

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **AIPAC LOBBYING TO INFLUENCE THE UNITED STATES DECISION RELATED TO IRANIAN NUCLEAR**

Iranian nuclear dispute on its processes has been involving many actors into the battle arena. The reaction mostly came from majority American alliances in the world and American-Jews interest group. The disagreement to allow Iran acquiring its nuclear program, in fact, produced high determination from America and its alliances to close Iran nuclear path by all means, including imposing Iran on economy and military embargo, freezing Iran assets abroad and isolating them from international community.

Among those actors who contributed in influencing American decision, the roles of American-Jewish group was undeniably important. They battled over the decision to close Iran pathway on acquiring their nuclear capability through many ways on behalf of Israel interest. They helped to give an intensive pressure to Iran by influencing public opinion. So people all around the world would see how dangerous Iran nuclear was for the global security stabilization.

Among those American-Jews names, AIPAC or American pro Israel lobbying is one of the biggest supporters for Israel goodness sake. AIPAC worked really hard to achieve their goals through lobbying and influencing public opinion in United State. When the U.S. decided to force Iran to sign the commitment under JCPOA agreement, AIPAC and all activist determined to influence the law maker to vote disapprove regarding the

JCPOA proposal handed for further congress ratification process.

In this chapter, the writer will provide the AIPAC lobbying to congress when the JCPOA agreement still in negotiation process with the 5 powerful country plus Iran and EU as special guest in Vienna. In addition, will provide the AIPAC lobbying activities during the 60 days of congress reviewing on JCPOA agreement for further ratification by the house of representatives and senator.

#### **A. AIPAC Lobbying to Congress During The Negotiation Processes of JCPOA Agreement in Vienna.**

Maintaining a direct lobbying to congress and senator is one of the effective ways to influence the decision outcomes. AIPAC for a couple of times acknowledged lobbying the congress related several issue that involving Israel. In order to prove how strong AIPAC lobbying is, here is the example of U.S. lobbying when the U.S. aggression fought against Iraq in 2003, or known as U.S. - Iraq war. At that time the United States argued that the invasion executed due to Iraq nuclear mass destruction weapon (MDW) possession -that the U.S. claimed, can be threatened global security and also in chased over Saddam Hussein which was believed as the responsible one behind the 9/11 tragedy. (Wallechinsky, 2011)

In different moment, AIPAC has denied that they have supported the U.S. decision to invade Iraq while the proof says in the opposed side. Nathan Guttaman reported in AIPAC annual policy conference in 2003 that AIPAC was always supporting Israel and all its decision, including when Israel was supporting the Iraq war Therefore a thousand of AIPAC member on Capitol Hill

were committed to lobbying for the same goal as Israel has. In January 2003, Howard Kohr, a former executive director of AIPAC also stated for The New York Sun that they had been quietly lobbying the congress to approve the use of force in Iraq. (Mast, 2014)

AIPAC alone was well known for their lobbying capability. In the AIPAC annual conference, they usually open an event called “lobbying appointment” which is the opportunity for new lobbyist or those who want to feel the lobbying tension, are possible to express their concern directly to member of congress. Ben Chouake, a physician and the president of pro’s Israel politician action committee told the foreign policy that they had seen many lobbyist all day. With the lobbying capability and the amount of money AIPAC easily influence congress to be on the same side.

According to Foreign policy, AIPAC successfully secured around 80 senates, including 47 democrats to strengthen the strategies cooperation between U.S. – Israel which was resulting U.S. assistance to Israel. On August 1, 2014 the House of Representatives has passed out the idea to give Israel assistance that worth \$225 million for Israel’s Iron Drone missile defence system, in the middle of Israel against Hamas in Gaza. (PTI, updated 2016)

The same case also come to Iran nuclear issue. When the issue of Iran nuclear growth heated considering whether or not the nuclear program in Iran is suppose to be closed, Netanyahu gave speech on AIPAC annual conference and urged AIPAC to lobby the congress for further Iran economy sanction related to the nuclear development, AIPAC has succeeded to make U.S. pass a resolution contained for a full implementation of sanction

against Iran and to oppose its nuclear program. The resolution was ratified by 90 sponsors in total from the House of Representatives. At that time, it succeeded to make Iran under high pressure. (Mast, 2014)

“we continue our work to achieve the largest possible bipartisan majority that will reject this flawed deal (referring to Obama’s idea to put Iran nuclear in the agreement commitment), we must oppose this deal because it will not block Iran’s path to acquiring nuclear bomb”

-Marshall Wittman, AIPAC spokesman.

