Why calls for a US withdrawal from NATO matter for Israel

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 28.12.2025

Although the likelihood that this legislation will lead to an actual US withdrawal from NATO is extremely low, its implications should not be underestimated.

The sponsors of the legislation argue that the original objectives of the NATO alliance, established during the Cold War, no longer align with the contemporary national interests of the United States. Their principal claims are:

1. NATO was established to confront the Soviet Union, a superpower that no longer exists.
2. The United States disproportionately finances NATO.
3. The European members of NATO possess sufficient military and economic capabilities to defend themselves independently.

It is highly unlikely that the bill will be approved by Congress. Powerful legal and political considerations stand in the way of its adoption:

a. The alliance is rooted in a profound sense of historical solidarity, forged through substantial sacrifices in various military campaigns.

b. Many observers rightly view Russia as the successor to the Soviet Union.

c. The alliance serves as a major deterrent against the enemies of the Western democratic states.

US tensions with NATO allies

This legislative initiative does not emerge in a vacuum. Since US President Donald Trump's entry into the White House, tensions between the United States and Western European countries – nearly all of them NATO members – have steadily increased. Recently, the president employed particularly disparaging language toward European states. He described them as "weak" and "decaying," arguing that Europe "doesn't know what to do" in addressing the major challenges it faces.

Trump did not stop there. In an unusual statement that appears to constitute blatant interference in Europe's internal political affairs, he made clear that he would endorse European leaders whose views align with his own, such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

Although the likelihood that this legislation will lead to an actual US withdrawal from NATO is extremely low, its implications should not be underestimated. The legislative effort reflects a mindset that is gaining increasing traction in the United States – namely, that the time has come for the country to focus more narrowly on its national interests. From this perspective, the United States will henceforth evaluate its relations with other countries primarily based on how much they contribute to advancing American national interests.

Numerous voices, including within the American Right, express growing discomfort with what they perceive as an excessively close relationship between the United States and Israel. The highly popular right-wing commentator Tucker Carlson has become a powerful spokesperson for this sentiment.

In anticipation of the forthcoming meeting – the fifth this year – between Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, it is essential to make one point clear: Israel should not be complacent about the close strategic cooperation that currently exists between Israel and the United States. Powerful currents threaten to significantly weaken this cooperation, and Israel must act with great sophistication to counter this emerging challenge.

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