravid, “U.S. Evacuating Personnel from the Middle East amid Growing Tensions with Iran,” Axios, June 12, 2025, <https://www.axios.com/2025/06/11/middle-east-evacuating-baghdad-iran>.

Later, On 15 June, seventy-three retired U.S. generals and admirals released an open letter through the Jewish Institute for National Security of America calling for strong U.S. support to ensure the effectiveness of Israel's military operations⁵⁹. Shortly thereafter, House Republicans introduced House Resolution 521, formally praising Israel's strikes and reaffirming U.S. commitment to preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. These actions functioned as elite level cues that shifted the domestic political environment toward acceptance of limited U.S. military action⁶⁰.

At the same time, competing signals emerged. A smaller group of legislators advanced War Powers resolutions aimed at restricting presidential authority to expand hostilities without congressional approval⁶¹. These initiatives reflected concern that U.S. involvement could widen the conflict into a regional war. The administration navigated this tension by maintaining ambiguity. On 17 June, President Trump publicly demanded Iran's unconditional surrender and stated that he would decide within two weeks whether to authorize military action. This statement increased pressure on Tehran while also signaling to domestic audiences that escalation remained a deliberate and controlled choice.

⁵⁹ JINSA, "73 US Military Leaders Applaud Israel's Strike and Call for US Support," Urge Letter, n.d., <https://jinsa.org/open-letter-on-us-supporting-israel-striking-iran/#:~:text=Share:,Download%20the%20letter%20here>.

⁶⁰ H. RES. 521 Standing with Israel as It Works to Dismantle Iran's Nuclear Enrichment Capabilities and Defends Itself against Iranian Attacks on Civilians., 521, House of Representative 1st Session (2025), <https://www.congress.gov/119/bills/hres/521/BILLS-119hres521ih.pdf>.

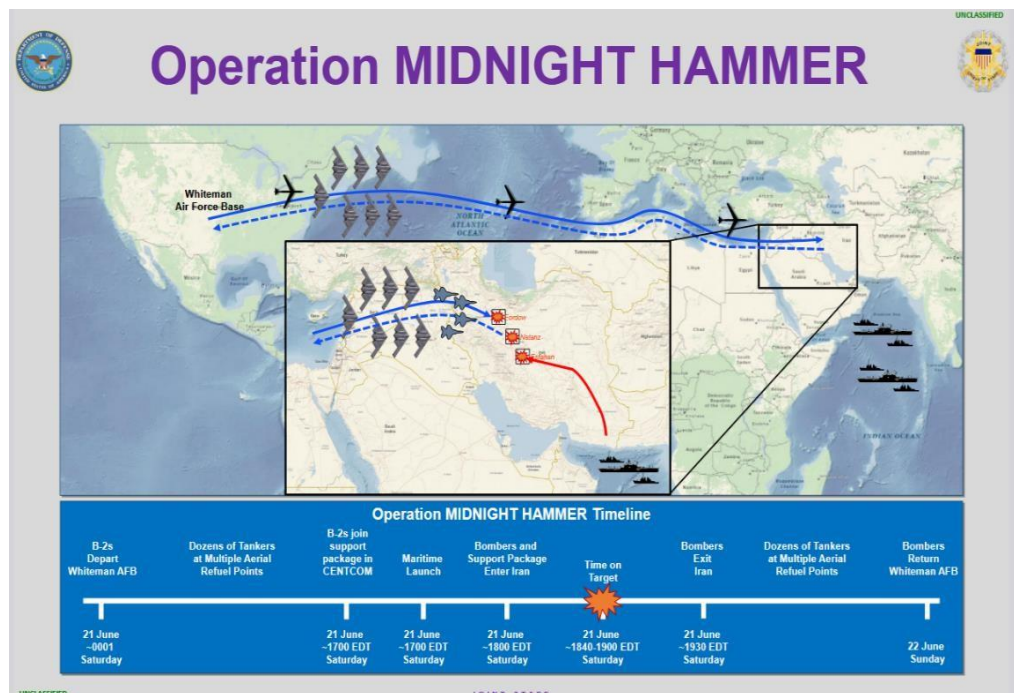
⁶¹ M. Patrick Hulme, "War and Responsibility," *American Political Science Review* 120, no. 1 (February 2026): 267–90, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055425000206>.

By 21 June 2025, following consultations with congressional leadership and key allies, President Trump authorized Operation Midnight Hammer. The operation was explicitly framed as limited and preventive. The stated objectives were to delay Iran's nuclear program, reinforce deterrence, and support Israel's security, while avoiding regime change or sustained combat operations.

According to Department of Defense (DoD), the strike involved more than dozens of US Air force Fleet, including seven B-2 Spirit bombers. These aircraft targeted nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan using fourteen GBU 57 bunker penetrating bombs, while a U.S. submarine launched over two dozen Tomahawk cruise missiles. The operation lasted approximately twenty-five minutes⁶².

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⁶² "Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dan Ca," U.S. Department of War, accessed November 9, 2025, <https://www.war.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/4222543/secretary-of-defense-pete-hegseth-and-chairman-of-the-joint-chiefs-of-staff-gen/>.



Picture 4.2 Key Decision-Making Milestones Leading to Operation Midnight Hammer During the 12-Day Israel–Iran War (June 2025).

Source: <https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4222533/hegseth-caine-laud-success-of-us-strike-on-iran-nuke-sites/>

In the immediate aftermath, the White House emphasized de-escalation. Officials stated that the strikes were confined to nuclear-related targets and did not represent the opening phase of a broader war⁶³. Israel publicly welcomed the operation and portrayed it as a significant setback to Iran’s enrichment capability. Iran condemned the strikes but calibrated its response. Tehran launched missiles at a U.S. base in Qatar after providing

⁶³ Joseph Gedeon and Robert Tait, “Briefing on Iran Strikes Leaves Senators Divided as Trump Threatens New Row,” US News, *The Guardian*, June 27, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/26/trump-iran-strikes-intelligence-congress>.

advance warning, resulting in no casualties. This response signaled deterrence while avoiding further escalation⁶⁴.

Within days, U.S. and Qatari mediated contacts facilitated a halt to hostilities. On 24 June 2025, a ceasefire took effect, formally ending the Twelve Day War. The authorization of Operation Midnight Hammer constitutes Level I executive action within the Two-Level Game framework. Escalation on the battlefield increased pressure for decisive action, while domestic political alignment reduced the cost of limited intervention. The administration's choice of a single, highly targeted strike followed by rapid de-escalation represents a compromise outcome shaped by both international security developments and domestic political constraints.

4. Short-lived War Explanation

The Twelve Day War ended rapidly due to a combination of military outcomes, strategic signaling, and political constraints affecting all principal actors. The conflict reached a point where continued escalation offered diminishing returns while increasing the risk of broader regional war. As a result, a ceasefire achieved once core objectives had been partially satisfied and each side arranges their or version of the outcome⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ Prapti Upadhayay, "Iran Launches Ops 'Glad Tidings of Victory' against US: Tehran Fires Missiles at US Base in Qatar, Explosions Heard in Doha," Wion, accessed September 12, 2025, <https://www.wionews.com/world/iran-launches-ops-glad-tidings-of-victory-against-us-tehran-fires-missiles-at-us-base-in-qatar-explosions-heard-in-doha-1750697514731>.

⁶⁵ Nina Farnia, "The 12-Day War and the Collapse of US Imperialism," *Middle East Critique* 34, no. 4 (October 2025): 791–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2025.2578034>.



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump

CONGRATULATIONS TO EVERYONE! It has been fully agreed by and between Israel and Iran that there will be a Complete and Total CEASEFIRE (in approximately 6 hours from now, when Israel and Iran have wound down and completed their in progress, final missions!), for 12 hours, at which point the War will be considered, ENDED! Officially, Iran will start the CEASEFIRE and, upon the 12th Hour, Israel will start the CEASEFIRE and, upon the 24th Hour, an Official END to THE 12 DAY WAR will be saluted by the World. During each CEASEFIRE, the other side will remain PEACEFUL and RESPECTFUL. On the assumption that everything works as it should, which it will, I would like to congratulate both Countries, Israel and Iran, on having the Stamina, Courage, and Intelligence to end, what should be called, "THE 12 DAY WAR." This is a War that could have gone on for years, and destroyed the entire Middle East, but it didn't, and never will! God bless Israel, God bless Iran, God bless the Middle East, God bless the United States of America, and GOD BLESS THE WORLD!

DONALD J. TRUMP,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

28.9k ReTruths 124k Likes

Jun 24, 2025, 12:02 AM

Picture 4.3 President Trump social media post announce the ceasefire between Israel and Iran Source:
<https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114734934153569653>

The U.S. strike under Operation Midnight Hammer played a central role in shortening the conflict. The use of B-2 bombers, Tomahawk missiles, and GBU 57 bunker penetrating munitions delivered a concentrated blow to Iran's nuclear infrastructure at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. While the long-term effectiveness of the damage remains debated, the strikes disrupted enrichment activity and removed the immediate justification for further Israeli escalation. The operation signaled that the United States was willing to intervene directly, but only in a limited and tightly controlled manner⁶⁶.