The another important decision regarding Iranian nuclear progress was that the negotiation processes by 5 powerful countries plus Iran and EU held in Vienna. To see the fact that Iranian deal would be a U.S. decision to overcome Iran nuclear dispute had disappointed Israel and all its American-Jews groups. The long way AIPAC lobbying processes conducted to block Iran nuclear possession before the deal was set up did not effect U.S. to nuke Iran through military strikes.

The first Iranian deal in negotiation table was on April 14, 2012 by P5 + Iran . The progress was achieved one by one until it reached the framework on April 2, 2015. All the respective countries which were involved to the negotiation process insisted to finish the agreement by the end of June 2015. Although it extended to several weeks but it was finally reached on July 14, 2015. The objection is to reach a better deal to block Iran nuclear threat in the future.

When the negotiation was proceeded by P5+Iran, AIPAC as the prominent Jews lobbying in U.S. urged its lobbyist and activists member to campaign what AIPAC called as 5 principles of a good deal that related to the negotiation process engaged a couple months before the deal was reached on point in Vienna. It is known that in a few weeks later, 5 world power countries and Iran would meet the negotiation deadline after being extended from April 2012 to July 2015. The principles endorsed by AIPAC lobbyist contained, Inspection and Verification, Possible Military Ambition, Sanction, Duration and Dismantlement. (AIPAC, 2015)

On each point, AIPAC emphasized the preventive action that U.S. supposed to consider taking in order to block Iran nuclear weapon development in the future. For instance, the first point of 5 requirement talked about Inspection and Verification, it said that AIPAC initiated the deal must cover the point “anywhere, anytime” inspection to Iran nuclear site, including to their military facilities, which was rejected by Iranian leader who talked that there would be no direct Military inspection allowed and permitted.

The second one was the Iran possible military ambition. At this point, in order to prevent Iran hidden motives of its military ambition, AIPAC initiated that the deal should require Iran full explanation regarding its prior weaponization and explain in details its nuclear plan development in the future. So, it would prevent any inconvenient condition.

The third was the sanction implementation. Obama and other negotiator in Vienna promised that in exchange of Iran willingness to participate in the agreement, all the

economy and military sanction would be lifted and Iran would embrace its new phase of global economy. Meanwhile, AIPAC suggested all the sanction must not be lifted before Iran followed all the agreement. This point also produced the disagreement from Iranian government which said that it was banned for obtaining inspection through Iran military site and facilities. (Tehran, 2015)

The fourth point was talking about the duration of the agreement. In order to prevent Iran becoming a nuclear sponsor threat, the deal was needed to cover for a decade. The last point was the dismantlement which required Iran to dismantle its nuclear infrastructure, so there would be no opportunity for Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon in the future. (AIPAC, 2015)

Through its principles, AIPAC tried to influence the U.S. decision regarding the final Iranian nuclear document as the considerable and important option to negotiate with. Prior to the JCPOA negotiation, AIPAC since 1990s had been known for lobbying the congress to generate policy and impose Iran on sanction, especially when Iran government had no intention to give up on its nuclear enrichment. When the deal was initiated in Vienna, still AIPAC urged the congress for the same tough sanction imposed to produce high pressure with the hope Iran would give up on its nuclear enrichment. In order to driving Iran on tough sanction, AIPAC brought top lawmaker from both houses which also known as most pro-Israel lawmaker.

