

Activities

Activity 1

How does a country choose its allies?

Preparation:

Estimated Time: 1 class period • **Materials:** (optional) poster board, felt markers, construction paper, scissors and tape

Background: Today, America is Israel's strongest ally. It wasn't always this way. How does a country choose its allies? How did America and Israel choose each other as allies? This activity explores these questions. After a brief introduction, students will work in small groups with *Israel 101* to uncover and analyze different aspects of the relationship between the United States and Israel. A summary ("How Israel Benefits the United States") is included for the teacher.

Activity:

1. Ask students: How does America choose its allies? What US interests should they serve? If you were president, how would you choose allies? What criteria would you use? Who are America's closest allies, and how do they meet these criteria? How does Israel choose its allies? What Israeli interests should they serve? If you were the prime minister of Israel, how would you choose allies—and what criteria would you use?

Give students about 20 minutes to work in pairs and write down their answers as a basis for a short class discussion. During the discussion, the teacher can summarize the main criteria that were suggested on the blackboard. (In *Israel 101*, these criteria have been summarized as follows: (1) military support, (2) agreement with US foreign policy, (3) technological and military research contributions, (4) commercial trade, (5) joint research in biomedical and technological fields, (6) support and popularity among the people, and (7) shared cultural and historical values). As an option, students can read the following article: Martin Kramer, "The American Interest," *Azure*, Autumn at: www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=331.

2. Compare the two countries. Ask students to estimate how much larger the US is in terms of population and geographical area.

- The US has about 303 million people and is 3.5 million square miles. Israel has 7.1 million people and is about 8,000 square miles. There are 43 times more Americans than Israelis, and America has 437 times more land than Israel.
- Roughly speaking, the US is about 50 times bigger in population and nearly 450 times bigger in geographical size. These facts highlight the question: What can a superpower like the United State receive from a much smaller country, such as Israel?

3. Brainstorm: Before they read the booklet, ask students to suggest how the criteria they discussed above can be applied to the relationship between Israel and the United States. What types of benefits might Israel provide the United States?

4. Group Work: In pairs, have the students read pages 18-19 of the booklet. Have them make lists of at least six different ways in which the United States has benefited from its close relationship with Israel. See "Summary of Israeli Benefits to America" below. Students can be encouraged to apply the above-mentioned criteria for choosing an ally.

5. Classroom Discussion: Each group should choose to present one benefit that the United States has gained from Israel. If desired, each group can expand its research work to include other sources, leading to a larger classroom project on the topic.

Wrap-Up: The United States and Israel have developed strong ties, based on common values and history. In this relationship, Israel provides support, which is strategic (acting in America's political interest in the Middle East), technological (e.g., sharing technological and biomedical breakthroughs, products and knowledge), economic (e.g., being an active and major trading partner by importing American products into Israel) and ideological (supporting and upholding common values, such as liberty and democracy).

Optional Follow-Ups:

- For comparison, students can research other allies of the US (e.g., South Korea, NATO, Europe, Japan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia). What does America gain from these allies? (Again, the above-mentioned list of criteria can be used for comparison.) How much American money is spent on these allies in foreign and military aid?
- Students can research why the US was not a more important ally for Israel before 1967. How did the 1967 War and the 1973 War change American perceptions? See Dore Gold, "Understanding the US-Israel Alliance," Sept. 2007, at: www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=2&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=376&PID=0&IID=1795&TTL=Understanding_the_U.S.-Israel_Alliance:_An_Israeli_Response_to_the_Walt-Mearsheimer_Claim.

Summary: How Israel Benefits the United States

For the Teacher: The benefits below have been summarized from pages 18-19 in the booklet. In the activity, these benefits can be identified and discussed by the students.

- Israel imports goods from America. It is second only to Canada in per capita imports of US products.
- US aid to Israel translates into new jobs created for American citizens, since about 75 percent of this aid is spent in the US. This represents billions of dollars of contracts.
- Israel shares information and expertise regarding the war on terrorism (p. 19).
- Israel provides important military information. (See “Israel Proves Its Strategic Value by Capturing...” [Operation Rooster 53] on p. 18.)
- In 1970, Israel supported the US to prevent Syria from invading Jordan (p. 18).
- Israel has sold advanced weapons it has developed to the United States.
- Israel acts to advance American interests in the Middle East. (See “US regards Israel as an ally in the Middle East” on p. 18.)
- Israel’s technological development saves the US funds and time needed for research and development. (See “Israel and US Researchers Cooperate in Technological and Biomedical Breakthroughs” on p. 19.)
- In 1991, Israel did not launch counterattacks to defend itself in the Gulf War at the request of the United States (p. 19).
- Israel has been a firm ally of the US in the United Nations, where it votes on the same side as the US over 90 percent of the time.
- Israelis overwhelmingly like Americans and American culture, while the populations of many other US allies do not (e.g., Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan). According to a PEW Research Poll, Israel has the highest percentage of people (79 percent) who view Americans favorably, followed by Britain at 70 percent. See pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/185.pdf, p. 19.

Wrap up: Israel provides support, which is strategic (acting in America’s political interest in the Middle East), technological (e.g., sharing technological and biomedical breakthroughs, products and knowledge), economic (e.g., being an active and major trading partner by importing American products into Israel) and ideological (supporting and upholding common values, such as liberty and democracy).