⁶⁶ ToI Staff and Agencies, "Witkoff: US, Iran Seeking 'Peace Deal,' Strikes Set Tehran's Nuke Program Back Years," *The Times of Israel*, June 25, 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/witkoff-us-iran-seeking-peace-deal-strikes-set-tehrans-nuke-program-back-years/>.

Israel's defensive situation also reduced pressure for prolonging the war. Its multi layered air defense system intercepted many Iranian missiles and drones, limiting civilian casualties and infrastructure damage. Because the domestic impact inside Israel remained contained, the Israeli government faced less public demand for an extended campaign or ground escalation. This defensive resilience allowed Israeli leaders to frame the conflict as a strategic success rather than an unresolved crisis requiring further action.

Iran's response strategy further contributed to rapid de-escalation. Tehran needed to demonstrate that it would not absorb U.S. strikes without reply, but it also sought to avoid provoking a sustained American campaign. The missile attack on the U.S. base in Qatar, conducted with advance warning and resulting in no casualties, illustrates this calibrated approach. Iran preserved deterrence signaling while keeping escalation below a threshold that would justify further U.S. or allied strikes. Regional proxy forces likewise avoided full scale engagement, indicating centralized restraint rather than uncontrolled escalation⁶⁷.

⁶⁷ John T. Psaropoulos, "Is the 12-Day Israel-Iran War Really over – and Who Gained What?," Al Jazeera, accessed November 3, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/24/is-the-12-day-israel-iran-war-really-over-and-who-gained>.

Taken as a whole, the empirical evidence presented in this section demonstrates the interaction between Level I and Level II dynamics as defined in the Two-Level Game framework.

The Level I outcome materialized on June 22, 2025, through Operation Midnight Hammer. The United States executive authorized B-2 Spirit deployment, GBU-57 release on Iranian hardened sites, and post-strike diplomatic signaling toward Tehran through Qatari mediation. The Level I bargain produced the Israeli requested outcome. Political viability of the Level I outcome required Level II domestic ratification within the United States. The following sub-chapter will trace the AIPAC mobilization that supplied this ratification.

B. AIPAC's Mobilization During the Twelve-Day War

During the Twelve Day War, The American Israel Public Affairs Committee also known as AIPAC operated as a central domestic actor shaping how the conflict was interpreted and managed within the United States political system. Its role went beyond passive support or repetitive alliance preservation. AIPAC engaged in coordinated mobilization across Congress, media, grassroots networks, and elite donor circles with the objective of structuring U.S. policy choices in a way favorable to Israel during the crisis.

At the domestic level, AIPAC's primary task was to stabilize political support for Israel at a moment of potential uncertainty. Which the war happened at Trump Second Administration with his 'America First' Branding with visible internal divisions over foreign intervention. This created a risk that congressional

resistance, War Powers initiatives, or public fatigue could constrain executive action. AIPAC's mobilization sought to prevent this outcome by rapidly consolidating a pro-Israel consensus and marginalizing alternatives centered on restraint or constitutional limits.

Beyond elite institutions, AIPAC also mobilized its grassroots infrastructure to reinforce pressure from below. Action alerts, coordinated messaging, and standardized talking points encouraged supporters to contact their representatives and publicly endorse pro-Israel positions. This activity explained national-level advocacy into district-level pressure, particularly affecting legislators viewed as hesitant or skeptical of escalation. Grassroots mobilization thus complemented elite lobbying by signaling potential electoral consequences for deviation from AIPAC's preferred line. This mobilization represents Level II lobbying activity, as it structured domestic political incentives during the crisis.

1. Activation of Legislation in Congress

During the War, congressional activity became a primary arena through which AIPAC urge political support for Israel into formal institutional gestures directed from legislative branch to the executive branch. The objective was not to initiate new policy debates, but to lock in a clear and early consensus framing Iran as the aggressor and Israel as a legitimate ally acting in self-defense. By doing so, AIPAC reduced

uncertainty over congressional preferences and constrained the range of policy options perceived as politically viable⁶⁸.

The process began with the rapid circulation of draft resolutions and joint letters prepared by 'AIPAC'. These texts were deliberately structured to attract bipartisan endorsement. Iran was consistently described as a state sponsor of terrorism and a nuclear threat, while Israel was framed as an ally whose security interests overlapped with those at the United States⁶⁹. House Speaker Johnson, Congressman Gottheimer, and Senator Coons were among the lawmakers who urged President Trump to maintain all available choices, implicitly including military force, while avoiding statements that would cause instant opposition.⁷⁰

A critical component of this legislative mobilization was the effort to neutralize War Powers initiatives. Proposals introduced by Congressman Massie a libertarian Republican supported by progressive Democrats to restrict or condition presidential authority were treated as threats to Israel's security and U.S. credibility⁷¹. Party leaders with close ties to pro-Israel funding networks issued strong pro Israel statements while withholding

⁶⁸ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Holding Sway on Capitol Hill," in *THE ISRAEL LOBBY AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux Farrar, Straus and Giroux, n.d.), 152–62.

⁶⁹ "Senators Coons, Schumer, Murray, Reed, Warner Statement on President Trump's Actions in the Middle East," *Senator Christopher Coons*, n.d., accessed November 12, 2025, <https://www.coons.senate.gov/news/press-releases/senators-coons-schumer-murray-reed-warner-statement-on-president-trumps-actions-in-the-middle-east/>.

⁷⁰ Josh Gottheimer et al., "Bipartisan Letter to The President of United States," June 13, 2025, https://d12t4t5x3vyizu.cloudfront.net/gottheimer.house.gov/uploads/2025/06/FINAL_Bipartisan-Letter-to-POTUS-on-Iran.pdf.

⁷¹ H.Con.Res.38 - Directing the President Pursuant to Section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution to Remove United States Armed Forces from Unauthorized Hostilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran., 38, House of Representative 1st Session (2025).

support from war powers resolutions. As a result, these initiatives were delayed, blocked procedurally, or defeated, preserving executive discretion during the crisis.

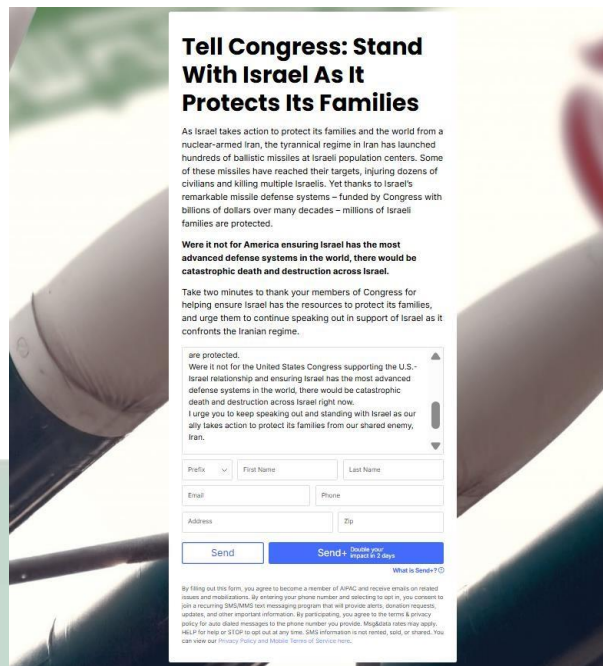
2. Grassroots Mobilizations: AIPAC's "Mass Mobilizations Wing"

Beyond Congress itself, AIPAC also activated grassroots platform at its website to ensure elite preferences into district level political pressure. This mechanism functioned to reinforce legislative lobbying by ensuring that members of Congress perceived constituent support for Israel as organized, visible by its constituent U.S citizens, and electorally relevant during the crisis⁷².

The core instrument of this mobilization was the Action Alert system. Through coordinated email, SMS, and web-based platforms, AIPAC distributed standardized messages to its national supporter network. These alerts combined brief narrative cues with direct instructions for political action. Supporters were provided with concise talking points framing Iran as the aggressor and Israel as acting in self defense, followed by one click tools enabling immediate contact with congressional offices. This design minimized message variation and ensured that offices received high volumes of consistent communications tied to specific legislative moments⁷³.

⁷² "AIPAC - Israel's War Against Iran," AIPAC, accessed December 10, 2025, <https://www.aipac.org/israel-war-iran>.

