Dissolve the US standing army and cut the Pentagon budget by 85%–95%. If a military emergency arises, draft people in order of their family wealth with the richest being drafted first. This isn't punitive. It is to prevent the rich from starting wars from which they benefit economically.

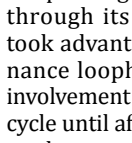
The usual pushback at this stage is panic-mongering about the Federal budget deficit. How can 'we' possibly afford these luxuries when we have pointless and murderous wars to fight, banks and bankers to bail out, and tax cuts for billionaires to pay for?

What is missing in the budget hawk panic is that it was private debt that caused the GFC (Global Financial Crisis), not public (Federal). Non-financial private debt (to prevent double counting) is currently $45 trillion versus $40 trillion for the public debt. And the Federal government of the US issues its debt in USD, which it can create at will. Private companies get charged with counterfeiting if they do this. The tales of sovereign defaults under these conditions are far and few between. The best-known, Russia in 1998, involved a pegged currency. The point is that it was the peg that was the problem, not the debt. The US has a floating rate currency. It isn't pegged and hasn't been since the US left the Gold Standard under Nixon.

For what it's worth, my Democrat friends are motivated in the current election and my Republican friends aren't. This jibes with news reports on early voting. More Democrats than Republicans are showing up at the polls. But Trump has already put down legal markers for contesting the election results. He had his chance to govern pretty much unimpeded and he made a mess of it. The problem of ICE at polling places so far hasn't materialized to my knowledge. I voted without incident. The larger challenge at present will be to get past Trump's legal impediments.

The immediate problem of an AI-induced financial crisis has been averted for now with the announcement that AI company Anthropic will IPO (Initial Public Offering) in late November. This should provide some breathing room until the next AI-induced crisis appears. If we can get Trump out of the way a tiny vacation from the existential dread that he has been causing may be possible. But recall that he is delivering 40,000 2,000lb bombs to Israel of the sort that flattened Gaza. This won't be over until it is over.

The article first appeared on CounterPunch.



By Akela Lacy
Senior politics reporter

PERSPECTIVE

AIPAC isn't retreating

Here's how it's shaping next Congress



GRACE HIE YOON/ANADOLU

In the words of the biggest name in the outside elections-spending game in the US, "Being pro-Israel is good policy and good politics." This midterms cycle, however, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's strategy seems to suggest the opposite. Contrary to its signature slogan, AIPAC's name has become anathema to voters across the political spectrum repulsed by Israel's genocide in Gaza and frustrated by Washington's outpouring of military aid for a foreign cabinet while domestic costs soar.

So, it's going underground. As The Intercept reported in December, AIPAC entered the 2026 midterms by returning to its strategic roots — funding other groups and uniting donors, rather than focusing on direct-to-candidate spending. Now, AIPAC has announced that it will no longer officially endorse or contribute directly to candidates.

Though progressives welcomed the announcement as evidence of AIPAC's retreat, it's far from a sign that AIPAC is backing down. The group is expected to continue spending heavily on elections through its super PAC, which took advantage of campaign finance loopholes to conceal its involvement in several races this cycle until after elections had already passed. To Lara Friedman, president of the Foundation for Middle East Peace, AIPAC's opting for obscurity shows that "its brand has become politically radioactive."

But how much has really changed? As AIPAC shifts strategy, a new project by The Intercept reveals the hundreds of candidates still taking its cash, plus how the money paid off for them. The data suggests that though the pro-Israel lobbying giant may be weakened, it's still dominant.

The Intercept tracked how much the group and its super PAC spent on elections to put pro-Israel candidates on the ballot in this year's midterms — including the money it tried to keep out of the public eye. While AIPAC makes use of a series of new pop-ups and pass-throughs, it still poured millions directly into 2026 midterm races. Its candidates usually still win.

