

## Israeli Lobbies and Their Influence on the E.U. Foreign Policy

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### **Abstract**

Israeli lobbies increasingly seek to transform the U.S. and E.U. approaches in the Middle East in favor of Israel's interests. In cooperation with their American counterparts, Israeli lobbyists struggle to strengthen their political presence in the E.U. states to ensure their political aims. This article tries to explore these lobbyists' objectives and activities in recent years across Europe. Findings indicate that they are committed to fighting anti-Semitism in Europe, inhibit the growth of the BDS movement and deviate the peace process in the Middle East from its standard path and toward Israel's interests. They also try to persuade E.U. leaders to take strict measures against Iran and delegitimize Iran and Hezbollah in E.U. institutions and provoke E.U. states to recognize Hezbollah terrorist organization.

**Key Words:** Israel Lobby, European Union, Middle East, Palestine, Zionism

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## Introduction

The significance of interest groups in domestic politics in the U.S. and E.U. countries is an undeniable fact. As a kind of interest group, lobbies play a crucial role in shaping the foreign policy of western countries. Among these lobbies, the Israeli ones seek to transform the U.S. and E.U. approaches in the Middle East in favor of Israel's interests. Concerning Israel's geopolitical and political predicament in the region, Israeli lobbies are willing to persuade E.U. countries to concentrate their attentions on the security of West Asia. In cooperation with their American counterparts, Israeli lobbyists struggle to strengthen their political presence in the E.U. states to ensure their political aims.

This article seeks to explore the reasons behind Israelis' efforts to establish Jewish lobbies across Europe. A case study of Israeli lobbies, established by influential Jews in the E.U. countries, is conducted to answer the research question. Data is collected from primary and secondary sources, including lobbies' websites, statements, and publications about their objectives and activities. Throughout the study, we will introduce almost all Israeli entries in Europe to explore how they influence E.U. politics at different levels in favor of Israel's interest.

## 1. Theoretical Framework

Contemporary academic scholars have attempted to explain the lobbying process by introducing various theories. First, there is a simplifying assumption that interest groups are actors whose prime goal is to influence public policy. Valerie Hudson (2014), for example, refers to a list of domestic forces trying to control the foreign policy of a state. Explaining lobbyists' behavior, she argues that the following sources of political and societal power and different groups get involved in influencing policy-making:

- 1) The executive branch of government;
- 2) The legislative branch;
- 3) The judicial branch;
- 4) Political parties, their factions, and wings;
- 5) Businesses and business coalition;
- 6) Political action groups;
- 7) Domestic interest groups;
- 8) The Media;
- 9) Unions;
- 10) Influential individuals such as the foreign minister;
- 11) Epistemic communities;
- 12) Religious groups and 13) Criminal and terrorist forces (Hudson, 2014: 144-145).

Interest groups, like political parties, form a link between the government and the governed in modern states. In contrary to political

parties, interest groups are not concerned with winning the election, but they want to reflect and satisfy the aspiration and values of the people they represent. An interest group is a political organization that aims to influence the policies and actions of the state (Heywood, 2019: 270-272).

As a collection of influential individuals, interest groups impact public policy decisions (Janda, Berry, Goldman, Hula, 2007: 182). Lobbyists are people who advocate for the interests of others against government officials. However, they do not have a good reputation with ordinary people. Journalists often humiliate lobbyists, blaming them for most of the flaws in the political system and insisting that lobbyists always corrupt legislators.

For this reason, even lobbyists do not like to be called lobbyists. Instead, they are interested in being known as "Advocate," "Liaison Officer," "Legislative Director," "Government Affairs Associate," or "Government Relations Specialist." (Holyoke, 2014:160) In another definition, lobbying is described as activities undertaken to influence public authorities decisions and represent an essential part of good democratic life. The participation of outside interests in policy-making corresponds with input and output legitimacy (Nastase & Muurmans, 2020: 238).

Many individuals and organizations try to communicate with lobbies and influential groups to achieve their own political goals. When special interests of influential groups are involved, only the political concerns of wealthy families, large corporations, and various economic and commercial sectors are addressed.

These influential groups focus on congressional committees, ministries, and government agencies through lobbyists, corporate lawyers, and business associations. Lobbyists usually include former elected officials, former political assistants, and advisers to elected officials. These lobbyists are highly paid because of their vast information and extensive connections to politicians and political institutions, which is why they are highly valued by wealthy families and corporations (Domhoff, 2014:7).

Domestic interest groups and policymakers strive to interact with each other in two ways: amplification and persuasion.

On the one hand, policymakers can motivate similar interest groups (allies) to amplify their shared policy goals when communicating with other relevant stakeholders. On the other hand, policymakers may seek out interest groups with opposing views (opponents) to persuade them to transform or soften their position (Lucas, Hanegraaff, De Bruycker, 2019: 408-409).

Moreover, Influential groups can communicate with legislators through precise and pre-determined planning to get them on track. These communication methods are:

**A) Entertainment:** Lobbyists provide the possibility of entertainment for legislators so that legislators feel comfortable and relaxed, and the conditions for recognition and trust-building between the two are provided;

**B) Lobbyists provide a platform for friendship and trust by arranging multiple trips for hunting, fishing, or shooting. But, of course, in the current era, these trips are rare. Therefore, they are not welcomed by lawmakers;**

**C) Gifts:** Lobbyists try to attract legislators to a favorable opinion on a particular issue by giving various gifts. But, of course, some lobbyists try to provide exceptional services to lawmakers instead of giving them as gifts;

**D) Holding Thanksgiving;**

**E) Recommending:** Lobbyists who specialize in a particular field try to influence the legislative process by providing advice and legislators' advice. Of course, if the lobbyists' advice is effective and efficient, there will be a lasting friendship between the lobbyist and the legislator (Rosenthal, 2001: 111-117).