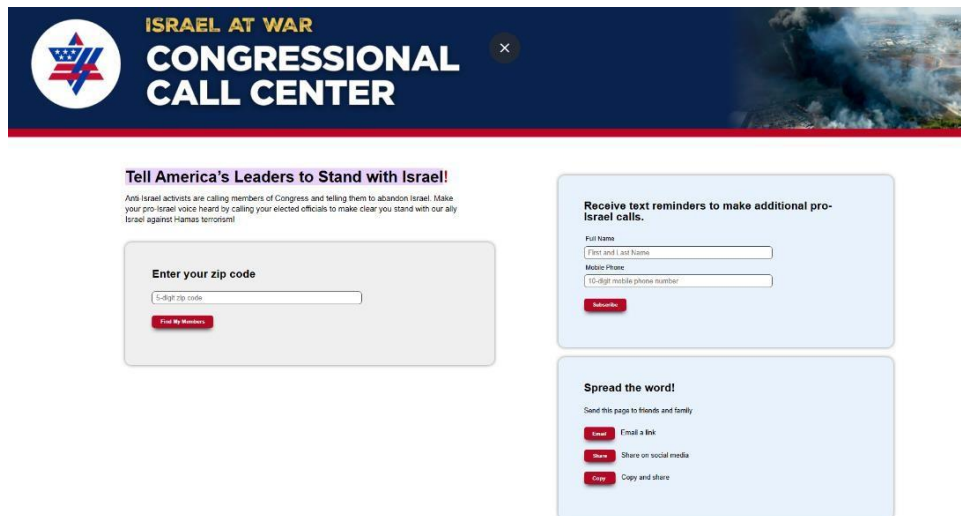
⁷³ "TAKE ACTION: Tell Congress To Stand With Israel," accessed December 10, 2025, <https://speak4.app/lp/j9016sxs>.



Picture 4.4 AIPAC action alert urging constituents to contact members of Congress in support of Israel during the Twelve-Day War. Source: https://speak4.isr.org/j9016sxs?ts=1749774649&utm_source=website&utm_medium=iran

Grassroots campaigns were operationalized into concrete activities rather than symbolic expressions. Supporters were encouraged to contact representatives, attend town halls with prepared questions, submit opinion pieces to local media, and circulate approved narratives through personal networks. These actions synchronized constituent outreach with developments in Congress, amplifying elite lobbying by reproducing identical frames at the district level⁷⁴.

⁷⁴ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “Guiding the Policy Process,” in *THE ISRAEL LOBBY AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, n.d.), 165–167.



Picture 4.5 AIPAC congressional call center page mobilizing constituents to contact U.S. lawmakers in support of Israel during the Twelve-Day War.

Source: <https://action.aipac.org/congressional-call-center>

This form of mobilization imposed political costs on legislators perceived as hesitant or skeptical. ‘America First’ leaning Republicans and ‘progressive’ Democrats who questioned escalation or raised concerns over war powers faced concentrated pressure in their home districts. Figures such as Congressman Massie, Congresswomen Greene, and Senator Rand Paul were treated as potential defectors from the prevailing pro-Israel consensus⁷⁵.

The effectiveness of this strategy is reinforced by long standing alliances between pro Israel organizations and evangelical Christian constituencies. Existing research on evangelical Jewish political cooperation shows that pro Israel advocacy groups have invested for

⁷⁵ “TRT World - ‘Dollar, Oil, and Israel’ — US Republican Lawmakers Slam Trump’s Threat to Iran,” accessed December 10, 2025, <https://www.trtworld.com/article/23e1c201e73a>.

decades in cultivating evangelical support as a reliable mobilization base. In conservative districts, where evangelical voters form a significant share of the electorate, this alignment enhances the credibility and impact of grassroots pressure⁷⁶.

Grassroots mobilization operates as a linking mechanism between national level lobbying and individual legislative behavior. It converts centralized policy preferences into decentralized but coordinated constituent signals felt directly by congressional offices. Within the Two-Level Game framework, this mechanism aligns domestic constituencies with the lobby's preferred outcome and contributes to the expansion of the domestic win set for limited U.S. intervention.

3. Media Framing and Narrative: Frontstage Lobbying

AIPAC also operated through sustained influence over public narratives in U.S. media. This dimension functioned as frontstage lobbying, shaping how the conflict was interpreted by policymakers, journalists, and the broader public. Rather than acting primarily through direct public statements under its own name, AIPAC operated as a coordinating node within a wider ecosystem of aligned think tanks, advocacy organizations, and policy experts⁷⁷.

⁷⁶ Paul D. Miller, "Evangelicals, Israel and US Foreign Policy," *Survival* 56, no. 1 (January 2014): 7–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2014.882149>.

⁷⁷ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Dominating Public Discourse," in *THE ISRAEL LOBBY AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, n.d.), 168–75.

Institutions such as the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and the American Jewish Committee supplied a steady flow of analysts, former officials, and retired military officers to major newspapers and twenty-four-hour news channels. Prior academic work identifies WINEP as part of the core institutional structure of the pro Israel lobby, with disproportionate influence over media discourse on Middle East policy. FDD, meanwhile, is widely associated with hardline positions on Iran's nuclear program and long-standing advocacy of sanctions and military pressure. Together, these organizations provided authoritative voices that framed the conflict in ways compatible with AIPAC's policy preferences⁷⁸.

During the Twelve Day War, three dominant media frames occurred. First, Iran was depicted as a nuclear aggressor nearing weapons capability, with urgent language such as months to the bomb and red line appearing frequently and often voiced by experts linked to pro-Israel advocacy networks⁷⁹. Second, Israel was framed as an ally and share the same common interest that under deliberate attack, making U.S. support appear both strategically necessary and morally justified⁸⁰. Third, neoconservative

⁷⁸ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt.

⁷⁹ Greg Wehner et al., "Israel-Iran Conflict: June 12, 2025," Fox News, June 13, 2025, <https://foxnews.com/live-news/israel-launches-preemptive-strike-on-iran-s-capital-tehran>.

⁸⁰ Amelie Botbol, "Evangelical Leaders Praise Trump's Continued Support for Israel amid War with Iran," Text.Article, Fox News, Fox News, June 15, 2025, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/evangelical-leaders-praise-trumps-continued-support-israel-amid-war-iran>.

commentary warned that restraint signaled weakness, portraying military caution toward Iran as a form of appeasement⁸¹.

Alternative perspectives were not entirely absent but were systematically marginalized. Commentators and political figures who emphasized escalation risks, constitutional limits, or domestic priorities were often framed as isolationist or insufficiently attentive to security threats. Figures such as Tucker Carlson and Congresswoman Greene, who questioned the intensity and selectivity of media coverage, became focal points of criticism within pro Israel aligned media spaces. This pattern narrowed the range of publicly legitimate debate without requiring formal censorship or direct intervention⁸².

This frontstage narrative management shaped the domestic political environment in which executive decisions were taken. Within Putnam's Two-Level Game, media framing contributed to expanding the domestic win set by making limited U.S. military action appear reasonable, responsible, and consistent with mainstream discourse. Skeptical positions remained visible but carried higher reputational and political costs, reducing their capacity to translate into binding constraints on policy.

⁸¹ Michael R. Pompeo, "MIKE POMPEO: US Strikes on Iran Nuclear Sites Mark Triumph of Decisive Leadership | Fox News," accessed December 20, 2025, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/mike-pompeo-trumps-iran-strikes-show-world-what-america-first-foreign-policy-looks-like>.

⁸² "What I Learned Discussing Israel with Tucker Carlson, Steve Bannon and Marjorie Taylor Greene," POLITICO, December 8, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2025/12/08/the-conservatives-pushing-maga-to-break-with-israel-00635363>.

4. Backstage Negotiations and Influence in Elite Circles

In addition to visible legislative action and media framing, AIPAC's influence during the Twelve Day War operated through backstage mechanisms embedded within elite political and policy networks. This dimension of mobilization relied on long term relationships with donors, senior congressional staff, and policy professionals, as well as institutional pathways linking advocacy organizations, think tanks, and executive agencies⁸³. These mechanisms function outside public debate but shape how policy preferences are formed, rewarded, and enforced.

Evidence indicates that engagement with this network begins before legislators formally assume office. Testimony from Congresswomen Marjorie Taylor Greene illustrates this early stage of influence. She stated that during her initial campaign she was asked by groups including AIPAC to complete detailed questionnaires and position papers on Israel. Newly elected members are commonly invited on AIPAC organized trips to Israel during their first term⁸⁴. These visits operate as structured political socialization, framing Israel's security environment and embedding threat perceptions that align closely with pro Israel policy narratives. Greene

⁸³ Ben Samuels, "Marjorie Taylor Greene and AIPAC Unleash Fundraising War over Gaza Genocide Claims," Israel News, *Haaretz*, August 8, 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-08-08/ty-article/.premium/marjorie-taylor-greene-and-aipac-unleash-fundraising-war-over-gaza-genocide-claims/00000198-89f5-d2f4-a99d-fdf769e60000>.

⁸⁴ Tucker Carlson, *Marjorie Taylor Greene: AIPAC, NYC's Future Mayor, and the Warmongers Trying to Undermine Trump*, Tucker Carlson Channel, 2025, 01:37:25, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8er4NEwVLXw>.

further argued that open disagreement with AIPAC positions risk triggering financial retaliation through support for primary challengers⁸⁵.

