

# This should be Israel's answer to Trump's reversal

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 22.06.2026

Only a few months after President Donald Trump returned to the White House, Vice President J.D. Vance delivered a widely discussed speech at the Munich Security Conference. The speech reflected a broader worldview concerning America's role in the international system and the limits of its commitments to its allies.

Vance has often been associated with a moderately isolationist outlook. He was initially perceived as a strong supporter of Israel. For that reason, the apparent shift in his position has raised troubling questions.

This is not the first time an American president has significantly altered his approach toward Israel. A notable example is President Richard Nixon, who, in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War and the Watergate scandal, adopted policies that conflicted with Israeli interests.

The principal lesson for Israel is clear: it must continue to reduce, as much as possible, its security dependence on the United States.

One of Trump's central arguments is that the United States and Israel have already won the war against Iran. Iran's leadership has suffered severe blows, significant portions of its military and nuclear capabilities have been damaged, and the regime has been forced to confront a new strategic reality.

Yet victory involves more than inflicting damage on an adversary. It also requires that the defeated side recognize its defeat. History demonstrates the importance of this factor. Following the First World War, many Germans did not feel that they had been defeated. Out of this perception emerged the "stab-in-the-back" myth, which later contributed to the rise of Nazism.

Iran's leadership is far from acknowledging defeat. On the contrary, it portrays its survival as a significant achievement and continues to emphasize its ability to withstand pressure from both Israel and the United States.

Another argument heard from President Trump is that, without American

intervention, Israel would have faced an existential threat. From this claim follows, at least implicitly, the expectation that Israel should align itself with Washington's demands.

Israel owes the United States profound gratitude for its contribution to degrading Iran's nuclear program and for the extensive security assistance it has provided over many decades. However, the assertion that Israel's survival depends entirely upon American action does not accurately reflect reality.

Even if the full extent of Israel's strategic capabilities remains unknown, it is evident that the Iranian leadership assigns considerable weight to them. The combination of credible strategic deterrence and sophisticated missile-defense capabilities is, with all due respect, what fundamentally guarantees Israel's security.

Finally, there is the claim that the Trump administration represents Israel's last remaining friend in the international arena. This argument, too, does not withstand close scrutiny. Israel's international standing today is arguably stronger than at any previous point in its history.

The extensive construction activity taking place in Judea and Samaria, with relatively limited international opposition, is one indication of Israel's current international standing. Furthermore, throughout the current conflict, Israel has managed to achieve most of its strategic objectives, notwithstanding intensive worldwide opposition.

And yet, in listening to Vance's argument, a broader question arises: what message does Washington send to its allies if it implies that a powerful partner such as Israel is so vulnerable that it must accept every demand made by its protector? How should Taiwan, the Gulf states, and other American allies facing serious security threats interpret such a message? Does such a message truly enhance American credibility as a reliable ally?

In practice, Prime Minister Netanyahu is entirely justified in maintaining public restraint in response to US criticism. In doing so, he follows David Ben-Gurion's enduring principle that Israel should avoid unnecessary confrontations with great powers.

Nevertheless, there would be no harm in occasionally presenting

counterarguments - provided this is done respectfully and in a manner befitting the unique relationship between Israel and the United States.

Published in Israel Hayom, June 24, 2026.

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