Recent research and polls show that lobbyists use various methods to influence decision-making. These methods include: Face-to-face meetings with legislators; face-to-face meetings with state officials; coalitions with other organizations; assistance in drafting legislation, and; face-to-face meetings with state agencies staff; testimony at Legislative Committee hearings; conversations with the media; use of correspondence; telephone calls and e-mails to communicate with legislators; registration of written comments on the proposed laws and regulations; assistance in drafting regulations and instructions; informal communication with state legislators; publication of press releases; informal communication with officials of executive agencies after being informed of the laws and regulations being passed; personal meeting with the governor; writing newspaper editorials; serving on advisory committees; testifying at executive agency hearings; fighting for or against a "Request to change state law" or a referendum; participation in legislative discussions; to "Benefit" legislators and support them; holding press conferences; using correspondence, telephoning and sending e-mails to communicate with executive agency officials; appearing on radio programs; requesting legislation; appearing on television; suing; advertising in the mass media; giving gifts to legislators and; participating in appearances and protests (Nownes & DeAlejandro, 2009: 435-436).

It is worth noting that strategies used by E.U. lobbies in the foreign policy arena do not significantly differ from those implemented by interest groups in E.U. domestic affairs. Contrary to the theory of "Two-Level Games," interest groups lobby both the E.U. institutions and member states. For example, the Council's reputation as 'the least accessible' E.U. institution extends to E.U. foreign policy too.

Primarily Brussels-based lobbies negotiate the Council and its thematic or geographic working groups and committees. In the absence of institutionalized mechanisms for consultations, lobbying the Council needs to establish relationships of trust with diplomats from E.U. member states' Permanent Representations in Brussels (Shapovalova, 2020: 428-429).

## **2. Lobbyism in E.U.**

The function of its political system to assess the mechanism of lobbies in the E.U. needs to be understood. According to political science theories, the governance of the European Union is based on a multi-level system. E.U. has seven official institutions, which can be categorized by their executive, legislative, judicial, and financial functions, including:

**A)** The European Council is a group of E.U. leaders, including the president or prime minister of every member-state. It sets the union's primary direction and deals with urgent high-level questions. Its members elect a president, who can serve up to two-and-a-half-year terms;

**B)** The European Commission is the chief executive institution and legal guardian of treaties. It suggests laws, manages the budget, implements decisions, issues regulations, and represents the E.U. worldwide at summits, negotiations, and international organizations. The European Council chooses the members of the commission, and the European Parliament approves them. The commission, particularly, considers interest groups to legitimize their involvement in decision-making processes as a potential link between European officials and the citizens. The Commission is sharply criticized for its democratic character, having looked for 'civil society organizations to advocate it through their participation or their consultation in decision-making processes and the enforcement of the various regulations, therefore, seeking to establish input legitimacy (Saurugger, 2010: 475);

**C)** The European Parliament is the only E.U. institution whose members are elected directly and are representatives apportioned by each member state's population. However, it is not allowed to propose legislation, but laws can't pass without its approval. It also negotiates and approves the E.U. budget and oversees the commission. Lobbies give legislators credible selective information on the anticipated effects of a policy, enabling organized interest groups to transform legislators' preferred policy options (Marshall, 2012: 1379). The legislative role of the E.P. has been increased and massively expanded lobby activity in Brussels between 1994 and 2005 and provided legitimacy for European integration. It has also put intense pressure on

the openness and transparency of E.U. policy-making, the creation of rules, and regulation of interest representation (King, 2016: 41);

**D)** The Council of the European Union, also known as the Council of Ministers, is another branch whose approval is also necessary for legislation to pass. This Council consists of the government ministers (foreign ministers, defense ministers, and so on) from all E.U. members. It has the authority to approve or reject the commission's proposals after consulting with the European Parliament;

**E)** The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) is the E.U.'s highest judicial institution, interpreting E.U. laws and founding treaties, resolving disputes, and ultimately creating new law;

**F)** The European Court of Auditors (ECA) examines whether the E.U. budget is appropriately spent. It also reports any fraud to the European Parliament, the E.U. Commission, and national governments;

**G)** The European Central Bank (ECB) manages the Euro for the nineteen countries that use the currency and carries out the E.U.'s monetary instruction (Jordan, 2001:195) (McBride, 2020).

Neil Nugent (2010) describes Brussels as the city of most lobbies. In his opinion, it is not possible to count accurately appointed lobbyists in Brussels, not because many of them engage in this activity, but because they do not look at it as a full-time job. Indeed, lobbyists work as lawyers, accountants, and people in business, and in part, those who are full-time lobbyists prefer to introduce themselves as consultants or policy experts (Nugent, 2010: 245).

Nevertheless, it is estimated that most lobbyists working in Brussels represent the interests of corporations and their lobby groups (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2020).

Three categories of lobby organizations are recognized in the E.U.: 1) European trade association; 2) Companies; 3) NGOs (non-governmental organizations) (Guéguen, 2020:100-101). Lobbies in the E.U. are interested in dealing with various subjects, including Green, Medicines, Energy, Farm, Digital Industries, and so on (Integrity Watch-commission Meetings, 2020).

The first non-governmental lobbying activity in the European Union was conducted by the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT). In April 1983, 17 leading European business leaders decided to launch ERT. They were then united by an argument that European cooperation between industry, policymakers, and all stakeholders is necessary to strengthen Europe's place in the world (About ERT, 2020).

Lobbying is a billion-euro industry in Brussels. According to Corporate Europe Observatory, a watchdog campaigning for greater transparency, there are at least 30,000 lobbyists in Brussels, nearly matching the 31,000 staff employed by the European Commission and making it second only to the U.S. By some estimates, they influence

75% of legislation. Generally, lobbyists give politicians information and arguments during the decision-making process (Tranor, 2014).