AIPAC discovered approaching Debbie Wasserman Schultz and said that there was still a time for her to influence the agreement and as a member of congress who represent one of the largest pro-Israel constituencies in

country, AIPAC urged her to play a role in ensuring that congress did not accept the deal and wanted to eliminate the Iran path on its nuclear weapon development. (Lake, Bloomberg View, 2015)

On August 2, 2012, in the early stage of Iran deal agreement negotiation, House of Representatives Debbie Wasserman made a statement on Iran new sanction bills. The bills contained a new targeted restriction in several aspects, such as Iran energy sector, financial institution, shipping companies and insurer doing business with Iran. The new bills had complemented the previous sanction U.S. imposed and especially targeted to Iran central bank, Iran national oil company and National tanker company. (wassermanschultz.house.gov, 2012)

When the Iranian deal was negotiated, Debbie was a Florida democratic member and chairwoman of the Democratic National committee. She was one of the most pro lobbying congresswomen that vocals on any issue related to Israel, including Iran nuclear threats issue. Debbie known as one of AIPAC top fund recipients. During the period of Iran nuclear deal in the negotiation process from 2012 to 2015, she got \$737.660. she got it three times. In 2011-2012, she received \$194.630 while in 2013-2014 period she got \$49.300. In 2015-2016, she received \$494.270, including a contribution to election campaign. (opensecrets.org, 2012-2014)

Senator Robert Menendez, one of the top democrats on the Foreign Relations Committee supported AIPAC notion to initiate new Iran sanction pass to remind Iranian government that there would be so much pressure conducted if only Iran still abandoned its nuclear weapon program. Although Obama opposed the sanction, but it

was acknowledged that Menendez as one of the lead sponsors along with Republican senator Mark Kirk persisted to have another Iran sanction if Iran violated the negotiation. (JTA, 2014). Robert Menendez and Mark Kirk were the senators who also got money donors from AIPAC.

AIPAC seemed to be overworked to always conduct lobbying a new Iran sanction bill to congress. The sanction brought and presented by the U.S. Congress on behalf of AIPAC was an opportunity for AIPAC to fail or sabotage the negotiation process regarding Iran nuclear agreement that was discussed in Vienna. AIPAC considered that the continuity of Iran sanction bills would provoke Iranian government to mistrust U.S. and all the nuclear agreement negotiation that they had made effort. It proved by Obama statement that he will veto all Iran bill initiative from the congress, when the U.S. and 5 powerful countries including Iran was still on negotiation process regarding Iran nuclear agreement.

Obama asked Netanyahu and American-Jews lobbying to stop force U.S. congress and senator in giving another advanced sanction against Iran. He argued that Obama and his administration was in trying to prevent Iran to acquire its nuclear weapon and reach out a better deal as possible but the continuity of Iran sanction bills itself would provoke and sabotage the agreement. He threatened, if there was another sanction bill passed to congress again, he insisted to veto it. (Ravid, 2015)

The JCPOA agreement itself actually unsatisfied AIPAC and all supporters. The Idea to solve a long term Iran nuclear disputes through diplomacy approaches by agreement was out of expectation from AIPAC and all



supporters. In additional, the JCPOA agreement believed that it could harm AIPAC, Israel, U.S. and all supporters later and might put them in dangerous position, knowing the fact that Iran still have an opportunity to develop it secretly within the country. This notion led to Iran bills initiatives from U.S. domestic affairs to sabotage or confront the agreement process in Vienna.

Congress should support the negotiation, not new Iran sanction. The new Iran sanction would only threaten the progress made over the past years to overcome the Iran nuclear disputes. In addition, the continuity of Iran sanction would only push Iran away from the negotiating table and would distrust the sincerity of U.S. government. However, all the sanctions initiated by several member of congress, in fact, would violate the U.S. promise to lift any Iran nuclear-related sanction if Iran wanted to negotiate. The promise was written under Nov 24, 2013 interim agreement.

In here even though AIPAC indirectly vocalize the decision making of JCPOA in Vienna, because they also forbid to do so as an interest group, their voice still can be heard through congress statement and Iran sanction initiatives by congress pro's Israel, in the hope that Iranian government will give up on its nuclear development and will succeed to bring more pressure and sabotage the deal process.