The new data builds on a 2024 project in which The Intercept documented just how AIPAC shaped the last congressional class. At the time, Donald Trump was preparing for his return to the presidency as Kamala Harris ran a campaign hamstrung by public disillusionment over the Biden administration's unflinching support for Israel's genocide in Gaza. To critics of Israel desperate to stop the violence, the two parties looked equally bleak, and the pro-Israel lobby's grip on Congress appeared unshakeable.

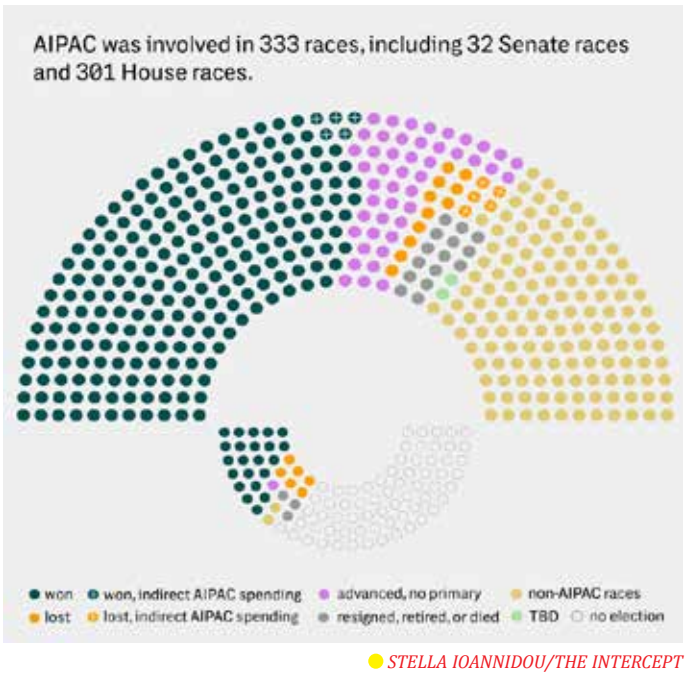
It's been different this cycle. Primaries across the country saw candidates win after vowing to cut off or restrict military aid to Israel, and incumbents signed on to legislation blocking weapons transfers in an attempt to keep their seats. But the shift should not be overstated: AIPAC still waded into nearly three-quarters of races, and its candidates still won far more often than they lost.

In total, AIPAC or its super PAC, United Democracy Project, spent on 333 of the 473 seats up for election this year.

These are the dollars AIPAC and UDP spent directly in races. The former makes contributions to candidates, while the latter, as AIPAC's leading super PAC, makes independent expenditures, like buying ads. They made up the bulk of the pro-Israel lobby's known elections spending — $53.3 million from AIPAC and $66.7 million from UDP, compared to $53.7 million and $41.4 million last cycle. Simultaneously, the groups took up another tack: making it harder to tell which races they were actually involved in. The group's donors poured money into races where AIPAC didn't officially endorse a candidate. AIPAC's board president hosted a fundraiser for a candidate who swore the group wasn't backing her. And in a series of races, no one knew for certain that AIPAC had spent on the election until after it was over.

The group tested different strategies in different states, spending directly in the Michigan Senate race, for example, while concealing its spending in several other primaries. In those races, UDP gave money to other committees, including a series of "pop-up PACs," groups that registered just before primaries, allowing them to delay disclosing their donors until after the election passed. Several of those groups took money from AIPAC's super PAC, spent on ads against candidates critical of Israel, and then disappeared.

The pop-ups and pass-throughs represent AIPAC's most talked-about new tactic, but the lobbying group and its flagship super PAC still sunk the bulk of their spending into key races and high-priority states. The Intercept analyzed where AIPAC employed which strategy, how UDP dollars flowed through pop-up PACs, and which candidates received the most AIPAC and UDP cash in their primaries.



