



[How Campaign Money in U.S. Elections Endangers American National Security?](#)

Following the 2010 Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC*, the phrase “money talks” became all the more evident. The ruling deregulated limits on independent expenditure group spending for or against specific candidates, claiming that it was the First Amendment right of corporations, large donors, and special interest groups to donate as much as they please toward elections. This has had major implications on all aspects of political policy in the United States, but none more pervasive than on U.S. foreign policy. It has shed light on the fact that U.S. foreign policy is not always crafted in the best interest of its citizens, but instead oftentimes in the interests of entities abroad. What we have seen since is the increased usage of political action committees (PACs) and super PACs, which use their substantial funds to influence foreign policy in a way that will align with their goals. In these instances, candidates are essentially exchanging money for favors. Americans overwhelmingly agree that this is a problem within the U.S. political system. A 2023 poll published by the Pew Research Center found that 72% of Americans believed that there should be limits on the amount of money that individuals and organizations can spend on political campaigns.

While the linkage between campaign funding and electoral victory is not readily apparent, numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between electoral victory and campaign spending, denoting a pay-to-win model in many cases. According to OpenSecrets, back in 2020, 87.71% of winners in the House and 71.4% of winners in the Senate were the top spending candidates in their respective races – a trend that has been on the rise. Running a campaign is expensive. All of the advertisements and staffers that are an integral part of getting a candidate’s message out and advocating for themselves requires elected officials to spend most of their time fundraising so that they can amass a treasure trove that will allow them to be competitive in their respective races. The ties between money and electoral success have had a negative effect on American politics, resulting in circumstances where elected officials dole out political favors to their donors instead of fulfilling obligations to their constituents.

The relationship between money and elected officials is an important explanatory variable in policy outcomes. There are many interest groups keen on influencing American foreign policy. Ethnic interest groups in particular tend to hold major sway in American politics due to their deep ties and resources, and one of the most prevalent examples of this is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Scholars John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt write extensively on AIPAC and other pro-Israel PACs in their 2006 book *The Israel Lobby*, wherein they claim that these groups have taken notable steps to shift U.S. foreign policy. One way in which pro-Israel groups have recently attempted to shape policy is by donating directly to officials. OpenSecrets detailed how following the October 7 Hamas attacks, AIPAC urged lawmakers to send security assistance to Israel. Three weeks later, House Appropriations Committee Chair Kay Granger (R-TX) introduced a bill that would provide \$14.3 billion in aid to Israel. Granger received over \$71,000 from AIPAC and affiliates in 2023 alone. It appears that the group’s lobbying efforts have been ramping up as well. Figures from *The Guardian* revealed that “legislators categorized as supportive of Israel received about \$125,000 on average during their last election compared to a mere \$18,000 on average for those categorized as supportive of Palestine.” Unsurprisingly, their findings concluded that those Congressmembers who received more money from pro-Israel donors tended to be more supportive of Israel.

This is not isolated to pro-Israel organizations either. Other interest groups that have had a discernible effect on U.S. foreign policy include Cuban, Armenian, and Ukrainian entities. One of the advantages for these ethnic lobbies over others with foreign influence is that they do not have as many restrictions under the Foreign Agents Restriction Act (FARA). In this way, the groups can exert more influence and spend more money to achieve their desired policies. Regardless of the motives and objectives of these interest groups, they are rarely pushing policies that are truly in the best interest of U.S. national ones. Furthermore, some of these groups are advocating for contradictory and double-standard policies whose messages often clash with one another. For example, Ukraine lobbyists are saying that the Russian invasion of Ukraine constitutes a violation of international law – which is true – citing human rights abuses as well. However, human rights activists have pointed out that many of the actions Russia has taken are comparable to what Israel is doing in Gaza, and yet Israel is not under nearly as much scrutiny among a considerable number of U.S. elected officials. Irrespective of the motives and objectives of these groups, their heavy-handed influence on the political system is not in the best interest of fair and responsible U.S. foreign policy.