Campaign finance data reinforce this pattern of discipline and reward. Investigative reporting shows that AIPAC and affiliated political action committees mobilized large scale funding to support aligned candidates and defeat critics. Planned expenditures approaching one hundred million U.S. dollars in the 2024 cycle and high-profile primary defeats of incumbents such as Jamaal Bowman and Cori Bush illustrate how financial resources impose electoral costs on dissent⁸⁶. These practices create a deterrent effect beyond individual races by signaling to other legislators the risks associated with challenging pro Israel positions.

This financial capacity is complemented by privileged access to the legislative and executive process. AIPAC and WINEP maintain close working relationships with senior staff on key committees, including Foreign Affairs, Armed Services, and Appropriations. Earlier warnings from the American Arab Anti Discrimination Committee highlighted a revolving door between WINEP and the National Security Council, raising concerns that pro Israel policy perspectives become institutionalized within executive decision making. Through policy briefs, draft language, and informal

⁸⁵ Tucker Carlson.

⁸⁶ Team Zeteo, “‘We Had to Fight’: Jamaal Bowman & Cori Bush Talk AIPAC on New Zeteo Show,” April 17, 2025, <https://zeteo.com/p/we-had-to-fight-jamaal-bowman-and>.

consultation, these networks shape which policy options appear credible and responsible, while alternatives emphasizing restraint are sidelined⁸⁷.

The evidence in this section corresponds directly to the Level II domestic indicators defined in Chapter II. Legislative mobilization, grassroots action alerts, media framing, and backstage elite coordination constitute Level II lobbying activity, as they structured congressional signaling, constituent pressure, and elite consensus during the crisis. Taken together, these mechanisms contributed to win-set expansion by reducing domestic political resistance to limited U.S. military intervention and narrowing the range of publicly legitimate alternatives centered on restraint or constitutional limits.

C. Political Spectrum: Pro-AIPAC vs. AIPAC-Skeptical Actor

This Third sections will be explains the domestic political spectrum in Washington during the Twelve Day War by applying a group level unit of analysis rather than focusing on isolated individual opinions. Identify how competing coalitions interacted and how their relative strength structured the domestic political environment in which United States foreign policy decisions toward Iran were taken.

At Level II of Putnam's Two-Level Game, two broad group formations emerged. The first was a dominant pro-AIPAC coalition composed of hawkish

⁸⁷ Thomas G. Mitchell, *Israel/Palestine and the Politics of a Two-State Solution*, Academic & Nonfiction Books Anthology (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2013).

Republican legislators, centrist Democrats, party leadership figures, and aligned policy elites. This coalition consistently framed Iran as an imminent nuclear threat and Israel as an ally whose security interests overlapped with those of the United States. This group worked to expand the domestic win set for limited military intervention.

Opposing this coalition was a smaller bloc of AIPAC-skeptical actors. This group did not reject Israel as an ally but questioned the automatic linkage between U.S. military action and Israeli security demands. Their arguments emphasized constitutional limits, escalation risks, and domestic priorities. Although visible in media discourse and procedural challenges, this block lacked the institutional leverage, coalition size, and financial backing necessary to impose binding constraints on executive action.

The interaction between these two blocks explains why dissent existed yet failed to alter policy outcomes. The pro-AIPAC coalition translated organizational capacity and elite access into effective control over legislative agendas and political signaling, while the skeptical bloc remained fragmented and reactive. As a result, the domestic political balance favored executive discretion and made limited intervention against Iran politically feasible during the crisis.

1. Pro-AIPAC Bloc: Expanding the Domestic Win Set

Within the domestic political arena, the pro-AIPAC bloc operated as the dominant group-level actor shaping United States policy toward the Israel–Iran war. This bloc was composed of senior Republican hawks,

House and Senate leadership figures, and a segment of centrist Democrats who consistently framed Iran's nuclear program as an urgent security threat and Israeli military action as both legitimate and necessary. Their influence did not depend on a single institution, but on the convergence of ideology, leadership authority, and organizational support⁸⁸.

At the ideological level, figures such as Senator Lindsey Graham and Senator Tom Cotton represented continuity rather than crisis-driven escalation. Their long-standing positions portrayed diplomacy with Iran as insufficient and military force as a credible and sometimes necessary tool. When the Twelve-Day War began, their public support for Israeli strikes and subsequent U.S. intervention reflected pre-existing preferences, reducing political friction around escalation⁸⁹. This continuity helped normalize limited military action as a reasonable policy choice rather than an extraordinary departure.

Institutionally, House leadership played a decisive role. Speaker Mike Johnson's control over the legislative agenda allowed him to block War Powers initiatives that could have constrained presidential authority⁹⁰. His public arguments against such constraints aligned closely with AIPAC's preference for preserving executive flexibility on Israel-related

⁸⁸ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Holding Sway on Capitol Hill," in *THE ISRAEL LOBBY AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux Farrar, Straus and Giroux, n.d.), 152–162.

⁸⁹ "ICYMI: Graham Floor Speech on the Israel-Iran Conflict," United States Senator Lindsey Graham, accessed December 22, 2025, <https://www.lgraham.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2025/6/icymi-graham-floor-speech-on-the-israel-iran-conflict>.

⁹⁰ Kate Santaliz, "Mike Johnson Calls War Powers Act 'Unconstitutional,'" *Axios*, June 24, 2025, <https://www.axios.com/2025/06/24/mike-johnson-war-powers-act-unconstitutional-iran>.

security issues. Campaign finance patterns, while not treated as sole causal drivers, reinforced this alignment by sustaining durable relationships between leadership figures and pro-Israel funding networks⁹¹.



Picture 4.6 Campaign finance exposure of senior U.S. lawmakers highlighting the scale of pro-Israel lobby influence in shaping congressional alignment during the Iran-Israel war. Source: <https://www.trackaipac.com/congress>

Picture 4.6 presents campaign finance exposure among selected U.S. lawmakers based on publicly available data compiled by Track AIPAC. The figure shows the scale of pro-Israel lobby contributions received by legislators occupying influential positions in Congress during the period surrounding the Twelve-Day War. The distribution of funding spans both Republican and Democratic lawmakers and includes figures holding leadership roles or serving on key committees⁹².

⁹¹ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “Holding Sway on Capitol Hill.”

⁹² “Hall of Shame,” Track AIPAC, accessed December 2, 2025, <https://www.trackaipac.com/shame>.

Beyond formal votes, symbolic and discursive practices are further consolidated. Representatives such as Brian Mast internalized Israeli security narratives through language use and public symbolism, reducing the perceived boundary between Israeli and U.S. interests⁹³. At the same time, centrist Democrats who maintained moderate public profiles continued to support pro-Israel resolutions and aid packages, often benefiting from backing by pro-Israel political action committees. This cross-party configuration produced the appearance of bipartisan consensus.

From a Two-Level Game perspective, the pro-AIPAC bloc expanded the domestic win set by signaling broad political support, minimizing electoral risk, and neutralizing institutional constraints. By doing so, it created a domestic environment in which executive authorization of Operation Midnight Hammer appeared politically legitimate and strategically justified.

2. The AIPAC-Contra Bloc: Attempts to Narrow the Win-Set

Opposing the dominant pro-AIPAC coalition was a smaller and less institutionally powerful bloc of legislators who questioned both military escalation against Iran and the political influence of pro-Israel lobbying networks. This group did not reject Israel as an ally but challenged the assumption that U.S. military action was automatically aligned with American national interests. Their behavior illustrates how dissent operates

⁹³ Brian Mast, "Supporting Our Ally Israel," Congressman Brian Mast, accessed December 22, 2025, <https://mast.house.gov/israel>.

at the margins of domestic politics and why it struggled to translate into binding constraints during the Twelve-Day War.



Picture 4.7 Lawmakers who reject AIPAC funding, illustrating the boundary of dissent and the political cost of opposing pro-Israel lobby alignment in Congress. Source: <https://www.trackaipac.com/congress>

Picture 4.7 displays selected members of Congress identified by Track AIPAC as legislators who rejected AIPAC funding or received no financial support from pro-Israel lobby networks. The figure includes representatives from different ideological positions and party affiliations, indicating that refusal of AIPAC support is not confined to a single political camp⁹⁴.

Congressman Thomas Massie represents the clearest case of direct confrontation with AIPAC at the group level. His libertarian-oriented opposition to foreign aid and discretionary wars placed him in open conflict with the dominant consensus. Massie's refusal to engage with AIPAC representatives and his public discussion of lobbying pressure exposed the

⁹⁴ "Track Your Congressmembers' Connections to the Israel Lobby," Track AIPAC, accessed December 3, 2025, <https://www.trackaipac.com/congress>.

disciplinary mechanisms used to enforce conformity⁹⁵. Negative advertising campaigns directed against him served a dual purpose. They aimed to weaken his electoral position and to signal to other legislators the costs of sustained dissent⁹⁶.

Massie attempted to convert skepticism into formal constraint through the War Powers Resolution. His proposal sought to prohibit unauthorized hostilities against Iran and to reassert congressional authority over the use of force. The effort failed when House leadership prevented the resolution from reaching the floor. Several members reportedly expressed private sympathy but declined to act publicly due to anticipated political costs. This outcome demonstrates a chilling effect in which latent opposition exists but remains suppressed by agenda control and lobbying pressure⁹⁷.

Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene contributed a different form of resistance. Rather than focusing on constitutional procedure, she emphasized media saturation, public attention, and domestic priorities⁹⁸.

By contrasting coverage of the Israel–Iran war with other U.S.-funded

⁹⁵ Thomas Massie [@RepThomasMassie], “This is not our war. But if it were, Congress must decide such matters according to our Constitution. I’m introducing a bipartisan War Powers Resolution tomorrow to prohibit our involvement. I invite all members of Congress to cosponsor this resolution.” Tweet, Twitter, June 16, 2025, <https://x.com/RepThomasMassie/status/1934749340813476204>.

⁹⁶ Sonam Sheth, “Thomas Massie Jokes He’d like Ceasefire with Trump after Iran Rift,” *Politics, Newsweek*, June 23, 2025, <https://www.newsweek.com/thomas-massie-jokes-hed-like-ceasefire-trump-after-iran-rift-2089710>.

⁹⁷ Julian E. Zelizer, “What Happened to the War Powers Act?,” *Foreign Policy*, June 25, 2025, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/06/25/war-powers-act-congress-president-trump-nixon-iran/>.

⁹⁸ Ellen Rittiner Raju Manu, “*Complete Bait and Switch*”: MTG Calls out Trump over Iran Strikes | *CNN Politics*, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/06/23/politics/video/mtg-trump-promises-maga-iran-strikes-digvid>.

conflicts, she suggested that public narratives were being selectively amplified. Her criticism of House leadership linked foreign policy decisions to elite consensus and donor-driven incentives, reinforcing the perception that dissenting views were marginalized within party structures⁹⁹. These actors attempted to constrain executive action but were outweighed by the size, coordination, and access of the pro-AIPAC coalition.

3. Media Allies and the Exposure of Backstage Dynamics

During the Twelve-Day War, a limited number of media actors functioned as conduits for AIPAC-skeptical narratives that were largely absent from mainstream coverage. Among these figures, media personality Tucker Carlson played a distinctive role by providing a platform where dissenting legislators could articulate experiences of lobbying pressure and challenge the dominant pro-intervention framing¹⁰⁰. His interventions did not reverse policy outcomes, but they exposed aspects of domestic political dynamics that normally remain concealed.

Carlson's interview with Representative Thomas Massie is analytically significant because it reframed the issue of lobbying from individual disagreement to structural discipline. Carlson questioned why a well-funded lobby would invest substantial resources to undermine a single

⁹⁹ Marc Rod, "MTG Post against Israel's Operations in Iran Unites Far Right, Far Left," *Jewish Insider*, June 16, 2025, <https://jewishinsider.com/2025/06/marjorie-taylor-greene-post-against-israeli-operations-iran-unites-far-right-left-code-pink/>.

¹⁰⁰ "Tucker Carlson Named 'Antisemite of the Year' for Opposing Israel's Genocide in Gaza," *Middle East Eye*, accessed January 1, 2026, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/tucker-carlson-named-antisemite-year-opposing-israels-genocide-gaza>.

libertarian congressman whose vote alone could not alter U.S. foreign policy¹⁰¹. This line of questioning shifted attention from Massie's policy stance to the deterrent function of lobbying pressure. The implication was that the objective was not only to defeat one legislator, but to prevent the normalization of open dissent by signaling consequences to others¹⁰².

Beyond interviews, Carlson highlighted symbolic dimensions of alignment with Israel. His criticism of the prevalence of Israeli flags in congressional offices appealed to nationalist sensibilities among conservative audiences¹⁰³. Rather than contesting specific policy details, this symbolism-focused critique encouraged viewers to question how foreign-aligned identities and narratives had become embedded within U.S. legislative culture. This approach lowered the entry barrier for skepticism by framing the issue as one of representation and sovereignty rather than ideology.

These media interventions illuminate the distinction between frontstage consensus and backstage acknowledgment. In formal political settings, bipartisan resolutions and elite statements projected unity around Israel's security and framed escalation as responsible. In contrast, discussions on Carlson's platform revealed legislators' awareness of donor pressure, coordinated messaging, and internal party discipline. While these

¹⁰¹ Tucker Carlson, *Rep. Thomas Massie Reveals Deep State Secrets and Teaches You How to Live Off-Grid*, 2024, 02:09:40, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omBSEuFTYEo>.

¹⁰² Tucker Carlson.

¹⁰³ Joe Walsh, *Tucker Carlson Spars with Ted Cruz on Israel-Iran Strikes: "You Don't Know Anything about Iran"* - CBS News, June 18, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tucker-carlson-spars-with-ted-cruz-on-israel-iran-strikes/>.

revelations did not generate institutional change, they provided empirical insight into why opposition remained fragmented and politically costly.

Tucker Carlson did not significantly narrow the domestic win-set for escalation. However, they exposed the mechanisms through which dissent is discouraged and consensus maintained¹⁰⁴. Within this thesis, such episodes serve as supporting evidence for the existence of backstage dynamics that shape policy outcomes without appearing in formal decision-making records.

4. Congress-Executive Tensions and the Preservation of Executive Discretion

During the Twelve Day War, executive discretion expanded despite formal congressional war powers. This expansion rested on aligned domestic signals rather than legal delegation. President Trump framed U.S. action as limited, preventive, and technical, directed at Iran's nuclear infrastructure rather than the Iranian state. This framing echoed dominant media narratives portraying Iran as an imminent nuclear threat and Israel as acting in self-defense.

By adopting language of restraint and proportionality, the executive reduced the appearance of war initiation while preserving operational latitude for escalation tied to enrichment thresholds and red line logic.

¹⁰⁴ POLITICO, "What I Learned Discussing Israel with Tucker Carlson, Steve Bannon and Marjorie Taylor Greene."

Executive messaging consistently emphasized restraint and proportionality. Statements such as “*not at war with Iran, but with its nuclear program*” positioned Operation Midnight Hammer as a technical intervention rather than a strategic shift¹⁰⁵. At the same time, public remarks left open the possibility of further strikes if Iran resumed higher-level enrichment. This dual signaling reassured hawkish allies while avoiding explicit commitments that might trigger stronger congressional resistance.

Congressional efforts to reassert authority took the form of War Powers resolutions. In the House, Representative Thomas Massie introduced a resolution to prohibit unauthorized hostilities against Iran. The measure failed to reach the floor due to agenda control exercised by Speaker Mike Johnson¹⁰⁶.

This shows how executive discretion is preserved under conditions of state-lobby symbiosis. When lobbying networks, party leadership, and dominant media narratives align with intervention, formal constitutional mechanisms prove insufficient to constrain action. In Two-Level Game terms, the pro-AIPAC coalition sustained a wide domestic win-set, allowing the president to authorize Operation Midnight Hammer without

¹⁰⁵ Edward Helmore, “JD Vance Claims US Is at War with Iran’s Nuclear Program, Not Iran,” US News, *The Guardian*, June 22, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/22/jd-vance-iran-nuclear-program-war>.

¹⁰⁶ Santaliz, “Mike Johnson Calls War Powers Act ‘Unconstitutional.’”

new congressional authorization and to retain leverage over subsequent escalation or de-escalation choices¹⁰⁷.

The evidence in this section corresponds to Level II domestic political indicators within the Two-Level Game framework. The dominance of the pro-AIPAC coalition, the fragmentation and marginalization of AIPAC-skeptical actors, media reinforcement of elite consensus, and the procedural defeat of War Powers initiatives illustrate how domestic alignment structured political feasibility during the crisis. Together, these dynamics sustained a wide domestic win-set, preserving executive discretion and enabling the authorization of Operation Midnight Hammer without binding congressional constraint.

D. The Israel Lobby's Role in Pushing U.S Military Intervention

Now the last Sub-chapter, will be explained about synthesizes the empirical findings that already presented in Sub-chapters A, B, and C to directly address the central research question of this study: to what extent did the Israeli lobby, through its political strategy and advocacy, play a role in encouraging the United States to conduct a limited military intervention on Iran's nuclear facilities during the 2025 Israel-Iran War?

This section will apply process tracing as a causal inference method to reconstruct the sequential linkages between lobbying activity and the executive

¹⁰⁷ Kevin Liptak Holmes Jeremy Herb, Kristen, "How Trump Quietly Made the Historic Decision to Launch Strikes in Iran | CNN Politics," *CNN*, June 22, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/06/22/politics/trump-iran-strike-decision-inside>.

authorization of Operation Midnight Hammer. This analysis also examines diagnostic evidence at each stage of the causal chain to assess whether observable lobbying mechanisms generated the conditions under which limited U.S. military intervention became politically viable. The analysis is organized around three causal stages: narrative framing and agenda setting, congressional alignment and win-set expansion, and executive authorization under reduced political constraint¹⁰⁸.

