

Who's Really Influencing America? The Answer Isn't Israel.

THE LIE

Israel's influence over the United States is more dangerous than China's.

THE TRUTH

China runs covert espionage, technology theft, transnational repression, and massive influence operations inside the U.S. Israel's advocacy is overwhelmingly transparent, legal, and conducted openly.

BACKGROUND

- On July 14, 2026, former CIA officer Andrew Bustamante went on the PBD Podcast and claimed that Israel is a bigger threat to the United States than China in the realm of influence and propaganda.
- Bustamante's reasoning was that Israel is "more capable" than China or Russia at these operations, and "more difficult for us to track."
- He concluded that Israel can't be trusted like other U.S. allies and needs to be "kept at arm's length." ([PBD Podcast](#))

TRUTH EXPLAINED

- Every U.S. ally engages in some form of influence. The real question is scale, transparency, and intent — and by that measure, Israel is one of the most restrained.
- Israel registers its lobbying under the Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA), which is public and searchable by anyone. AIPAC, its most prominent advocacy group, is entirely American-run with no formal ties to the Israeli government, and is arguably the most scrutinized lobbying organization in the country. ([Open Secrets](#)), ([ABC News](#))
- Qatar, not Israel, is the real spending heavyweight: often the 2nd-largest foreign spender on U.S. influence after China, with 31 FARA-registered lobbying firms (71% based in D.C.) and \$6.3–\$6.6 billion+ poured into U.S. universities since the early 2000s. Israel runs no such operation in American universities. ([Washington Examiner](#)), ([Quincy Institute](#))
- China uses TikTok, WeChat, and fake-account networks like "Spamouflage" to manipulate American voters and harvest user data. ([NPR](#)), ([WSJ](#)), ([ISD](#))
- China's United Front Work Department runs front groups to silence Chinese-American critics and build political influence, even resulting in China's flag being raised over American city halls. ([House of Representatives](#))
- China has also operated 100+ secret "police stations" worldwide — including in New York City — to monitor and pressure dissidents. ([DOJ](#))
- China steals U.S. technology through cyber espionage and recruitment programs like the Thousand Talents Plan, costing America an estimated \$225–\$600 billion a year and fueling China's military buildup. ([FBI](#)), ([CSIS](#)), ([NBR](#))
- China ran Confucius Institutes on 100+ U.S. campuses to shape curricula and suppress discussion of Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang. Most shut down by 2023, but many quietly reemerged under new names. ([GAO](#)), ([Taipei Times](#))
- China remains the primary source of the fentanyl precursor chemicals killing tens of thousands of Americans every year. ([House of Representatives](#))
- If Israel really had the influence capability Bustamante describes and chooses not to use it against America, that's proof Israel is a trusted ally, not a threat.

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QUOTES

"The People's Republic of China poses the greatest threat to America today, and the greatest threat to democracy and freedom world-wide since World War II." – CIA Director John Ratcliffe

"The United States has no better, more capable or determined partner anywhere in the world [than Israel]." Former Pentagon official Michael Makovsky

TAKEAWAY

Bustamante's argument is self-defeating. He says Israel is more capable of influencing America than China – then admits it doesn't actually do it. Meanwhile, Qatar spends billions influencing Washington and American universities, and China runs secret police stations on U.S. soil, steals hundreds of billions in technology, and floods American communities with fentanyl precursors. A country with real capability and the discipline not to use it against you means it is not a threat. It's an ally you can trust.