To increase the transparency in E.U. politics, the European Commission launched a project entitled "European Transparency" on November 9, 2005. This plan requires all natural and legal persons who intend to provide advice to the legislative and executive bodies of the European Union to register their activities legally (Eising, 2010:195).

Besides, there are approximately 2,500 lobbying organizations in Brussels, which are arranged in various groups such as industry associations, NGOs/interest groups, and regional representations (King, 2016: 2).

In this regard, the European Parliament approved strict rules and urged the commission to make the E.U.'s lobby register mandatory by 2017. These rules include:

- A) Restricting access to Parliament buildings for non-registered organizations;
- B) Asking MEPs to get lobbyists with whom they meet to sign up to the register;
- C) Providing information for registered lobbyists, allowing them to co-host events in parliament more efficiently and to participate in public hearings;
- D) Limiting the parliament's representation at events hosted by non-registered organizations (Cerulus, 2014).

Moreover, the European Parliament voted on January 31, 2019, demanding MEPs to publish their meetings with lobbyists and took this measure to ensure transparency in the E.U. parliament (Pearson, 2019).

All states would exploit from lobbying, mainly because they have no formal access and no formal power in the consultative phase of the Commission and the European Parliament. States with effective administrations that can rapidly produce national positions, which is necessary for getting active in lobbying in the first place, and states that have been in the E.U. for a long time, are lobbying E.U. institutional actors most often. Size matters, as well as large states, tend to lobby E.U. actors more often in general. However, this does not offer extensive conditions in lobbying the commission because of a neutrality norm in the commission's bureaucracy (Panke, 2012: 145).

Generally, non-state actors use national and E.U. channels to lobby in favor of their clients. Figure 1 below illustrates the level of their lobbying (Voltolini, 2013: 58):

Figure 1

E.U. Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E.U. Commission</li> <li>- European External Action Service (EEAS)</li> <li>- European Court of Justice (ECJ)</li> <li>- E.U. Delegations</li> </ul>
National Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capitals of member states (government, parliament, national courts)</li> <li>- Council in its different formations</li> <li>- Permanent Representations</li> <li>- Embassies on the ground</li> </ul>

To pass a law, lawmakers and lobbyists need to find multiple sets of compromises: between conservatives and progressives; between north and south; between East and West; between big and small member states (Teffer, 2019).

It is astonishing that spent over €2 billion (\$2.3 billion) on lobbying the E.U. from the beginning of January 2017 through September 2018, primarily by entities located within the European Union. In the same period, spent €4.7 billion on lobbying legislators in Washington (Antypas, 2018). For instance, U.S. companies spent vast amounts of money to lobby the European Union and impact decisions (Figure 2) (Drozdiak, 2016).

Figure 2



### 3. Israeli Lobbies in Europe

In recent decades, the right-wing pro-Israel lobby groups have established a strong presence in European Union to protect Israel's national interest in Brussels and deflect severe criticism of Israel's treatment of Palestinians. In addition, Israeli interest groups in the E.U. demonstrate Islamophobia tendencies and support Israel's settlement industry. Yet, contrary to Israeli lobbies in the U.S., the Israel lobbies in the E.U. have not come under scrutiny. So, it is even



though they have increased their influence in E.U. politics over the past decades. These lobbies have launched a campaign against Palestinian causes, have sought to trivialize severe accusations of human rights abuses, and have ultimately tried to create a circle of friends in the E.U.'s policy-making loops (MacDonald, 2016).

Furthermore, Pro-Israel lobbies in the E.U. are less potent in decision-making than their counterparts in Washington because European Jews are less concentrated in Europe's economic, cultural, and political life. Therefore, they have been less well-organized and resourced. Additionally, decision-making is highly complicated in the E.U., and lobbying is a very daunting task in Brussels. Nevertheless, it doesn't mean that Israeli lobbies don't have any impact on E.U. decision-making (Burc Yildiz, 2014: 4).

It needs to be emphasized that Christian Zionists who lobby in European countries, especially in Brussels, are distinctive from the US-style Christian Zionist lobbying, often depicted as confrontational sophisticated (King, 2016: 11).

Meanwhile, as a Jewish scholar, Norman Finkelstein strongly criticizes Israel and does not believe that anti-Zionism is equal to anti-Semitism. On the contrary, it argues not only that the new anti-Semitism is non-existent but that the myth of the Holocaust provides a pretext for Israel to extort money from Europeans (Finkelstein, 2003: 33-38).

Israel uses lobbies as moral weapons to silence academic opponents. For instance, Israeli lobbies in Europe have sought to accuse Finkelstein of anti-Semitism. In this regard, Neoconservative and Zionist pressure groups, such as Honestly Concerned, advocate Israeli policies and defames critics of Israel as anti-Semites. BAK Shalom<sup>1</sup> was among the lobbies that tried to cancel Finkelstein's two planned lectures in Munich (Fathollahnejad, 2010).

Yet, despite Israeli lobbies' engagement in political activities to pursue the country's interests, it seems that European intellectuals and partly governments have recently made attempts to adopt an independent foreign policy toward Palestine and the Middle East. Nevertheless, there are numerous lobbies in Europe and the E.U. protecting Israel's national interests in this continent. It is noteworthy that the pro-Israel lobbies in the E.U. operate in a particular secular environment (King, 2016: 82).

#### **4. European Friends of Israel (EFI)**

Established in 2006, EFI is fronted by Michel Gourary and is now the most prominent organization of its kind in Europe, gathering nearly

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1 . A Pro-Zionist Group Within the Left-Wing Youth Movement Links Jug End Solid, also With Close Ties to the Left Party in Germany.