The fact that Iranian nuclear deal that has been reached on July 2015, does not mean that the end of the whole of negotiation's process regarding Iran nuclear disputes. The agreement still needed to reach the congress ratification in order to pass further implementation. The JCPOA proposal handed to congress for the further

ratification processes also become the other big opportunity for AIPAC to lobby the congress on behalf of Israel.

## **B. AIPAC Lobbying On The Congress Review Related To JCPOA Document**

The idea to force Iran to sign the commitment under JCPOA document in fact, left bad impression from Israelis and American-Jews descendant to Obama administration. The ratification process by congress related to JCPOA documents that has been negotiated by 5 powerful country + Iran in Vienna was taking a serious response from the American-Jews including AIPAC and Israel.

The intensiveness of lobbying from the AIPAC to congress prior JCPOA achievement and the background history from both relationship of the U.S. and Israel, in fact, could be not enough to make United States make a decision to invade Iran through Military forces and close their path on acquiring nuclear development completely. In here, at the crucial moment, AIPAC has given out all of his best to prevent the deal that happened as the last standing opportunity.

During the 60days of congress reviewing documents for further ratification, again, AIPAC showed the extraordinary battle of power through its lobbying capability to congress. Perhaps, there is no other American Jews group in America who have an ability to conduct lobbying as fantastic as AIPAC did. AIPAC was known to spend the biggest amount of money in several sectors to accomplish the mission through TV advertisement propaganda and the biggest one is for congress lobbying sector.

According to *the Times of Israel*, Howard Kohr requested to hold a special meeting at AIPAC Public Affairs Committee which was believed to obligate all activist and lobbyist for the further actions regarding the issue right after the United States announced the JCPOA agreement. (Kampeas R. , Jewish Journal, 2015)

It says that Kohr has distributed a phone script to a 10.000 of activist directed at member of congress. The script itself said that he urged the senator and representative to oppose the Iran deal because the deal would not block Iran from acquiring nuclear weapon in the future.

Obama delivered his speech at the American University regarding the Iran nuclear deal saying that those people who once pushed the U.S. into the Iraq war, were played or insisted the same goal as more than a decades ago by creating a public fear. Obama realized that a pro Israel's group and politician would prefer directing war to Iran or use a military force to overcome the problem rather than the implementing JCPOA.

As we can see that Obama's vision was clear that having diplomatic approaches is the first attempt in order to solve the problem rather than declaring war. The war isn't the best solution to be achieved. Meanwhile the most consequential Foreign Policy decision by the congress will be taken importantly in very soon and need guidance since the congress has voted to legalize the invasion of Iraq war in 2003. The absolute difference behaviour showed by Obama compared to the previous U.S. president Bush which more aggressive looking at the interest of U.S. and

Israel, was essentially important made AIPAC twice or even more times harder to give their efforts.

In addition, Obama brought the case of John F. Kennedy in 1963 who push the nuclear test ban treaty with the Soviet Union. He stated that there is nothing wrong with the agreement because Kennedy proved it and there would be no war conducted on his administration. The speech also was acknowledged indirectly to confront the AIPAC whom has sent a thousand of activist to lobby the law makers to reject the deal and was spending \$14.5 million to television advertisement propaganda (ABC, NBC, FOX, CBS) started from middle of July to middle of September. Later, it was found out that the intensive time of lobbying was 2 months. (Clifton, Lobe Log, 2015)

In order to response Obama's speech for those who campaign to oppose the deal, AIPAC through Marshall wittman responded that the deal would only create more terrorism, further regional conflict, nuclear proliferation races, and would definitely fail to block Iran from conducting nuclear weapon. AIPAC denied their suggestion to invade Iran on war but went back to the negotiations for a better deal with the P5 + Iran.

Strangely, being back to the negotiation processes would only waste time wasted because there was no better deal for AIPAC except completely close Iran's path on its nuclear development. Meanwhile Iran has stated that they never give up on its enrichment program.

