

# Advance US Interests by Supporting the Iranian People

written by Asher Fredman | 16.01.2026

Iran stands at an inflection point. The Iranian people have risen up with extraordinary courage and on an unprecedented scale to demand a better future. The ayatollah regime has responded with lethal repression.

But the regime's brutality cannot hide the fact that it has no answer to the forces driving the unrest: economic collapse, failure to provide basic services, and a society that increasingly rejects the regime's ideology in favor of freedom, dignity, and human rights.

A new Iranian government that ends the export of terror, ceases its ambition for military nuclear power, and chooses constructive relations with the West rather than allying itself with America's enemies would be one of the most consequential developments for Middle East and the global order in modern history.

President Donald Trump's urging of Iranians to keep protesting, promising that "help is on its way," while signaling that the United States is prepared to sustain and escalate pressure stands in stark contrast to the approach of recent administrations.

In 2009, Iranians filled the streets in the Green Movement with a simple question—"Where is my vote?"—and the regime answered with brutality.

Prioritizing a nuclear deal with the regime over the Iranian people's democratic aspirations, the Obama administration all but ignored the protestors. In 2022, the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement revealed once again the courage of Iran's youth and women, but the regime survived through violence and fear, emboldened by Western inaction.

Today, however, Iran's rulers face a new reality. Trump has restored American power and standing on the international stage. Internally, the country is gripped by skyrocketing inflation, deep corruption, and a catastrophic water crisis—problems driven by the regime's mismanagement, its refusal to abandon its nuclear ambitions, and its determination to send billions of dollars to terror

proxies abroad rather than invest in Iran's own people.

Externally, the Islamic Republic's moment of maximum regional power has passed. On Oct. 6, 2023, Tehran's terror proxy network threatened Israel, destabilized Lebanon, endangered U.S. partners in the Gulf, and menaced global shipping lanes.

In the war that followed Hamas' Oct. 7 massacre, Israel, with U.S. support, dealt devastating blows to Hamas and Hezbollah. American and Israeli strikes severely degraded the Houthis' ability to threaten shipping and regional partners.

And the 12-day war, culminating in Operation Midnight Hammer, did not just destroy much of Iran's nuclear infrastructure and ballistic missile arsenal, but dismantled key elements of Iran's air defenses, leaving the regime in a state of heightened vulnerability.

In other words, the ayatollah emperor has been revealed to have no clothes. Yet even as the regime's weakness is exposed and the people's desire for change is unmistakable, the most important question remains unanswered: What comes next?

The best available data regarding the preferences of the Iranian people comes from the Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran. Its June 2024 survey, based on anonymous responses from more than 77,000 respondents, found that 70% of Iranians explicitly oppose the Islamic Republic. An extraordinary 89% say they support a democratic system. Two-thirds reject governance based on religious law.

On the preferred alternative, Iranians are not unified around a single blueprint: about 26% favor a secular republic and around 21% support a constitutional monarchy. Reza Pahlavi, the son of the former shah, remains the most popular opposition figure listed, enjoying 31% support, but no figure is favored by a majority.

This mix of deep anti-theocratic sentiment, strong democratic aspirations, and fragmented opposition means both hope and risk. The hope is obvious. The risk is that a powerful force, such as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps or elements of the military, could attempt to capture the state in the name of stability.

Still, if Iran's future is a government that chooses normal relations with the world rather than theological extremism and revolutionary export, the strategic benefits for the United States could be historic.

First, such a shift could permanently extinguish Iran's "ring of fire." Tehran is the banker, trainer, and armorer of the region's most destabilizing terror networks. A post-Islamic Republic Iran could reduce the threat to U.S. forces and allies, restore confidence in global shipping routes, and open the door to new regional integration architectures.

Second, it would strike a major blow to Russia. Today's Iran is one of Moscow's most important partners, supporting sanctions evasion and enabling Russia's war machine. A new Iranian government seeking Western investment and sanctions relief would have strong incentives to sever that relationship.

Third, it would disrupt China's strategic foothold in the region. Beijing has benefited from Iran's isolation, importing discounted Iranian energy and using Tehran as an anti-American anchor in the Middle East. A normalized Iran, trading broadly and transparently, would reduce China's leverage.

None of this will happen automatically. That is why America's policy should be guided by a simple principle: support the Iranian people, deter mass repression, and prepare for multiple transition scenarios.