1500 Parliamentarians and Policy Makers who are Friends of Israel, from the European Parliament and the 27 National Parliaments of the European Union. Michel Gourlay, Executive Director of EFI, was a UEJB (Union of Jewish students in Belgium) Board and Treasurer of the Belgian Federation of the Jewish Youth. Later, he began his professional career for 22 years as a project manager and specialist in municipal and community services development in France, Belgium, and Israel, focusing on developing and implementing different municipal and community services (EFI, 2017). The EFI was founded by Stuart Polak, the director of Conservatives Friends of Israel (CFI) between 1989 and 2015, along with Marc Cogen, a Belgian academic, and Jean-Pierre Haber. It was officially founded as a nonprofit organization. In recent years, Israeli diplomats cooperate with EFI to develop relations between Israel and the E.U. (Cronin, Marusek, Miller, 2016: 14-15).

Polak has spent 25 years as head of the CFI; the organization attracted 80 percent of Tory MPs. Since 2004, CFI has granted £377,994 to British Conservative Party to fund the trips to Israel for M.P.s fully. Robert Hayward, a Conservative peer and pollster, has acknowledged Conservative Friends of Israel was a "Very Influential Group" within Tory (Pickard & Wright, 2017).

Moreover, Polak has arranged the meetings between Priti Patel, Secretary of State for International Development (2016-2017), and Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (McElroy, 2017). As an indication of full support for Israel, he made a serious allegation against the United Nations because it is "Singling out Israel with Nauseating Frequency." (Harpin, 2020) In February 2011, 450 participants from 37 European countries arrived for its three-day policy conference at the Jerusalem International Convention Center (Binyenei Ha'uma). Michel Gourary declared in 2011 that most of the group's donors are from Western Europe, including "Businessmen and Women from the U.K., Greece, Spain, Italy, and Germany." He also stated EFI has "nonpartisan representations from all over Europe including Liberals, Social Democrats even the Green Party" (Stern SHEFLER, 2011). Such political relations demonstrate that EFI wants a strong alliance between E.U. countries and Israel (Voltolini, 2013: 123). In addition, the EFI coordinates its activities with Israeli Representation in Brussels, which lobby MEPs to persuade them to support the Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA). As a liaising actor, the EFI has sought to guarantee the MEPs accommodate Israel's view on the ACAA. Furthermore, the EFI, as a media, publishes short articles on its website in support of the ACAA (Voltolini, 2013: 201).

EFI's mission is to make a strong connection between Israel and European countries. Its three main goals include creation of an environment to enhance Israel's political and commercial interests,

unification of all Israel Friendship Groups existing in the Parliaments of the E.U.'s 27 member states, provision of decision-makers and those who influence public opinion with well-researched and balanced information about the historical and geopolitical realities of the Middle East (EFI Policy Conference, 2020).

The organization has set up headquarters in Finland and maintains offices in Spain, Germany, and Belgium (Sheffield, 2009). It aims to become an AIPAC-type pro-Israel lobby in Europe (Eichner, 2006).

Meanwhile, its strategy is designed to concentrate on European decision-makers while intestinally "Ignoring the E.U.'s Complex Decision-Making Structure." The EFI has used its powerful tools to spark public debate and put general issues of EU-Israel ties such as foreign policy, Jewish culture, and Israel-Palestine conflict on the agenda (Gobel, 2016: 24).

The Steering Committee of EFI includes all the chairmen of the leading parliamentary associations across Europe. In addition, The Steering Committee of EFI includes all the chairmen of the leading parliamentary associations across Europe. The Members of the Political Board of EFI come from different political and geographical backgrounds. For instance, Helga Trüpel MEP (Germany | Greens)<sup>2</sup>, has declared: "I am a friend of Israel because after the crimes committed by Nazi Germany, I feel that the existence and security of the state of Israel is my political responsibility. I support a two-state solution, with a democratic Palestinian and a democratic Jewish state of Israel serving as the basis for peace in the Middle East". Moreover, Alejo Vidal-Quadras MEP (Spain EPP), Vice President of the European Parliament, has said: "As part of my work with the European Friends of Israel group inside the European Parliament, I recently had the pleasure of hosting a conference on Iran, the bomb and its implications not just for Israel, but also for the European Union" (Siwiec, 2014). The political board of EFI is summarized in the following figure (EFI Political Board, 2007):

**Figure 3**

Name	Marek Siwiec	Frederique Ries	Alejo Vidal	Helga Tripel	Hannu Takkula	Bastiaan Belder
Affiliation	Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialist and Democrats in the European Parliament	Group of Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrat)	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group
Country	Poland	Belgium	Spain	Germany	Finland	Netherlands
Position	Chairman	Vice-Chairman				

2. The Vice-Chair of the European Parliament's Education and Culture Committee.

The EFI has endeavored to establish strong ties with the Israeli government and parliament. For example, EFI launched the European Forum of the Knesset, a coalition led by M.K. Yohanan Plesner (Kadima), with the blessing of Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin (Likud). In addition, the its lobby forged a political alliance with the Israel Allies Caucus Foundation, the Knesset's Christian Allies Caucus (Sheffield, 2009).

As previously mentioned, the EFI is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) to endorse M.P.s and MEPs who have sympathy for Israel. However, the EFI does not advocate electoral campaigns because the structure of the E.U. is very different from AIPAC. Instead, it mostly invites parliamentarians for dinner and organizes trips to the regions to provide them with policy briefs (Voltolini, 2013: 111-112).

### **5. Friends of Israel Initiative (FOII)**

José María Aznar, former Spanish Prime Minister, took the initiative in a high-level group meeting in Paris in the middle of 2010 to launch a new project to protect Israel's interest. In close cooperation with leading figures such as David Trimble, Marcello Pera, John Howard, John Bolton, and Andrew Roberts, Aznar formed this group to fight against the increasing effort to delegitimize Israel (About Friends of Israel Initiative, 2020). Furthermore, one of its key aims is to counter the growing efforts of bodies like BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions). To gain its security and political objectives, FOII has endorsed a new High-Level Home Front Group (HLHFG), made up of top intelligence, counter-terrorism, and police officials from the U.S., UK, Spain, Netherlands, Australia, Italy, and Colombia (Teller, The Friends of Israel Initiative, 2018). It is weird to see support for Israel in Spain, where history has not been particularly friendly to Jews, and even it hosted massive public rallies in support of Hamas and Hezbollah.

