

Israel: One State, Two States, 51st State?

American aid to Israel is something like a pot of gold that keeps on giving. Since the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948, Israel has been “the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign assistance since World War II,” (Congressional Research Service.) The United States has provided Israel with \$233.7 billion in aid adjusted for inflation aid between 1948 through the end of 2012. US aid is currently more than 20 percent of Israel’s total \$16 billion defense budget.,

None of this counts special appropriations. For instance, the “Iron Dome” missile-defense system was largely funded by the United States, to the tune of more than \$1 billion. In the 1980s, the Israeli Lavi jet-fighter development program was funded by Washington, costing \$2 billion to the U.S. taxpayer before it was terminated over technical and other problems, part of \$5.45 billion in Pentagon funding of various Israeli weapons projects through 2002.

Israel has also been adept at using “loan guarantees,” an issue that may have contributed to the downfall of President George H.W. Bush. The reality is that the loans, totaling \$42 billion, are never repaid by Israel, so that the United States Treasury picks up the tab on principle and interest.. The Bush-era loan amounted to \$10 billion.

With such maneuvers as preferential projects and the provision of surplus, the Department of Defense routinely turns over useable equipment to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Through tax exemptions, the U.S. government also subsidizes additional assistance to Israel. Most similar groups are required to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn has learned to his chagrin regarding Turkey.

A handful of key U.S. organizations and hundreds more, including a small number of evangelical Christian organizations, play a role within a vast ecosystem that demands unconditional U.S. support for Israel. In the year 2012 the nonprofit wing of the Israel lobby raised \$3.7 billion in revenue **and was largely tax exempt.** They are on track to reach \$6.3 billion by 2020. Collectively

they employed 14,000 and claimed 350,000 volunteers.

None of this includes the billions in private donations that go directly to Israel, as well as the billions in contributions that are regarded as covered by “religious exemptions” for groups that don’t file at all. There are also contributions sent straight to various Israeli-based foundations that are themselves often registered as charities. *The Forward* magazine investigated 3,600 Jewish tax-exempt charitable foundations in 2014 and determined that they had net assets of \$26 billion, \$12–14 billion in annual revenue, and “focuse[d] the largest share of [their] donor dollars on Israel.” That share amounted to 38 percent of total income. *The Forward* reports that it is “an apparatus that benefits massively from the U.S. federal government and many state and local governments, in the form of hundreds of millions of dollars in government grants, billions in tax-deductible donations and billions more in program fees paid for with government funds.”

Some pro-Israel foundations are in-your-face about their goals. *The Friends of the Israel Defense Forces*, which “Support[s] the wellbeing and education needs of Israel’s brave soldiers,” is a registered tax-exempt charity that conducts fundraisers throughout the United States. Some American Jews have been surprised to learn that the donations that they had presumed were going to what they regard as charitable causes in Israel have instead wound up in expanding the illegal settlements on the West Bank, an objective that they might not support. It was recently reported that Donald Trump’s son-in-law and advisor Jared Kushner has a family foundation that has made donations to Israel, including funding of West Bank settlements, which is illegal under U.S. law.

Israel also benefits in other ways, frequently due to legislative action by Congress. It enjoys free and even preferential trade status with the United States and runs a \$9 billion trade surplus per annum. Its organizations can, without any restrictions, bid on U.S. defense and homeland-security projects—a privilege normally only granted to NATO partners—which has given it dominance in some U.S. law-enforcement, telecommunications, and travel-security sectors. Its involvement in the development and use of classified military technologies developed by U.S. arms producers has sometimes led to claims that Israel has adopted and adapted—or even stolen—proprietary information and then used it to



develop its own arms industry, which is now ranked sixth in the world by volume of sales. Ironically, U.S. taxpayers have subsidized an Israeli industry that then competes directly with American companies, producing a loss of jobs in the United States.

There has also been considerable collateral damage derived from the relationship with Israel, including the Arab Oil embargo and possibly even some blame for the ruinous cost of Iraq, which many believe to have been fought in part for Israel. But even without that war, the U.S.-Israeli bilateral relationship has been an expensive proposition for Americans. Whether Israel is a strategic liability or not, or whether its complicated geostrategic situation merits virtually unquestioning support from the United States, the reality is that it has a lopsided relationship with Washington. This has long been and continues to be largely paid for by the United States taxpayers, who are not as well off as they once were.