1. First Stage

The causal sequence begins before the first Israeli strike on June 13, 2025. As documented in the first Sub-chapter of Chapter IV, the Israeli executive branch under Prime Minister Netanyahu personally calls President Trump to pressure toward the United States for American munitions support against Iranian hardened nuclear sites¹⁰⁹. AIPAC and its affiliated advocacy networks had already invested in preparatory framing around three core claims: that Iran was approaching nuclear weapons capability, that Israeli security was inseparable from U.S. national security interests, and that executive action should not be constrained by restrictive War Powers interpretations¹¹⁰. This pre-crisis framing constitutes what Putnam's Two-Level Game theory identifies as a prior shaping of the

¹⁰⁸ Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, eds., *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139858472>.

¹⁰⁹ Eric Cortellessa, "How Netanyahu Pushed Trump to Back Strikes on Iran," *TIME*, June 19, 2025, <https://time.com/7295726/netanyahu-trump-israel-iran-nuclear-strikes/>.

¹¹⁰ Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (December 1993): 51–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>.

domestic win-set, meaning that the range of politically acceptable responses to the crisis was partially structured before the crisis itself began¹¹¹.

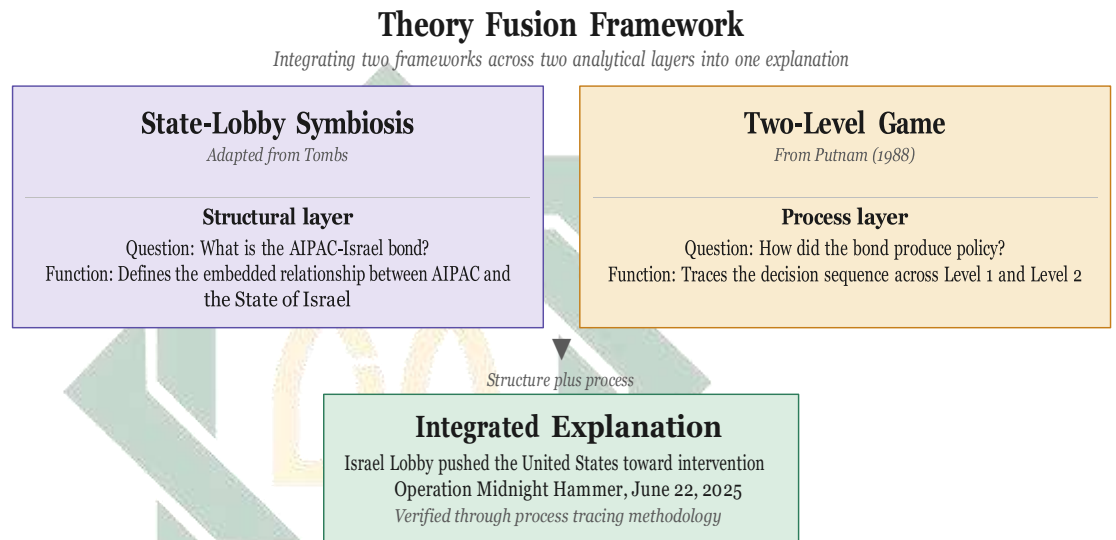


Chart 4.3 Fusion of State-Lobby Symbiosis and Two-Level Game
Source: Author's construction.

The diagram presents the analytical division of labor between the two frameworks used in this study. The State-Lobby Symbiosis operates at the structural layer and answers what AIPAC is in relation to the State of Israel. The Two-Level Game operates at the process layer and answers how that bond produced a specific policy outcome. Their integration yields the central finding: the Israel Lobby pushed the United States toward intervention through Operation Midnight Hammer on June 22, 2025.

¹¹¹ Putnam, *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games*.

When hostilities erupted, AIPAC with its allied institutions including the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy immediately activated this pre-constructed narrative infrastructure. Iran was framed as a nuclear aggressor, while Israel was positioned as a defensive ally acting in the shared interest of the United States¹¹². Within the Two-Level Game framework, this framing constitutes a Level II mechanism because it shaped how domestic audiences, legislators, and executive staff interpreted the strategic meaning of Israeli military action. Critically, framing reduced the political cost of supporting intervention by embedding it within mainstream security discourse rather than presenting it as a controversial escalatory choice¹¹³.

The causal significance of this stage lies in its timing and reach. Narrative consolidation occurred within the first 48 hours of the conflict, before congressional deliberation or executive planning had produced binding outcomes¹¹⁴. By establishing Iran as the aggressor and intervention as a security imperative early in the crisis, AIPAC constrained the range of frames available to skeptical actors, who were subsequently characterized as isolationist or insufficiently attentive to national security threats. This asymmetry in narrative access constitutes a measurable causal process observation that marks the opening stage of lobbying influence¹¹⁵.

¹¹² John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Dominating Public Discourse."

¹¹³ MEE staff, "How US Leaders, Lawmakers and Civil Society Reacted to Israel's Strikes on Iran."

¹¹⁴ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Dominating Public Discourse."

¹¹⁵ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Guiding the Policy Process."

The pre-crisis framing carried Level I executive substance from the outset. Israeli intelligence assessments on Iranian nuclear progress reached American policy discourse through two parallel routes. The first route operated through bilateral diplomatic channels between the Israeli executive and United States executive counterparts. The second route operated through AIPAC, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, where the same intelligence material entered congressional briefings, op-ed circulation, and think tank publications. The Israeli executive supplied the originating content. The Israel Lobby supplied the domestic translation infrastructure that converted bilateral intelligence into legislative signaling and mainstream security discourse.

This division of function illustrates the State-Lobby Symbiosis structure where foreign state priorities enter American political deliberation through embedded domestic intermediaries alongside formal diplomatic channels. The narrative framing observable at Level II therefore carried Level I executive substance, making the two levels analytically distinct but empirically interlinked from the earliest stage of the crisis sequence.

2. Second Stage

The second stage of the causal chain is the translation of narrative framing into formal legislative signals directed at the executive branch. As explained in the Sub-chapter B, AIPAC pursued coordinated legislative

mobilization through multiple simultaneous channels¹¹⁶. The rapid introduction and bipartisan endorsement of House Resolution 521¹¹⁷, the circulation of the bipartisan letter to President Trump co-signed by Congressman Gottheimer and others¹¹⁸, and the open letter from 73 retired military officers organized through JINSA collectively produced a congressional signal environment that favored executive action. These were not isolated gestures but coordinated outputs of a lobbying infrastructure operating under compressed time pressure.

The process of tracing evidence is diagnostically significant here because the sequence of events follows a pattern consistent with causal influence rather than mere correlation. Lobbying outputs preceded and conditioned legislative behavior. Congressional alignment preceded and shaped executive calculations¹¹⁹. This temporal sequence, from AIPAC advocacy to legislative signal to presidential decision, reflects the causal pathway that Putnam's framework predicts. Win-set expansion occurred because domestic political support reduced the political cost of intervention and eliminated the institutional resistance that would otherwise have constrained executive discretion¹²⁰.

¹¹⁶ James M. Lindsay, *Congress and the Politics of US Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

¹¹⁷ 119TH CONGRESS, *House Resolution 521 H. RES. 521* (Washington D.C: Authenticated U.S Government Information, n.d.), 1–6.

¹¹⁸ Josh Gottheimer et al., “Bipartisan Letter to The President of United States.”

¹¹⁹ Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing.”

¹²⁰ Putnam, *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games*.

Equally important to the causal argument is the parallel failure of the AIPAC-skeptical bloc. As in the Section of Sub-Chapter C, Representative Massie's War Powers Resolution was procedurally blocked by Speaker Johnson before reaching the floor¹²¹. The absence of binding congressional constraint is not neutral background condition, but a causal outcome produced by specific lobbying strategies. Speaker Johnson's public characterization of the War Powers Act as unconstitutional, combined with the procedural tools he exercised to prevent floor votes, directly reflects the alignment between House leadership and pro-Israel lobbying preferences documented in the campaign finance and elite access evidence¹²². Within the State-Lobby Symbiosis framework, this alignment illustrates the structural interdependence through which the state and lobbying organizations reinforce each other's preferred outcomes¹²³.

The causal weight of this stage is substantial. The domestic political environment confronting the White House by June 20 to 21, 2025, was one in which bipartisan resolutions endorsed intervention, elite military figures had publicly called for U.S. support, war powers constraints had been neutralized, and skeptical voices had been marginalized both procedurally and in media discourse¹²⁴.

¹²¹ Thomas Massie [@RepThomasMassie], "This is not our war. But if it were, Congress must decide such matters according to our Constitution. I'm introducing a bipartisan War Powers Resolution tomorrow to prohibit our involvement. I invite all members of Congress to cosponsor this resolution."

¹²² Santaliz, "Mike Johnson Calls War Powers Act 'Unconstitutional.'"

¹²³ Tombs, *STATE-CORPORATE SYMBIOSIS IN THE PRODUCTION OF CRIME AND HARM*.

¹²⁴ Zelizer, "What Happened to the War Powers Act?"