Meanwhile, Aznar has admitted that "The Majority of Spanish are Extremely Critical of Israel." Although he knew that support for Israel is not a good political move in the country, he insisted that his organization would solicit the membership of non-Jews. With great regularity, its members care deeply for living in Israel. In the words of Aznar, the understanding of the Jews and Judeo-Christian values is essential to understand the history of the Western world and Europe (Smith, 2010).

Not surprisingly, the Middle East Forum, a think-tank founded by political activist Daniel Pipes, also had a crucial role in establishing FOII. James Zogby, Arab American Institute, depicted Pipes as "Obsessive Hatred of all Things Muslim." (MacDonald, 2016) John Baird, former Canadian Foreign Minister, is now the executive for the mission (O'Leary, 2020). The founders have mentioned three goals of

FOII: 1) To open a space in the public arena to talk about Israel; 2) to influence pro-Israel political leaders; and 3) to help all friends of Israel, primarily in Europe but also elsewhere (About Friends of Israel Initiative, 2020).

In July 2010, the British House of Commons launched FOII. Henry Jackson Society, a Neoconservative think-tank, supervised by Robert Halfon, a Tory MP, hosted the event. At that time, Halfon was a political director of Conservative Friends of Israel. Aznar, Marcello Pera as well as Roberts participated in the meeting. Jewish Chronicle has reported that Dore Gold<sup>3</sup> strongly endorsed the establishment of FOII (Cronin, Marusek, & Miller, 2016:17). FOII does many activities, including publishing "Working Papers" and "Dispatches and Alerts." It also organizes meetings and promotes op-eds written by its members. FOII sets up its headquarters in Madrid, Spain. The organization had over \$1.5 million in total revenues in 2012 in the United States alone. The main concerns of FOII are "Radical Islamism" and "Iran." (Militarist Monitor, 2014)

Unsurprisingly, the FOII has gained a little good and widespread publicity (Teller, The Friends of Israel initiative, 2018).

The source of FOII's funding is not revealed; however, Robert Agostinelli, its billionaire founder member, finances the group. Agostinelli amassed a vast fortune working in Mergers and Acquisitions in London in the 1980s and is currently Managing Director of private equity firm the Rhone Group. Agostinelli bankrolled the Presidential campaigns of John McCain and Rudy Giuliani and commended Silvio Berlusconi and Nicolas Sarkozy (Mills, 2010).

One of FOII's strategies is to show Hezbollah as the most dangerous threat to Europe's security. In this regard, it claims the Iranian-funded Lebanese organization has targeted Europeans for decades: from the 1983 bombing of French barracks in Beirut, killing 55, to a 1985 hijacking of an Athens-to-Rome jet, to more than a dozen bombings in Paris in 1985 and 1986 that killed 13 people. Moreover, FOII had a vital role in designing the military wing of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization by The Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 2013).

## 6. AJC Transatlantic Institute (TAI)

The AJC Transatlantic Institute (TAI) was established in 2004 and set up its headquarters in Brussels. AJC seeks to reinforce the transatlantic bond and EU-Israel ties by engaging E.U. and NATO officials and diplomatic missions, journalists, think-tanks, and civil

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3. An American born Israeli who is the Israeli Government Advisor and Heads the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. He Was Formerly an Adviser to Ariel Sharon and is Currently an Advisor to the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

society leaders. According to its website, AJC's mission is to create an environment in which Europe, Israel, and the U.S. cooperate to fight terrorism, extremism, and anti-Semitism. Across Europe, it has several offices located in Berlin, Paris, and Rome. Currently, David Harris and Harriet Schleifer work as AJC chief executive and president, respectively (AJC, 2020). It was a diplomatic initiative of the American Jewish Community to open AJC's office in Brussels (Harris, 2004). Once E.U. membership increased from 15 to 28, AJC strongly supported the process.

Moreover, the institute engages politicians across the political spectrum in all three major European institutions-the European Council, the European Commission, and the European Parliament-to achieve its goals (CISION PR Newswire, 2014). As a pro-Zionism group, it severely criticizes E.U. politicians who question the legitimacy of Israel. For instance, as Mick Wallace, a member from Ireland, described Zionism as a "Colonialist Project," it urged Wallace to withdraw his words (Abunimah, 2020).

TAI has sought to depict Iran and Hezbollah as severe threats to European nations, exaggerating the relations between the two as relationships between father and son. To provoke European states, especially France, it also accuses Hezbollah of establishing a totalitarian government in Lebanon. Shia clergy, who have ties with Iran, will dominate politics and society (AJC Central Europe Office, 2020). Regarding Iran, it warns Europeans that Iran will undoubtedly purchase Chinese and Russian advanced weapons not only to modernize its forces but to equip its proxies across the Middle East (Leemhuis, 2020).

### **7. European Foundation for Democracy (EFD)**

European Foundation for Democracy is described as a group strongly connected, "Both organizationally and through their funders, to the right-wing pro-Israel movement in the United States" (MacDonald, 2016). The European Foundation for Democracy is a policy institute that works with civil society, academics, government, and other stakeholders to prevent radicalization. Its members, based in France, Italy, Germany, Sweden, the U.K., and Ireland, continue to cooperate with the European Commission's Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) and co-chairs its Communication and Narratives (C&N) to counter extremism (The European Foundation for Democracy, 2020). The lobbying cost of EFD was 50, 000€ - 99, 999€ in the financial year between January 1, 2018, and December 1, 2018 (LobbyFacts, European Foundation for Democracy (EFD), 2020). The total budget of EFD is roughly 442, 974 €. Moreover, EFD receives money from various public and private sources, including foundations, individual philanthropists, and organizations (Europa, 2020). Furthermore, research indicated in 2009 that the Foundation for the Defense of

Democracy (FDD) provided a direct grant of \$478, 829 to EFD (Mondialisation, 2016). Not only Roberta Bonazzi, the EFD's current director, but several other members of its staff have direct ties with the Israel lobby in Washington (Cronin, Marusek, Miller, 2016: 38).

