**[The TikTok problem](https://www.dawn.com/news/1823652/the-tiktok-problem)**

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TYPICALLY, you can’t get the red and blue tribes that make up the legislative branch of the American Empire to agree on anything at all, and so it came as a surprise to some when the now infamous TikTok ban bill passed through the House of Representatives with all the ease of a super-heated knife through a soft slab of butter. With 352 votes in favour and 65 against, the bill enjoyed the kind of bipartisan consensus that less important issues (like providing affordable healthcare, or pardoning student debt, or funding Ukraine’s unending war) rarely get.

The bill requires TikTok’s owners Bytedance to sell the social media platform by September or face being banned in the US. The reason being given by the bill’s supporters is that the Chinese government is able to access the data of the roughly 170 million TikTok users in the US and is able to ‘tweak’ the algorithm in its favour, thus subtly controlling the kind of content American TikTok users get to see. This is a direct threat to national security, claimed Nancy Pelosi and others, and thus could not be tolerated.

In one sense you could look at this as a continuation of the aggressive US stance against China, which includes posturing in the South China Sea in line with the Asian Pivot, the building of anti-China alliances with the aim of ‘containment’ and the attempted hobbling of Chinese technology, as we saw with the measures taken against Huawei.

But what explains the urgency and the remarkable agreement across a deep political divide to vote for this measure, and that too by many representatives who have themselves built a massive following on TikTok? Take a deeper look and it turns out that it’s not so much about the national security of America, as it is about the national security of Israel.

The hold of the Israeli lobby on US politics remains unshakeable.

After the Oct 7 attacks, as Israel jumped on the chance to fulfil its genocidal agenda by massacring the population of Gaza, a change was noticed among populations in the West. Young people took to the streets and protested with increasing determination and volume against what they clearly saw as barbarism perpetrated by a Western-supported Zionist regime steeped in the traditions of colonialism and apartheid. Western elites and their affiliated media outlets at first dismissed the protests, then demonised them and seemed aghast when they not only continued, but increased in frequency and volume.

‘What could the reason be?’ Zionist-allied political and media establishments in the West asked themselves. Could it be that young people didn’t like seeing Palestinians starve, bombed and slaughtered before their eyes? Could it be that they were repulsed by images of Israeli soldiers triumphantly looting and blowing up homes and posing with the lingerie of killed and displaced Palestinian women? Could it be that these same people now actually wanted to learn the truth about this long-standing occupation?

No, decided the ruling classes, the problem was social media and TikTok in particular where, as with every other social media platform, pro-Palestinian voices, videos and hashtags far outnumbered pro-Israeli ones.

Jonathan Greenblatt, director of the pro-Zionist Anti-Defamation League, admitted as much in a leaked audio call when he warned that they (pro-Israel groups) “had a serious TikTok problem”. Then, when the bill was drafted it quickly received the backing of the powerful pro-Israel lobby groups, the Jewish Federations of North America.

And, of course, when we look at Mike Gallagher, the Congressman who wrote the bill, we find that the all-powerful American Israel Public Affairs Committee was his top funder in the last election cycle. AIPAC, con­c­erned about the drubbing that Israel’s reputation is deservedly receiving, is breaking out the chequebook in the com­ing election sea­son and has put toge­ther a war chest of $100m to defeat candidates they deem insufficiently worshipful of Israel.

But a pushback is starting; a group of prominent Jewish-Americans, including educators, actors, writers and professors signed an open letter condemning AIPAC, and Pam Keith, a former US Congresswoman from an overwhelmingly Jewish district, used some very colourful language while calling out AIPAC on X. Mainstream media in the US is also plucking up courage, with MSNBC doing a whole six-minute segment on how AIPAC influences US politics.

However, the hold of the Israeli lobby on American politics remains unshakeable for now; the House of Representatives recently passed a measure in a 286 to 134 vote banning aid to UNRWA and also providing an additional $14 billion to Israel. AIPAC, for its part, touted the success of its backed candidates in the Democratic primaries, leading one to wonder whether America is the only country where a foreign power can openly boast of buying politicians.

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