

Taking the US-Israel Alliance to New Heights

A Roadmap for Revitalizing a Mutually Beneficial US-Israel Partnership

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Joint Exercise of the US and Israeli Air Forces
(Photo Credit: IDF Spokesperson)



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המכון לביטחון לאומי ולאסטרטגיה ציונית
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INTRODUCTION

The election of President Donald Trump to a second term presents an opportunity to take the US-Israel relationship to entirely new heights, in ways that advance the vital interests of both the United States and Israel. If the tremendous potential of the next four years is realized, the security, resilience and prosperity of both the US and Israel will grow exponentially, American technological leadership will be bolstered, and the Middle East will be put on the path towards a future of warm peace.

By deepening the US-Israel alliance, and advancing regional integration based on the principle of Peace through Strength, the Middle East can move from a reality of war and instability to one of cooperation and mutual prosperity. This will greatly decrease the likelihood of US troops becoming actively engaged in regional conflicts, enable the shift of US assets to other theatres, advance US-led economic development and technological breakthroughs, and counter the designs of hostile actors in the Middle East.

The following paper presents four key areas for strengthening US-Israel cooperation in the coming years, in line with the critical interests of the American and Israeli peoples. It then describes concrete steps and measures to be taken in each area, in order to realize their full potential. While these four areas certainly do not encompass the full range of strategic issues related to the US-Israel relationship, they are critical linchpins which can catalyze historic changes and produce far-reaching benefits for the US, Israel and Middle East. The four areas are:

1. Enhancing US-Israel defense, intelligence and technological cooperation.
2. Countering the shared threats from Iran and its proxies.
3. Expanding regional cooperation and the Abraham Accords.
4. Countering and defunding anti-American, anti-Israeli and pro-terror activity in international organizations.

1. ENHANCING US-ISRAEL DEFENSE, INTELLIGENCE AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION



Israel's Iron Dome System, developed in cooperation with the United States.
(Photo Credit: Shutterstock/Hamara)

US-Israel defense and intelligence cooperation plays a key role in defending American and Israeli security and vital interests in the face of radical regimes and terrorist organizations. US-Israel collaboration on defense technologies helps keep America and Israel's soldiers and citizens safe, and their borders and cities secure.

The more that the US empowers Israel to face shared enemies through defense and intelligence cooperation, the less US troops will need to be directly involved in regional conflicts. In addition, the more that the US-Israel defense partnership is seen as truly ironclad, the more likely it is that other Middle East countries will choose to ally with the US, rather than with China or Russia. This will also increase the chances of Middle East countries choosing to normalize relations with Israel.

While serving as a deterrent to conflict, US-Israel defense cooperation also enables the accelerated achievement of Israel's war goals when armed conflicts do break out. Conversely, the official and unofficial arms embargoes and delays imposed by the Biden Administration on Israel served to prolong conflict, and to raise doubts in the region regarding the reliability of the US as a steadfast ally. While Israel will always seek to defend itself by itself, American support can enable Israel to win decisive victories in as rapid a manner as possible.

In addition to military predominance, the United States will need to maintain global technological preeminence in order to remain ahead in international great power competition. Israel is one of the most innovative tech hubs in the world, and the highly-complex military conflicts in which Israel has been engaged since October 7 will only serve to encourage further technological breakthroughs. Deepening US-Israel cooperation in advanced and emerging technologies will enable both countries to remain at the forefront of critical technological developments. This in turn will help ensure secure, prosperous and healthy societies in the US and Israel, and American leadership on the global scale. Among the fields with high potential for enhanced US-Israel cooperation are AI, Quantum Computing, Water, Sustainable Development and Health.

Key Steps:

- Issue a Presidential Executive Order declaring that it is US policy to grant licenses and other export approvals for Defense Articles and Services to Israel, and directing the State Department and other relevant agencies to process such approvals in an expedited manner.
- Raise the level of US defense and intelligence cooperation with Israel to that enjoyed by countries that are part of the Five Eyes alliance (US, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand).
- Expand cooperation and joint R&D on cutting-edge military technologies, including high-energy laser systems, space and satellite technologies, unmanned air, ground, surface and undersea vehicles, hypersonic weapons, military AI, and offensive and defensive cyber capabilities. The US and Israel should also work together on increasing defense manufacturing capacities via the implementation of Industry 4.0 technologies, and on securing supply chains for critical defense materials.
- Shift the emphasis in negotiations over the next US-Israel Memorandum of Understanding from US Foreign Military Financing to US-Israel joint ventures and collaborative partnerships, while preserving Israel's ability to access advanced technologies and platforms. Incentivize partnerships between US and Israeli military and defense companies, including defense-focused start-ups and SMEs.
- Consider adding Israel to NATO's Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII) and granting Israel 'Enhanced Opportunity Partner' status.
- Explore the feasibility of repositioning certain US assets currently positioned in Qatar, particularly given Qatar's proximity to Iran, and its continued support for Islamist terror groups and incitement.

- Establish a jointly-funded US-Israel Artificial Intelligence Center, in order to advance shared global leadership in AI through cooperation between government agencies, institutions of higher education, private sector entities and innovation hubs.
- Advance a strategic cooperation agreement between the US National Quantum Coordination Office and the Israel National Quantum Initiative.
- Deepen US-Israel water cooperation, by expanding the MoU between the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Israeli Ministry of Environmental Protection to include additional entities and areas of collaboration.
- Establish a strategic US-Israel dialogue and cooperative framework in the fields of precision medicine, digital health, drug development and bio-convergence.
- Increase opportunities for US-Israel bilateral R&D and scientific cooperation by expanding the BARD, BIRD and BSF frameworks, with an emphasis on creating opportunities for collaboration between young scientists.