EFD is a think-tank closely linked with Neoconservative and Islamophobic activists (Cronin, Marusek, & Miller, 2016: 37). EFD has also forged strong alliances with like-minded individuals and organizations throughout the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and North America (EURACTIV, 2020).

Roberta Bonazzi, a political scientist, established EFD in 2005. The connection between EFD, based in Brussels, and Washington D.C.-based FDD, as a notorious Israel lobby, demonstrates that EFD is undoubtedly linked to Israel's advocacy groups. A sign of ties between EFD and Israel is the statement made by Valentina Colombo, EFD senior fellow, who argues that the "Muslim Brotherhood is Connected to Terrorist Organizations." (Bridge Initiative Team, 2019)

The EFD has adopted policies endorsed by Israel. Its experts have, for instance, proposed a ban on television channels tied to Hamas and Hezbollah. They argue that the E.U. should place both the political and military wings of Hezbollah on its list of terrorist organizations. EFD has also hosted events to mobilize for stricter action against Iran over its nuclear program (Cronin, Marusek, Miller, 2016: 38).

EFD has wrongly portrayed Hamas's ideology as belonging to a terrorist organization like ISIS and al-Qaida (European Foundation for Democracy, 2014). Concerning Hezbollah, EFD complains that E.U. is reluctant to place Hezbollah on the terrorist list due to security reasons, including Hezbollah's capability to launch a terrorist attack in E.U. countries (European Foundation for Democracy, a, 2013).

## **8. European Leadership Network (ELN)**

The European Leadership Network (ELN) is a so-called independent, non-partisan, pan-European network of nearly 300 past, present, and future European leaders focusing on European foreign, defense, and security issues practical solutions in the real world for political and security challenges. It was founded in 2011, and its headquarters set up in London. ELN seeks to create better security across Europe through its research, publications, events, practical policy advocacy, media reach, and high-level networks (European Leadership Network, 2020).

Several organizations fund ELN, including John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Nuclear Threat Initiative, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Ploughshares Fund, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT), Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation (PPCF), The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, German Federal Foreign Office, The U.K. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Ministry for

Foreign Affairs of Finland and U.S. Russia Foundation (European Leadership Network, 2020).

Moreover, ELN received \$1, 579, 600 between 2018 and 2020, including four grants in Nuclear Challenge (European Leadership Network, 2020). In addition, there are close and strong ties between ELN and Israel organizations in the U.S. (MacDonald, 2016).

### **9. European Leadership Network (ELNET)**

According to shared values and mutual interests, the European Leadership Network (ELNET) was established to gather European and Israeli policymakers. ELNET carries out a range of programs, including delegations, dialogues, conferences, and roundtables, to strengthen political advocates of the Europe-Israel relationship (ELNET, About, 2020).

Since the beginning of the second intifada, ELNET has been seeking to counter widespread criticism of Israel in European countries (Guttman, 2008). American Larry J. Hochberg and Israeli Raanan Eliaz founded ELNET in 2007 (Cronin, Marusek, Miller, 2016: 40).

Larry J. Hochberg is a nationally famous leader who recently served as national chairman of the Friends of the Israel Defense Forces. In addition, Larry was a national director of AIPAC and occupied leadership positions with UJC and UJA. He is an international expert on Israel advocacy and is a significant contributor to many organizations that endorse Israel (JFNLA, 2020).

ELNET has set up a network of offices in France, Germany, Poland, Brussels (EU/NATO), and Israel and activities in the U.K., Italy, and Spain (IsraelGives, 2020).

Several government institutions, international organizations, and research institutes in Israel and Europe cooperate with ELNET, including IDC Herzlia, WARSAW Security Forum, Institute for National Security Studies, Hudson Institute, International Institute Counter-Terrorism, and so on (ELNET, About, 2020).

U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman, US Senator Mark Kirk, Former U.S. Congresswoman Shelley Berkley, Former U.S. Congressman Howard Berman, Former U.S. Senator Norm Coleman, and Former U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor Elliot Abrams are Advisory Board Members of ELNET (ELNET, Leadership and Staff, 2020).

In recent years, ELNET has collaborated with NATO by organizing a dinner roundtable on the topic "New Dynamics in the Middle East," featuring Gideon Saar, former Israeli Interior Minister (ELNET, Leadership Briefing, 2017).

Friends of ELNET (FELNET) consists of various institutes to fund ELNET. These institutes donated ELNET thousands of dollars from 2009 to 2013. For instance, the Middle East Forum gave FELNET \$10000 in 2013 (Conservative Transparency, 2020).



Moreover, the total revenue of FELET was \$4, 100, 756 in 2016 and \$4, 543, 253 in 2017 (Nonprofit Explorer, 2018).

FELNT warmly embraced the Deal of Century proposed by the Trump administration. It asserted the plan would be a golden opportunity for European nations to stabilize the Israeli-Palestinian scene. Having good relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, according to FELNET, enables the E.U. to persuade both sides to enter into a constructive peace process (ELNET Briefing, 2020).

It has been seeking to isolate Hezbollah politically and financially to convince all European countries to designate the entirety of Hezbollah as a terrorist entity. To achieve its goal, FELNET argues the political and military wings of Hezbollah reinforce each other, and therefore, Europeans do not have to distinguish between these two branches (FELNET, 2020).

### **10. European Coalition for Israel (ECI)**

As a Christian Zionist alliance, European Coalition for Israel (ECI) is willing to demonstrate its solidarity with Israel (ECI brochure - who we are, 2020).