The procedural neutralization of the War Powers Resolution by Speaker Johnson illustrates the depth of state-lobby interdependence beyond standard interest group activity. Procedural authority within House leadership operates as a state institutional power, yet its exercise aligned precisely with the policy preferences of the Israel Lobby coalition. Within the State-Lobby Symbiosis framework, this alignment reflects structural embedding through which lobbying preferences and institutional state behavior reinforce each other without direct transactional exchange.

The state and the lobby do not operate as separate actors with conflicting interests in this case. They operate as components of an integrated decision system in which lobby preferences shape institutional procedure and institutional procedure delivers lobby preferences as policy outputs, locating the Israel Lobby's influence in the architecture of the policy process itself. *Figure 4.2* below visualizes the embedded interdependence between the State of Israel and AIPAC. Israel transmits strategic priority through its executive branch and security doctrine into the American political space. AIPAC supplies domestic advocacy capacity through congressional access, donor mobilization, and its affiliate network of pro-Israel organizations. The bidirectional flow defines symbiosis. The output is pro-Israel pressure within United States foreign policy, observed empirically in Operation Midnight Hammer.

State-Lobby Symbiosis between AIPAC and the State of Israel

Adapted from Tombs, structural interdependence model

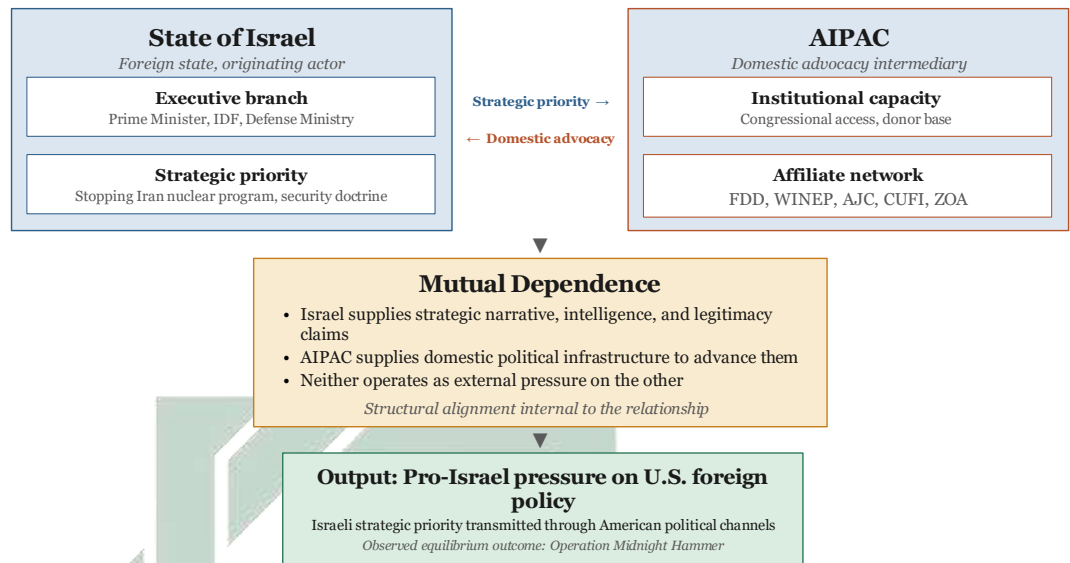


Chart 4.4 Relation of AIPAC and State of Israel.

Source: Author's construction.

3. Third Stage

The third stage connects the domestically engineered political environment to the presidential decision itself. The authorization of Operation Midnight Hammer on June 21, 2025, occurred after a deliberate sequence of executive signaling that reflected awareness of both international pressure and domestic political alignment¹²⁵. President Trump's public ultimatum to Iran on June 17, his consultations with congressional leadership, and the framing of the operation as limited, preventive, and non-escalatory all indicate that the decision was calibrated to satisfy both within the Level I and Level II constraints simultaneously¹²⁶.

¹²⁵ Holmes, "How Trump Quietly Made the Historic Decision to Launch Strikes in Iran | CNN Politics."

¹²⁶ U.S. Department of War, "Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dan Ca."

At Level I, the administration faced genuine strategic pressure. Iranian missile barrages, Israel's pushed and expanding target set, and assessments of Iran's nuclear infrastructure created independent incentives for action¹²⁷. The simultaneous calibration across both levels deserves explicit emphasis. President Trump engaged in direct bilateral exchange with Prime Minister Netanyahu, received Israeli intelligence transmissions on Fordow and Natanz, and faced specific Israeli executive requests for GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator deployment, a munition only the B-2 Spirit platform delivers¹²⁸. The institutional anchor of the United States Israel Memorandum of Understanding and the Qualitative Military Edge doctrine structured the Level I bargain in favor of compliance with Israeli requests¹²⁹. At Level II, AIPAC mobilization had already removed the principal sources of domestic resistance through House Resolution 521, the bipartisan letter circulated by Congressman Gottheimer, the JINSA generals' letter, and the procedural defeat of the Massie War Powers initiative.

The convergence of bilateral pressure at Level I with engineered domestic alignment at Level II produced the executive decision under conditions where neither dimension imposed binding constraint on the preferred outcome. The lobbying activity did not replace strategic

¹²⁷ Helmore, "JD Vance Claims US Is at War with Iran's Nuclear Program, Not Iran."

¹²⁸ "Congress.Gov/Crs_external_products/IF/HTML/IF13032.Html," accessed April 20, 2026, https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/IF/HTML/IF13032.html.

¹²⁹ William Wunderle and Andre Briere, *U.S. Foreign Policy and Israel's Qualitative Military Edge*, n.d.

considerations. It restructured the political environment within which strategic considerations were evaluated, lowering the cost of compliance with Israeli requests and raising the cost of restraint.

The process tracing methodology does not require lobbying to be the sole cause of intervention. What it requires is evidence that lobbying activity was a necessary part of the causal mechanism that produced this specific outcome at this specific moment¹³⁰. The evidence satisfies this requirement. A decision to conduct strikes against sovereign Iranian nuclear facilities would have faced substantially higher domestic political costs in the absence of AIPAC's mobilization, congressional alignment, and narrative consolidation. The domestic win-set would have been narrower, War Powers resistance more organizationally capable, and elite skepticism more visible and credible¹³¹.

The State-Lobby Symbiosis framework further clarifies the causal relationship at this stage. The administration's framing of the operation emphasizing that the United States was at war with Iran's nuclear program rather than Iran as a state, as articulated by U.S Vice President Vance closely mirrored the threat framing AIPAC, and aligned organizations had promoted throughout the crisis. This convergence between executive messaging and lobby-generated narratives is not coincidental. It reflects the structural embedding of pro-Israel policy preferences within the

¹³⁰ Barton J. Bernstein, Graham Allison, and Philip Zelikow, "Essence of Decision," *Foreign Policy*, no. 114 (1999): 121, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1149596>.

¹³¹ Mitchell, *Israel/Palestine and the Politics of a Two-State Solution*.

executive discourse environment through long-term relationship building, policy briefings, and revolving-door access that already been on the sub-chapter B¹³².

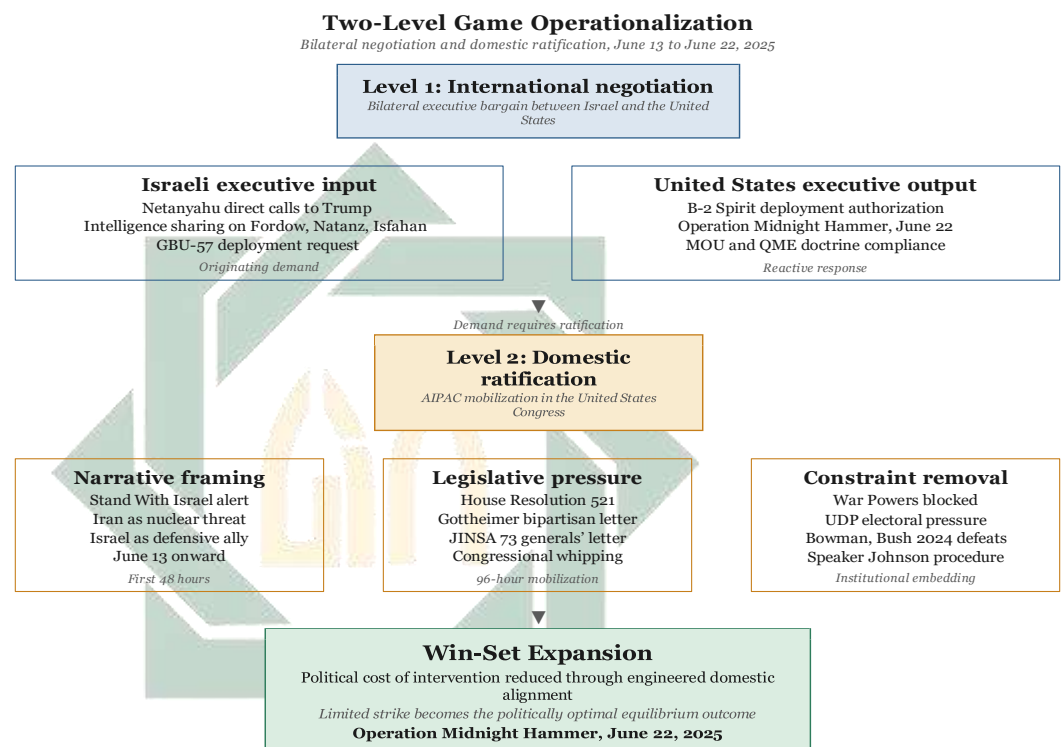


Chart 4.5 Two-Level Game Operationalization for Twelve Day War.
Source: Author's construction.