STELLA IOANNIDOU/THE INTERCEPT

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Direct spending

The pro-Israel lobby's biggest investment in the primaries turned out to be a disappointment. UDP spent more than $30 million on ads attacking Democratic candidate Abdul El-Sayed in the Michigan Senate race or backing his opponent, Rep. Haley Stevens. Now that El-Sayed is the Democratic nominee, UDP is also battling El-Sayed in his general election contest with Republican Mike Rogers, spending just over $500,000 so far.

Thanks in part to the deluge of spending, the El-Sayed–Stevens contest was one of the marquee primaries of 2026, pitting a vocal critic of the pro-Israel lobby who could become the first Muslim US senator against an enthusiastic AIPAC cash recipient who famously said: "Israel comes to me in my dreams." It's one of the key races where we're breaking down the money AIPAC and UDP spent in favor of one candidate and against a clear opponent. We're skipping Democratic House candidate Adrian Boafo, who benefited from $5.7 million in UDP spending, because his Maryland primary included 23 other candidates.

After Stevens and Boafo, the top AIPAC and UDP recipient from this year's primaries was Rep. Wesley Bell, a moderate Democrat from Missouri who fended off a challenge from former Rep. Cori Bush to return to the House (AIPAC spent millions to oust her last cycle). When UDP spending is excluded, Bell received more AIPAC funding in the primaries than any other Democrat.

On the Republican side, the top beneficiary was Ed Gallrein, the Trump-backed challenger who unseated Rep. Thomas Massie in Kentucky. Massie, a libertarian critic of all foreign aid — including to Israel — was the relatively rare Republican incumbent AIPAC and UDP opposed.

Often, the pro-Israel groups backed Republican incumbents. Two more top recipients were Sen. Tom Cotton, who easily won his primary in Arkansas, and John Cornyn, who lost to state attorney general Ken Paxton in Texas.

But the greatest Republican recipient of AIPAC largesse — ahead of Gallrein, when UDP is excluded — did not face a primary opponent.

Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, now facing a tight general election contest against Democratic candidate Troy Jackson, has been a longtime beneficiary of campaign cash aligned with the pro-Israel lobby. Asked by Zeteo last year for her comment on Americans killed by the Israeli military, Collins shook her head and said only: "I am pro-Israel."

Pop-ups

On top of the $53.6 million it spent directly on races this cycle, United Democracy Project poured another $13.1 million into Democratic primaries by giving money to other committees whose names or stated agendas indicated no connection to Israel policy. That $13.1 million, more than triple the $3.5 million United Democracy gave through other groups last cycle, helped fund at least three pop-up PACs that formed this year.

The groups' names offered little insight into their political agendas, as The Lever recently highlighted. UDP spent the most on popup PACs in a series of Democratic primaries around Chicago, where groups with names like Elect Chicago Women, Chicago Progressive Partnership, and Affordable Chicago Now! used their funds to attack candidates running on rejecting AIPAC money or ending US military support for Israel. Several of the groups also received funding from major United Democracy Project donors, and three of them shut down after the primaries and gave their money back to United Democracy Project.

If last cycle AIPAC proved that it could leverage its financial advantage to target critics of Israel, its performance this cycle suggests that its money has become a faltering superpower.

New pro-Palestine groups have sprung up to spend against AIPAC — though their pockets aren't nearly as deep. When candidates went head-to-head this cycle in primaries defined by US military support for Israel's genocide in Gaza, pro-Palestine candidates often came out on top.

For decades before it started spending directly on elections, "AIPAC operated in the shadows," Friedman, of Foundation for Middle East Peace, said. Its endorsements were once "clear but unofficial," she added, and its funding operated through "informal understandings with big donors and allied but ostensibly independent PACs."

Today, "AIPAC is trying out a sort of middle road," Friedman said. "It will return in part to the shadows — no direct endorsements, no direct donations — but it will also continue to flex its power directly in elections, via tactics it has been testing and honing these past four years."

If anything, next cycle could see an expansion of the recent pop-up PAC strategy, making it harder to tell when AIPAC is involved — until it's too late.

The full article first appeared on The Intercept.