ECI is a joint initiative by major international Christian pro-Israel institutes across Europe to meet challenges posed by growing anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in the continent. ECI was formally launched in March 2003 in Brussels by Finnish journalist Tomas Sandell, though the partner organizations have worked together to form the network for several years. ECI informs members of the European Parliament and other political leaders in Brussels and other European capitals about the complex realities of the conflict in the Middle East by acknowledging the existence and legitimacy of Israel. In addition, ECI publishes issue briefs and other documentation on Israel, Europe, and the Middle East to achieve this goal. ECI also holds regular conferences and seminars in Brussels and other E.U. capitals to promote closer relations and understanding between Israel and the European Union (Press Club Brussels Europe, 2020).

The organization's first initiative, Churches against Anti-Semitism, will educate, empower, and mobilize churches and faith communities to counter anti-Semitism and support Jewish life worldwide (Oliere, 2020). The cost of its lobbying is roughly estimated to be 50, 000€ - 99, 999€ in the 2019 financial year (LobbyFacts, European Coalition for Israel (ECI), 2020). In 2012, ECI had a budget of €330, 000 (Cronin, Marusek, & Miller, 2016: 40).

ECI co-hosts with the European Jewish Congress (EJC) the annual Holocaust Remembrance Day to direct E.U. policy towards a pro-Israel path. By offensive lobbying, it concentrates most of the time on issues concerning the peace process. For instance, it has launched San Remo Initiative, a campaign taken to E.U. institutions, E.U. capitals, Japan, and the U.N., to convince the policymakers that the division of

Jerusalem is an illegal action regarding international law (King, 2016: 84-85).

Tomas Sandell, the founding director of ECI, has endorsed the Jewish state for almost two decades. He speaks at the European Parliament, repeatedly travels to the United Nations, and has spoken at several national legislatures worldwide (Glatt, 2017).

Tomas Sandell firmly believes that the E.U. has to condition financial assistance to Palestinian Authority to respect the Oslo Accords and accept the Jewish state. He has the firmly-held belief that “The E.U., as the Single largest Financial Contributor to the Palestinian Authority, can play a central role in promoting positive values that would undergird peace and understanding in the region” (European Coalition for Israel, 2020).

Regarding Israel itself, Sandell sharply criticized some E.U. states, especially Germany, because they are not interested in moving their embassies to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, he claims that most central and eastern European countries are inclined to move their embassies to Jerusalem (Weinthal, 2018).

### **11. Europe Israel Press Association**

Europe Israel Press Association (EIPA) is an organization in Europe to provide accurate information, briefings, and first-hand media trips about Israel and the Middle East. Its headquarters is located in Brussels, with offices based in Paris, Berlin, Rome, London, and Israel. EIPA aims to create positive media coverage about Israel in Europe (EIPA, 2020). EIPA was established by Yossi Lempkowicz (Free Speech on Israel, 2016).

It organizes the briefing for Israeli scholars to express their views about Israel-Europe relations. For instance, Eran Lerman, Vice President of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS), talked to journalists in Zoom briefing planed by EIPA. He said, “Europe today to give up on opportunities to cooperate with Israel science in the context of Horizon 2020-2027 would harm first and foremost European interests” (Lempkowicz, 2020).

Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM) in London has provided some materials for EIPA to publish (Cronin, Marusek, Miller, 2016: 36).

It also supports journalists, editors-in-chief, reporters, bloggers, and opinion-makers to gain greater insight and knowledge concerning Israel. Its website produces material in English, French, and Russian to reach a wider audience across Europe. EIPA has forged a partnership with the European Jewish Association (EJA), a Brussels-based umbrella group active in various European domains including media, Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF), the leading environmental organization in Israel, the World Forum of Russian-speaking Jewry (WFRJ), an organization representing

millions of Russian-speaking Jews in support of Israel, and "Face of Israel," an independent body active in public diplomacy (European Jewish Press, 2014).

### **12. Israel Allies Foundation**

The Israel Allies Foundation (IAF) collaborates with the U.S. Congress and parliaments worldwide to mobilize pro-Israeli politicians to persuade states worldwide to recognize Israel and Jerusalem as its capital (IAF, 2020). Pioneered by M.K. Rabbi Binyamin Elon in 2004, IAF received \$100,000 from the Israeli government in 2019. It has also published the first annual list of the top 50 Christian leaders who have endorsed the Jewish State (Miami Meditation Center, 2020).

It works as an organization that coordinates 44 Israel Allies Caucuses in various countries (Lodema Tree Service, 2020), including the U.S., Uruguay, Brazil, South Africa, Finland, England, Australia, The Philippines, South Korea, and Canada. IAF deals with several issues, including moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, addressing the Iranian nuclear program, making sure U.S. funding does not go to a terror organization, fighting against the legitimization of Israel, and holding the U.N. and UNRWA responsible (Jewish Virtual Library, 2020).

Andras Patkai, a Hungarian E.U. veteran, is the European Director of IAF (Appointed July 2013), who actively developed communication between European organizations, Christian communities, and the State of Israel last 20 years. He encourages cooperation and coordination between the eight Israel Allies Caucuses in Europe and the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus in Israel (Hoffman, 2013).

### **13. Jewish News One and the European Jewish Parliament**

Igor Kolomoisky and Vadim Rabinovich, Two Ukrainian billionaires, began Jewish News One (JN1), a new pro-Israel channel on YouTube, and the European Jewish Parliament (EJP) in 2011 to bring issues of Jewish concern to the European Union. According to Tomer Orni, CEO of the European Jewish Union, the EJP has offices alongside the European Parliament in Brussels and holds regular assemblies there. The European Jewish Union will provide EJP's budget, and the plan is determined by elected members (The Jewish News of Northern California, 2011).