The diagram operationalizes Putnam's Two-Level Game across June 13 to June 22, 2025. Level 1 represents the bilateral executive bargain through Netanyahu's calls to Trump, intelligence sharing on Iranian nuclear sites, and the GBU-57 deployment request. Level 2 represents AIPAC mobilization through narrative framing, legislative pressure including House Resolution 521, and constraint removal through procedural

¹³² Tombs, *STATE-CORPORATE SYMBIOSIS IN THE PRODUCTION OF CRIME AND HARM*.

blocking of the Massie War Powers initiative. The convergence of both levels produced win-set expansion, lowering the political cost of intervention until a limited strike emerged as the equilibrium outcome

4. Casual Assessment and Answer to the Research Question

The process tracing analysis supports the following causal assessment. The Israeli lobby, operating primarily through AIPAC and its affiliated networks, played a significant and identifiable role in shaping the domestic political conditions under which U.S. military intervention against Iran's nuclear facilities became politically feasible in June 2025¹³³. This influence operated through three sequentially linked mechanisms: narrative framing established the interpretive environment before and during the crisis, congressional mobilization generated formal legislative alignment and neutralized institutional constraints, and elite signaling reduced the perceived political risk of executive authorization¹³⁴.

This finding does not support a claim of lobby determinism. Strategic factors at Level I including Iranian missile strikes, the credibility of U.S. alliance commitments, and intelligence assessments of Iran's nuclear timeline were real and independently relevant to executive calculations. The causal argument advanced here is more precise. The lobby expanded the domestic win-set such that a limited strike became the politically optimal equilibrium between international pressure and

¹³³ Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing."

¹³⁴ Putnam, *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games*.

domestic constraint. Without this expansion, the administration's decision space would have been narrower, alternative options such as continued diplomacy or defensive-only assistance would have carried lower political costs, and the specific form of intervention through direct U.S. strikes rather than enhanced support to Israel would have faced greater resistance¹³⁵.

In Putnam's terms, AIPAC and its allied organizations functioned as active engineers of Level II politics rather than passive constraints. They did not merely reflect pre-existing public preferences for intervention¹³⁶. . They constructed legislative signals, media frames, and elite endorsements that made intervention appear consensus-backed, professionally validated, and strategically necessary. This active construction of the domestic political environment is the core causal contribution of the Israel Lobby to Operation Midnight Hammer¹³⁷.

The cumulative evidence answers the research question directly. The Israel Lobby played a necessary role in pushing the United States toward limited military intervention against Iranian nuclear facilities during the Twelve Day War. The lobby did not generate the underlying strategic pressure, which originated from Israeli operational decisions at Level I and Iranian nuclear program developments. The lobby supplied the domestic

¹³⁵ Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*, Cornell Studies in Political Economy (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

¹³⁶ Putnam, *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games*.

¹³⁷ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Holding Sway on Capitol Hill."

conditions that transformed strategic pressure into political feasibility. The necessary condition test rests on three counterfactual checks. Without AIPAC narrative consolidation, the Israeli framing of Iran as imminent threat would have faced sustained competing interpretations within American discourse. Without AIPAC legislative mobilization, congressional alignment would have remained uncertain and War Powers constraints would have remained operative. Without AIPAC electoral pressure, the cost calculation for individual legislators would have permitted broader dissent. The Israel Lobby therefore functioned as the necessary causal mechanism that converted Level I Israeli executive demand into Level II American political ratification, producing Operation Midnight Hammer as the politically viable equilibrium outcome.

This last section answers the research question through systematic empirical analysis grounded in process tracing methodology. The three-stage causal chain covering narrative framing, congressional mobilization, and executive authorization meets the methodological standard set by Collier and by Bennett and Checkel for process tracing in single case research¹³⁸. Each stage produced empirical traces collected from multiple independent sources, including TrackAIPAC records, OpenSecrets campaign finance data, congressional voting records, AIPAC public materials, and press reporting from the Times of Israel, Reuters, the

¹³⁸ Bennett and Checkel, *Process Tracing*.

Washington Post, CNN, Axios, and Congressional Research Service publications.

The research objective sought to examine how lobbying strategies were articulated, mobilized, and translated into support within United States legislative and executive institutions, and how domestic political pressures interacted with existing security commitments and Iranian nuclear concerns in shaping the executive decision¹³⁹.

The dual framework integration delivers this examination. The State-Lobby Symbiosis explained the embedded structural bond between AIPAC and the State of Israel, supplying the institutional grounding for AIPAC's role as a faithful carrier of Israeli strategic priority¹⁴⁰. The Two-Level Game traced the temporal interaction between Level 1 bilateral negotiation and Level 2 domestic ratification across the compressed crisis window of June 13 to June 22, 2025¹⁴¹. The two frameworks operated at different analytical layers and addressed different research questions. Together they produced a complete account of the lobbying causal mechanism¹⁴².

¹³⁹ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Dominating Public Discourse."

¹⁴⁰ Tombs, *STATE-CORPORATE SYMBIOSIS IN THE PRODUCTION OF CRIME AND HARM*.

¹⁴¹ Putnam, *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games*.

¹⁴² Bennett and Checkel, *Process Tracing*.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A. Conclusion

This research finds that Operation Midnight Hammer emerged from the interaction between Level I and Level II within the Two-Level Game framework. At Level I, Israeli executive demand for American kinetic support structured the bilateral negotiating agenda through Netanyahu and Trump direct engagement, intelligence sharing, and the request for GBU-57 deployment. At Level II, AIPAC and its affiliate network mobilized the domestic ratification environment through House Resolution 521, narrative framing, congressional whipping, and electoral pressure. The two levels converged through win-set expansion. Israeli Level I demand without Level II domestic ratification would have faced congressional resistance. AIPAC Level II mobilization without Level I Israeli demand would have lacked executive target. The convergence of the two levels produced limited military intervention as the politically optimal equilibrium outcome.

Meanwhile, War Powers initiatives and AIPAC-skeptical voices in Congress, though increasingly vocalists were unable to impose binding institutional constraints on presidential authority. Taken together, these findings show that the eventual U.S. decision for a single, time-limited strike on Iranian nuclear infrastructure was not an ad-hoc reaction, but the convergence point of structural lobbying influence, executive discretion, and crisis-induced threat perception. From this empirical pattern, three core conclusions can be drawn.

1. AIPAC did not “cause” the 12-Day War, but it decisively shaped the form and political feasibility of U.S. intervention by expanding the domestic win-set in favor of a limited, high-intensity airstrike option (Operation Midnight Hammer), rather than either full non-involvement or a larger, sustained campaign.
2. U.S.–Israel alignment in this crisis operated as a case of state–lobby symbiosis, in which Israeli threat assessments and strategic preferences fed into AIPAC’s legislative and media mobilization, while the lobby’s success in Washington widened the policy space available to both Israeli leaders and the U.S. executive.
3. This case refines Putnam’s Two-Level Game by demonstrating that organized lobbies are not merely passive constraints but active engineers of the domestic win-set: through campaign finance networks, congressional signaling, grassroots pressure, and narrative framing, AIPAC helped produce the domestic conditions under which a limited strike became the most politically acceptable equilibrium outcome.

B. Suggestions

Future research should expand this study through comparative analysis of foreign policy lobbying networks linked to different states, including Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, and Taiwan, to determine whether the patterns identified here are distinctive or structural. Scholars should examine digital media ecosystems, social media advocacy, and coordinate online messaging as mechanisms that accelerate

lobbying influence during crises. Quantitative approaches such as campaign finance analysis, network mapping, and roll call modeling would strengthen causal testing. Theoretically, further refinement of Two-Level Game theory is required to capture how lobbying organizations actively construct and widen domestic win sets through persuasion, framing, and constituency mobilization rather than functioning only as constraints.

For policymakers and the public, this research underscores the importance of understanding domestic political drivers behind great power foreign policy. Indonesian policymakers should strengthen diplomatic literacy on lobbying dynamics, engage more actively with international policy networks, and monitor donor and coalition shift as early indicators of policy change in Washington. For the wider public, greater political literacy is needed to recognize how war decisions are shaped by domestic incentives, funding structures, and narrative control. A critical approach to international media coverage helps clarify how interest groups influence which conflicts are prioritized and how intervention is justified.

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