That means enabling communications and internet access during blackouts, documenting and sanctioning perpetrators of atrocities, and making clear that sanctions relief is available only in exchange for verifiable changes—ending terror exports, accepting robust nuclear and ballistic missile constraints, and respecting fundamental rights.

If the regime continues its brutal repression, a U.S.-led military response should follow.

The U.S. has the capabilities to deal a devastating blow to the regime, while protecting American assets and personnel. Under Trump's leadership, the U.S. now has an opportunity to stand with the Iranian people and to shape a more stable and peaceful future for the Middle East and the entire world.

The article was co-written with Daniel Flesch, a Senior Policy Analyst for Middle

East and North Africa at The Heritage Foundation.

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# The American Venezuela operation marks end of era of US military hesitation

written by Ruth Pines-Feldman | 16.01.2026

The American move in Venezuela is not just a successful military operation.

From the perspective of the Trump administration, it is intended to convey a broad and unmistakable message to the United States' adversaries. As US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said at a press conference in Florida, when US President Donald Trump makes a threat, he also acts.

Venezuela became a concrete example that Trump's Washington is prepared to use military, intelligence, and economic power to enforce red lines, even at the cost of international criticism. For rivals of the United States, it served as a warning that statements from the White House can no longer be dismissed as mere rhetoric.

As expected, criticism within the US has been sharp and has come from both sides of the political spectrum, including a heated debate over the legality of the operation and whether it violated international law.

Figures from the "progressive camp," including New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, were quick to declare the move illegal, a position that also resonated in mainstream media, including *The New York Times*.

At the same time, the publication of indictments against Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, alongside the release of footage documenting his transfer to the United States, makes it clear that the White House is preparing for a high-profile legal battle.

Maduro is expected to stand trial in federal court in southern New York, widely regarded as the preferred venue for major federal cases, particularly those involving drug offenses, financial fraud, and cross-border criminal activity.

Even sharper criticism focuses on what may come next. Critics fear a repeat of past mistakes, foremost among them Iraq, the rapid toppling of a regime without

a stable political plan for the day after.

Trump has stated that the US will control developments in Venezuela through local actors, but he has not explained how such a mechanism would operate, nor has he ruled out the possibility of an American ground presence if required.

The American memory of Iraq looms over public debate, and concerns about a power vacuum and institutional collapse are prominent. For now, Venezuela's Vice President, Delcy Rodríguez, has assumed the role of acting president.

The economic dimension has also been stated without ambiguity. Trump declared that the Venezuelan oil industry is "returning to American control," arguing that the Maduro regime had unlawfully nationalized these assets, a process from which China primarily benefited.

According to Trump, the US not only corrected a historical injustice, but will also rehabilitate energy infrastructure and restore American influence in the region.

The central framing of the move is explicitly geopolitical, aimed at blocking the China-Russia-Iran axis in the US's backyard. According to reports, Venezuela has in recent years served as a base for hostile activity, including cooperation with Iran, and has become an anchor point for an anti-Western axis in South America.

Trump seeks to sever the chain, and not only in Venezuela.

## **Reinforcing US as 'world's strongest superpower'**

Public discourse is already shifting toward a question troubling many: Is this the end, or is it only the beginning?

The question of Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, and even Greenland is being raised, although at this stage, there is no mention of regime change in Iran.

At the same time, it remains to be seen whether there will be a Chinese response to the move, which reportedly caught Beijing completely by surprise, just hours after an official visit between the two countries in Venezuela, and whether any shift will emerge around Taiwan.

Statements emphasizing the operation's success, no fatalities, no loss of equipment, and the use, apparently, of advanced cyber capabilities that, according to Trump, plunged the entire capital into darkness, are intended to reinforce the image of the US as the world's strongest superpower, militarily as well.

In a broader view, some argue that Washington succeeded in Venezuela, where Putin failed in Kyiv at the outset of the Ukraine-Russia War.

It is also impossible to ignore the motive presented as central: the war on drugs. It remains to be seen whether Maduro's removal will generate a domino effect among regional cartels and how this will affect the broader system.

Finally, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth defined the operation as an

expression of “America First” and of the concept of “peace through strength.” The Trump administration is seeking to send a clear signal to countries around the world: the era of American hesitation, at least for now, is over. Published in The Jerusalem Post, January 2026.

