A historic chance to dismantle the ‘axis of evil’

written by Gilad Erdan | 10.12.2024

The fall of the Assad regime, combined with Israel’s decisive blows against Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis, presents a historic opportunity. With a bold US president open to innovative initiatives, there is now a chance to fundamentally alter the Middle East. By dismantling the Iranian regime, this moment could pave the way for normalization between Israel and the broader Arab and Muslim world.

The key to achieving this transformative change lies in demonstrating strength against surrounding enemies, proving Israel’s strategic value to the United States, building a coalition of moderate states, and setting a clear national goal: applying all possible pressure – including a credible military threat – to overthrow the Iranian regime, ultimately consigning it to history alongside Assad’s regime.

President Donald Trump enters the White House committed to ending wars, not starting them. However, he is also prepared to strengthen US allies in the Middle East – foremost among them, Israel – so they can defend themselves. American support will weaken the Iranian-Chinese-Russian axis, fostering sustainable stability and expanding the Abraham Accords.

Trump’s recent statements about the Middle East reflect his principles: distinguishing between allies and adversaries, valuing nations that achieve victories and weaken their enemies, and rejecting endless wars with heavy casualties on both sides.

Israel must act decisively to achieve its objectives against its adversaries as swiftly as possible. In Gaza, Israel needs to dismantle Hamas as a military and governing force, ensuring that humanitarian aid entering the Strip does not fall under its control. Simultaneously, any violation of the ceasefire by Hezbollah should carry a heavy price.

Israel must also demonstrate its strategic value to the US, aligning with Trump’s “America First” agenda. This can be achieved through close cooperation with Washington to advance new regional military and economic frameworks alongside

Abraham Accords states and other regional partners, creating a counterweight to China's expanding influence in the Middle East.

Israel must operate from a position of strength, courage, and uncompromising dedication to its vital interests. Analysts urging Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians in exchange for US support in normalization agreements risk portraying Israel as weak – a liability, not an asset, to Washington.

Reshaping the Middle East requires addressing the regime in Tehran. Israel must adopt this as a bipartisan national objective. Just as Western intelligence agencies failed to predict developments in Egypt, Syria, and Gaza, they may similarly overlook Iran's next steps. One day, the world could wake up to an Iran armed with nuclear warheads. As an ambassador to the US and UN, I engaged with representatives from regional states, including those lacking diplomatic ties with Israel, and they all recognized that Iran is the root of the problem.

Today, with Assad's fall, Iran is weaker than ever. Three of its pillars – Assad's regime, Hezbollah, and Hamas – have been crippled, and the Houthis have also suffered significant setbacks. Israel has demonstrated its ability to strike Iran's strategic assets, leaving it exposed to further aerial attacks.

Now is the time to complete the task, with US support. This involves launching a maximum-pressure campaign – economically and diplomatically – against Iran. Sanctions must target critical sectors, including energy, finance, defense, and automotive industries. Simultaneously, support for Iranian opposition groups should be bolstered, ensuring their access to encrypted communication and uninterrupted internet connectivity.

If this pressure does not bring about dramatic change or regime collapse, Israel must convince its ally that the only path to stability, peace, and prosperity in the region lies in delivering a devastating blow to the Iranian regime. Jerusalem and Washington would need to target a range of sites across Iran, from nuclear facilities to strategic government and military assets, and economic hubs such as oil facilities and ports.

Beyond Iran, it is essential to address other actors supporting radical terror and spreading hatred and antisemitism, starting with Qatar. It is unacceptable for the US to condemn Hamas for holding American citizens hostage while the same organization operates its financial empire from Doha, a US-designated ally. Nor

can Qatar’s media outlets continue spreading venomous anti-Israel propaganda while Trump works to strengthen the Abraham Accords.

Efforts should target government, private sector, and civil society leaders to compel Qatar to make a clear choice: end all support for terror and incitement, expel Hamas operatives, and cease aiding the organization, or face designation as a terror-supporting state and sanctions isolating it from the global community.

To ensure a bright future for Israel, citizens and the Jewish diaspora must unite around one transformative goal: the fall of Iran’s regime. This moment is closer than ever.

Published in Israel Hayom, December 10, 2024.

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