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More on The Fire This Time: GUESS THE INVASIVE SPECIES

The fires seemed to spring from the ground in Northern California’s wine country at 14 different sites from Humboldt to Sonoma counties. The blame for these fires was laid at the feet of climate change and, indeed, the climate has changed but it’s not just fossil fuel. There’s an invasive species that threatens to decimate the last 1% of coastal redwoods.

Most of the coastal redwoods were cut during 18th and 19th centuries and most of what was left was ‘harvested’ by Maxim in the 1980’s. Less than 1% of the coastal redwoods are left stretching from Big Sur to the Oregon/California border. They created a rainforest ecosystem in the region. The redwood dominated the landscape, growing above all else to soak up all the sun limiting the species of plants that could grow in its shadow. During the summer months when there is no rain, the chilling damp Pacific coast fog rolls in. The redwoods would collect that moisture on its needles and create its own rain drinking in the droplets that fell to its shallow, broad roots. Through transpiration, the trees release moisture back into the atmosphere returning it to the clouds.

Since the removal of most of these trees, the coast is much dryer. Without the domination of the ecosystem from the tallest trees, more denuded hills are covered with grasses and other smaller trees that wouldn’t typically grow in this area.

Not only does the redwood forest provide moisture, it is also an efficient

and greedy carbon hoarder. Just 2 mature redwoods can remove and store 1600 tons of carbon from the atmosphere. This is equal to the amount of carbon produced by the average American in a lifetime. The carbon is released only when the tree dies and decays. Redwoods can take centuries to decay slowing the release of their sequestered carbon. If you want to show your green, don’t buy a Prius or a Tesla, plant a redwood (or at least don’t cut it down).

The cutting of redwoods hasn’t stopped. In the last couple of decades a new invasive species threatens the redwoods. It’s called pinot noir. Much of the privately held coastal redwood land was sold off to the booming wine industry. More of the redwoods were cut. It’s nothing personal, there’s money to be made and the redwoods were ‘wasting these resources’. Every time I drove up Route 101 from Marin to Humboldt in the last 10-15 years, the vines crept further north. They stretched up the hills as far as the eye could see.

The fires burning those vineyards are a self destructive creation of their own making. It’s the man who smokes a pack of cigarettes a day and gets emphysema. The drought was, at a minimum, exacerbated by the removal of this water source for this region. In a time when we are talking about carbon credits and finding ways to reduce greenhouse gases, one of our best resources to reduce carbon emissions is being destroyed to grow grapes.

Lisa Argento Martell

New Zealand’s new prime minister calls capitalism a ‘blatant failure’

New Zealand’s new prime minister called capitalism a “blatant failure”, before citing levels of homelessness and low wages as evidence that **“the market has failed”** her country’s poor.

Jacinda Ardern, who is to become the nation’s youngest leader since 1856, said measures used to gauge economic success **“have to change”** to take into account **“people’s ability to actually have a meaningful life”**.

The 37-year-old will take office next month after the populist New Zealand First party agreed to form a centre-left coalition with her Labour Party. They will be supported by the liberal Greens.

In her first full interview since becoming prime minister-elect, she told current affairs program *The Nation* that capitalism had **“failed our people”**.

“If you have hundreds of thousands of children living in homes without enough to survive, that’s a blatant failure,” she said. **“What else could you describe it as?”**

Ms Ardern said: **“When you have a market economy, it all comes down to whether or not you acknowledge where the market has failed and where intervention is required. Has it failed our people in recent times? Yes. How can you claim you’ve been successful when you have growth roughly three per cent, but you’ve got the worst homelessness in the developed world?”**

The Labour leader said her government would judge economic success on more than measures such as GDP.

“The measures for us have to change,” she said. **“We need to make sure we are looking at people’s ability to actually have a meaningful life, an enjoyable life, where their work is enough to survive and support their families.”**

Ms Ardern, will be the youngest female premier of any developed economy in the world. The leader of New Zealand First, Winston Peters, said his party had opted for change from the **“status quo”** as he announced his party would enter coalition with Labour instead of the National Party.

The Green Party will support the coalition but will not be part of the government.

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