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# **Innovation as an Engine for Regional Development: Strengthening and Expanding the Abraham Accords in the Fields of Water, Food and Healthcare**

written by Noa Lazimi | 16.01.2026



## **Highlights**

The fields of water, food and healthcare offer a strategic opportunity for regional collaborations between Israel and countries that signed the Abraham Accords (the

UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan) and with potential candidates, including Saudi Arabia. In addition to the top-priority defense and security needs, countries in the region are attributing increasing importance to addressing acute challenges relating to water scarcity, food insecurity and improving public healthcare systems – as an integral part of their national development plans:

□ In relation to **water**, countries in the region are contending with overexploitation of freshwater sources, a shortage of recycling and partial access to clean water. Israel offers proven solutions for desalination, wastewater recycling, smart water management and data-based forecasting technologies.

□ In relation to **food**, there is high dependence on imports, coupled with a desire to strengthen sustainable local production. Israel offers unique know-how in desert agriculture, precision irrigation, advanced cultivation technologies and food-tech solutions.

□ In relation to **healthcare**, relatively high morbidity rates, disparities in access to medicine in outlying regions and a growing need for personalized healthcare solutions create numerous opportunities for Israel, which is an innovation leader in fields such as digital medicine, telemedicine, genetic data analyses and bioinformatics.

Goal-oriented collaborations in these fields, harmonized with the target countries' needs and national vision, could enable Israel to establish an ongoing regional presence and deepen partnerships based on the values of stability, sustainability and innovation. Considering the inherent potential, this document recommends a policy based on four key guiding principles:

□ **Adapting Israeli solutions to local needs:** Adapting innovative Israeli technologies and services to government plans and SDGs in Abraham Accords countries, by creating partnerships with local governmental and private entities.

□ **Promoting integration into national ventures using a public-private partnership model (PPP):** Encouraging Israeli companies to participate in wide-scale national projects in the Middle East, led by sovereign funds, by establishing local branches in order to reduce legal and regulatory obstacles.

□ **Establishing a dedicated financial support mechanism:** Devising a system of state guarantees and risk insurance for Israeli business activities in Abraham

Accords countries, focusing on markets such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, to contend with project financing difficulties.

□ **Formulating of a multi-year strategic plan for international development:** Adding a humanitarian layer to Israel's commercial approach through joint ventures between Israel and Abraham Accords countries in developing countries, for the purposes of promoting regional stability and humanitarian influence and establishing Israel's standing as a responsible partner.

Germany, the leading European country in advancing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and a strong supporter of regional integration in the Middle East, can play a key role in supporting and building this process, in conjunction with the European Union, which has already formed a strategic partnership with the Gulf states. A trilateral partnership between Israel, the Gulf states and Germany/the EU can become a significant engine for promoting stability, innovation and sustainable development in the region.

To read the full article

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# Trump accelerates Middle East plan as tensions grow

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 16.01.2026

The US is focusing its efforts on November 18, the date of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit, during which an expanded defensive pact and new arms deals between the two countries are expected to be announced.

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# **Israel and the US bear hug: An attempt to place Jerusalem under Washington's authority**

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 16.01.2026

Netanyahu is trying to clarify that Israel is not a protectorate of the United States, and that it alone will decide how to pursue its security objectives.

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## **Defund and replace the UN**

written by David M. Weinberg | 16.01.2026

Do we have to settle for a system that elects Saudi Arabia and Iran to lead human rights councils, and that disregards slaughters in Syria and Sudan while outrageously branding Israel a war criminal enterprise?

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## **The Evangelical dimension: The Trump administration's policy**

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 16.01.2026

Countries whose foreign policy toward Israel has been favorable enjoy strong and prosperous economies. Conversely, France and Britain have endured difficulties.

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# **Europe must adopt a wartime mindset as conflict with Russia becomes inevitable**

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 16.01.2026

The European states, as in the 1930s, refuse to see the danger standing at their threshold.

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# **India-Israel ties: A relation meant to last generations**

written by Joseph Rozen | 16.01.2026

The recent investment agreement represents more than economic coordination—it is the latest milestone towards a generational vision built on complementary strengths, shared democratic values, and mutual respect

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# **What Israel can learn from Modi: National honor as strategic asset**

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 16.01.2026

From India, we learn that national honor is not a luxury but a far-reaching strategic asset. If Israel desires to secure its standing and security, it must project firm resilience to the world.