On its effort to support Israel decision regarding Iran deal, AIPAC has listed several congressional members that they focused on to lobby. Most of them were Democratic member of congress. As we know that the biggest challenge for AIPAC is to influence the decision

of Democratic member to block the ratification and betrayal of Obama. Howard Kohr has mentioned to public several names that AIPAC has tried to gain their voice to block the deal. He mentioned at first there are 2 names of Democrat senators that he believed were having an important voice in the decision making of Congress reviewing on the deal. (Kampeas R. , The Jewish News, 2015)

He said he called senator Mikulski and senator Cardin and had urged them to oppose the deal.

Cardin was a prominent Maryland Jewish family and a senior democrats. Kohr said if they can influence those two members, there is a possibility for influencing the other democate delegation to have the same vision. In addition, Yehuda Neuberger, an AIPAC's lay leader, has been lobbying Cardin intensely and revealed that the senator told him. He hold Wohlberg in special regards.

AIPAC also announced its plan to hold next meeting on September 3, in Livingston, New Jersey, focusing on senator Cory Booker, another democratic lawmaker who had tied relations with American Jews group and the state of Israel.

"What a powerful message we sent to the world, if majority of two houses joined by the American people vote down the deal"

- Rabbi Mitchell Wohlberg.

The Iran deal tseemed a battle for the AIPAC and Republican to fight against Obama and the democrats congressional member and senator. Most of Republican will definitely vote for disapproval. Meanwhile they have

to influence the voice of democrats to go in the same direction.

Due to that reason, AIPAC had been working with the Jewish advocacy group including the American security initiatives to force democrats to reject the JCPOA's idea. In addition to spend a budget for advertising, AIPAC also held a caucus which sent off their activist on meeting and gather with the law makers around the country with the objective to block the agreement. (Lake, Bloomberg View, 2015)

“As public supports for the flawed Iran deal, our member along with the other American are expressing their views to their Senators and representatives across the country during the congressional review” -Marshall W, AIPAC spokesperson

In counter attack, according to The New York Times, Obama has been in contact with the democratic member of congress which was trying to gain support for the nuclear deal vote. It also informed that the coalition of anti-war and progressive organization persuaded democrats who had not yet decided the Iran nuclear deal to fight against the republican. (Davis, 2017)

One of Obama's senator from democrat who opposed Obama's decision regarding Iranian nuclear deal was Charles Schummer. The AIPAC decision to brought Senator Charles Schummer to the chamber seemed to be a great decision to take. According to The New York Times, despite only managing to bring

along three more democratic senators, such as Sen. Ben Cardin, Joe Manchin and Robert Menendez but Schumer opposition to Iran deal has possibility shaking up the democratic wall. AIPAC welcoming the senator and expect him to influence the other fellow democrats. (Clifton, Lobe Log, 2015)

“In here, we agree that we need a better deal as bipartisan opposition grows and public support for bad deal is eroding”- AIPAC

However, behind that, AIPAC which was also known for funneling their campaign contribution through NORPAC, acknowledged that they contributed around \$90,000 to Schumer’s campaign committee between the time of the announcement of his opposition to JCPOA ratification. The NORPAC donation to Schumer was also known as the biggest amount of group’s campaign contribution. In 2010, he got only around \$25,700 donation from NORPAC on his last election year. Far from that, in 2004, Schumer only got \$3,000 in order to support new Iran sanction.

Despite of the result announced regarding JCPOA agreement after U.S. domestic affairs ratified the document, one that need to be emphasized here was the AIPAC ability to lobby the House of Representative and Senator. What they did was beyond other American-Jews group in the U.S. could ever imagined. By using the amount money that AIPAC had, the group grew into strong compatible interest group which was quite dominant in U.S. politics. AIPAC never left Israel behind for every issue related to the Jews state including when the

Issue of Iranian nuclear weapon threatened Israel security and position in the Middle East. Because of that, a number of lobbying had been conducted prior the JCPOA and after the JCPOA has been achieved, including when the document pass to congress for further ratification.