

Americans: End aid to Arabs, but keep backing Israel

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A telephone poll of Americans last week by the Rasmussen Reports polling agency found that a firm majority want to end all US foreign aid to the Middle East, except for the aid that goes to Israel, which they believe should continue.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents said the US should stop all financial and military aid to the Arab states. This comes at a time when many Arab countries, in particular Egypt, appear to be transitioning to democratic rule.

However, many Americans feel that the wave of revolutions sweeping the region is another indication that there is no guarantee that US aid given today to a trusted leader won't be misused tomorrow by his hostile predecessor.

Only 20 percent of those polled said that aid to the Arab countries should continue.

At the same time, 51 percent of Americans want US economic and military aid to Israel to continue. Thirty-two percent said the US should no longer aid Israel financially.

The numbers against aid to the Arabs and in favor of continued aid to Israel were even larger among Republicans. Seventy-six percent of GOP voters believe aid to the Arab states should cease, while 61 percent want aid to Israel to continue.

A plurality, though not a majority, of Democrats (48 percent) said aid to the Arabs should stop, and just 46 percent of Democrats wanted to keep backing Israel.

Last month, a group of Israeli experts concluded that it wouldn't be a bad thing for the US to stop providing Israel with economic and military aid. In addition to giving the White House too much diplomatic leverage over Israel when it comes to the peace process, US financial aid is actually costing Israel.

Yarden Gazit of the Jerusalem Institute for Market Studies noted that the bulk of the US aid to Israel is for defense purposes, and that according to the stipulations of that aid, Israel must spend 75 percent of the money on US-made weapons and defense systems.

The American aid is also part of a bundle that includes military aid to Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, countries over which Israel must maintain a qualitative military edge. So, the US provides Israel with the funds to keep its military on top, but at the same time constantly upgrades the

surrounding Arab armies to make sure Israel must continuously buy new American weapons.

Gazit explained that the \$3 from the US is not enough to cover that expense. For example, “every dollar granted to Egypt requires Israel to spend between 1.6 and 2.1 dollars to maintain the balance of power. As a result, every dollar granted to Israel costs Israel between 1.06 and 1.39 dollars.”

By forcing Israel to buy most of its military equipment in the US, Washington is also saddling the Israeli defense industry with an annual loss of \$750 million. And because Israel doesn't buy the systems made by its own defense industry, that hurts the ability of those Israeli contractors to sell their wares abroad.