EJP members' representing 7 countries are selected by over 400,000 people from East, Central, and Western Europe who voted online (European Jewish Press (a), 2012). EJP, as a "Platform for Jews from all Corners of the Continent," was inspired by Israeli President Shimon Peres to act as a Knesset of the Jewish Diaspora (Axelrod,

2020). EJP, as in the Knesset, will comprise 120 members (Gedalyahu, 2011).

Joel Rubinfeld, as a lecturer at universities in Europe, Israel, and the United States and at the European Parliament and the U.S. Congress, is Co-Chairman of EJP and contributes to news reports produced by JN1 (European Jewish Association, 2020).

**14. European Strategic Intelligence and Security Centre (ESISC)**  
European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center (ESISC) was founded in 2002 in Brussels to cooperate with European institutions, NATO, and numerous European multinational corporations. Since its beginning, ESISC has collected and analyzed all sources of intelligence (open and human) in the fields of security (terrorism, conflicts, piracy, organized crime, or social unrest), geopolitics (stability of states, actual decision-making, foreign influences, matches) and economy (markets, competition, and legal security). In 2005, ESISC started to lobby at European institutions, national authorities of several countries, and international organizations such as the U.N. (ESISC, Our Mission, 2020).

Its lobbying efforts go beyond the structures of the European Union, as it frequently exchanges ideas with the Council of Europe, various member-states (at the government level or the level of elected assemblies), the United States, the U.N., and various Arab, African or Asian states. Its lobbying aims to defend an industrial portfolio, open a new market, and guarantee the political interests of a state (ESISC, Lobbying, 2020).

Claude Moniquet is the co-founder and CEO of the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Centre (ABC, 2015). According to Moniquet, ESISC has an annual budget of between €1 and €1.5 million (Cronin, Marusek, Miller, 2016: 45).

#### **15. European Jewish Congress (EJC)**

European Jewish communities established the European Jewish Congress (EJC) in 1986 as a regional affiliate of the World Jewish Congress (WJC). The goal of EJC is to protect the interests of Jewish communities and to cooperate with European Union institutions, including the Council of Europe (where the EJC has participatory status) and national governments and parliaments to defend the common interest of 42 national Jewish communities in Europe (European Jewish Congress, 2020).

These communities are located in 42 countries, including Russia, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Turkey, etc. Even Jewish communities in Morocco and Tunisia are members of EJC (European Jewish Congress; Members, 2020).

Moshe Kantor, an international philanthropist, and scientist, has been elected as President of EJC several times. He has taken

significant steps to counter the rising anti-Semitism in Europe (Chemla, 2020). EJC spent 200, 000€ - 299, 999€ for lobbying in the 2018 fiscal year (Lobby Facts, 2020).

### **16. European Jewish Association**

As a federation of 15 European Jewish organizations, the European Jewish Association (EJA) is pursuing the goal of fighting against anti-Semitism across Europe. It also seeks to boost Jewish activities in the continent and preserve Jewish interests in European countries. To achieve these aims, EJA makes meaningful contacts with E.U. decision-makers in Council, Commission, Parliament, and various Israeli permanent representations and embassies to Europe to counter Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). Fighting against bans on Shechita (Jewish ritual slaughter), promoting and supporting Jewish holidays and traditions, securing and safeguarding Jewish communities, schools, synagogues, and Mikvot are other objectives of this association (EJA, 2020). The cost of lobbying EJA was 200, 000€ - 299, 999€ in the 2018 fiscal year (Lobby Facts (a), 2020).

Rabbi Menachem Margolin is the chairman and founder of EJA. He was appointed as Program Director of the Rabbinical Centre of Europe (RCE) in 2004 (Hulya, 2020). He has appreciated Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán for his government's position on Jewish settlements in the West Bank, its constant support for Israel, and the comprehensive agreement that the government signed with the Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation (EMIH) (Hungary Today, 2019).

Similar to most Israeli lobbies in Europe, EJA is exceptionally determined to counter anti-Semitism across the continent. In a sustained effort, it introduced a plan at its annual conference in Paris. It urged all European states to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism to choose a special envoy on fighting anti-Semitism in schools and public places (Magid, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Israeli lobbies in Europe serve the interests of Jewish communities and seek to influence the policy-making process in European countries by adopting various methods. Noting that lobbies could be engaged in politics only in a democratic political scene, Israeli lobbies can work smoothly in European nations. Moreover, Israel has more or less close and good relations with the E.U., and this creates a golden opportunity for Israelis to establish interest groups to pursue Israel and Jewish societies' interests in the continent.

The presence of Jewish people across Europe has provided a pretext for Israel to influence European politics in different institutions, including the European Council, the European

Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of the European Union. In addition to these institutions, Zionists have made attempts to lobbies in certain European countries to impact their policies towards Israel.

The main priority of Israeli lobbies in E.U. is to counter all kinds of activities they identify as hostile towards Jews, labeled as anti-Semitism. The sensitivities of these lobbies to anti-Semitism are derived from the bitter experience of Jews living in Europe, especially over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second objective of these lobbies is to convince European states to deny the rights of Palestinians in the peace negotiations in case it launches.

Israeli thresholds are determined to impede the peace process in favor of Palestinians, regardless of its benefit to Israel. Finally, countering Iran's nuclear program and reducing the perceived threat of Iran are among the daunting tasks of these lobbies. To persuade European politicians to consider Iran a severe and difficult danger, they have plans to exaggerate Iran's capabilities and intentions. Regarding Hezbollah, EU-Israeli lobbies have concentrated on its activities on the E.U.'s soil to illustrate it as a terrorist organization.

Finally, it seems all of these lobbies, previously mentioned above, are seeking to forge a network and alliance to achieve those aims by adopting similar strategies, tactics, and plans. In other words, they coordinate their efforts to infiltrate into E.U. politics to change the course they have taken concerning Palestinians, Hezbollah, and Iran. In the real world, similar goals would bring them together to serve the interest of Israel in general and the European Jewish community in particular.

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