2. COUNTERING THE SHARED THREATS FROM IRAN AND ITS PROXIES



Iranian Military Forces Display Fake American and Israeli 'Coffins' as Part of Iran's 'Quds Day'
(Photo credit Shutterstock/saeediex)

Iran is the primary source of terror, destruction and instability in the Middle East. Without Iran, Hamas would not have been able to carry out its October 7 massacre, Hezbollah would not have been able to build up its deadly arsenal of missiles and rockets, and the Houthis would not be able to disrupt global shipping. Iran and its terror proxies threaten numerous countries in the region, especially those that have made peace with Israel or are considering doing so.

At the same time, Iran is continuing its drive for nuclear weapons and its development of advanced ballistic missiles, while becoming a central supplier of weapons and military technology to Russia. Iran has developed a strategic partnership with China and is supporting Chinese efforts to expand the CCP's influence in the Middle East. The Ayatollah regime also continues to brutally repress human rights and pro-democracy protests at home.

Middle East stability, peace and prosperity require that the current Iranian regime either change its behavior entirely or be replaced. The way to advance such a goal, while reducing the chances of intensified armed conflict in the region, is through a maximum pressure campaign on Iran. This campaign should combine far-reaching primary and secondary sanctions with a credible military threat and a willingness

to carry out kinetic strikes when necessary. If the maximum pressure campaign fails to achieve its objectives, the US and Israel should consider carrying out more extensive strikes to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities and other strategic sites, such as military bases, energy facilities and ports. In parallel, avenues for supporting those in Iran demanding freedom and opposing the regime should be explored.

Iran's efforts to foment regional instability and wars are carried out both directly and together with its terror proxies in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen and additional countries. In parallel to steps aimed at changing Iran's destabilizing and destructive behavior, Middle East peace will require firm measures and sanctions aimed at degrading and deterring Iran's regional proxies.

Key Steps:

- Expand and fully enforce primary and secondary sanctions on Iran's petroleum, petrochemical, financial, military, mining, construction, manufacturing, technological and automotive sectors, as well as on R&D institutions which support such sectors.
- Aggressively enact and enforce sanctions on the 'ghost fleet' transporting Iranian oil to Asia, and on any entity involved in the manufacture, sale, or transfer of Iranian military equipment or technology to other countries.
- Impose sanctions on any financial institution that uses Iran's System for Electronic Payment Messaging (SEPM) to verify or conduct a transaction. Terminate or prohibit any accounts of offending financial institutions in the US.
- Sanction all entities related to the IRGC or involved in providing assistance to Iran's terror proxies, as well as financial institutions which provide such entities with services.
- Urge European allies to trigger the Snapback mechanism in order to reimpose pre-JCPOA sanctions on Iran, and urge the EU to designate the IRGC in its entirety as a terrorist entity.
- Conduct joint military exercises involving the US, Israel and potentially other CENTCOM partners, simulating strikes on Iran's nuclear sites and other hardened targets.
- Expand US and Israeli cooperation on cyber operations targeting Iranian nuclear, military and IRGC-related facilities.
- Expedite, to the degree possible, the delivery of Israel's November 2024 order of F-15IA fighter aircraft, and the upgrading of its existing F-15I fighters.
- The US and Israel should both declare that, going forward, as a matter of policy, Tehran will be held responsible for the actions of its proxies.

- Apply harsh economic and diplomatic sanctions on Iran's proxies in the region, their financial networks, and any entity involved in hosting or providing them services. Ensure that no US funding reaches these proxies directly or indirectly, particularly through the diversion of US or international aid to countries such as Iraq and Lebanon.
- Establish a robust US-led global coalition to ensure that international waterways, particularly the Red Sea, remain open to maritime trade. Insist that regional countries which benefit from this coalition, such as Egypt, commit appropriate resources to its operation.
- Immediately add the Houthis to the US list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Encourage other countries to follow suit.
- React swiftly and forcefully to any threats from Iranian proxies to US forces in the region.
- Prevent Iran from establishing proxy forces in Sudan or other Sahel countries by strengthening US ties with these countries, provided they distance themselves from Iran, China and other anti-American actors.
- Expand sanctions against Iranian officials responsible for violations of human rights and the repression of freedoms in Iran.
- Support Iranian citizens and civil society groups fighting for freedom, liberty and human rights in Iran, including by ensuring that they have access to continuous and secure communications and internet.



3. EXPANDING REGIONAL COOPERATION AND THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS



Signing of the Abraham Accords on the White House Lawn
(Photo Credit Shutterstock/Noamgalai)

There is today tremendous potential for expanding regional cooperation, integration and normalization, in the spirit of the historic Abraham Accords. Strengthening regional integration will advance US-aligned economic prosperity and technological breakthroughs, promote stability, accelerate conflict resolution, deter Iran and counter the increasing influence of China in the Middle East. Enhanced regional cooperation in the defense sphere will enable US allies to defend themselves and advance their shared interests with the US, while reducing the resources which the US must expend in the region.

It is important to focus both on strengthening bilateral ties between Israel and its Arab and Muslim neighbors, and on advancing ambitious multilateral initiatives with transformative impacts on the regional and global levels. These initiatives include large-scale projects in the economic, military, technological, food and water security spheres.

The economic growth and technological breakthroughs generated by multilateral regional integration will enhance prosperity, bolster resilience and improve lives in the United States and across the Middle East. They will also serve to counter-balance competing multilateral initiatives led by China, Russia and Iran in the region.

Key Steps:

- Advance the India-Middle East-Europe (IMEC) Corridor, in line with the September 2023 MoU signed by the United States, in order to advance regional trade, transportation, communications and energy resilience, and to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). IMEC-related investment targets, including within the framework of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) or similar vehicles, should include border crossings, railways, roads, sea ports and dry ports, fiber-optic cables, and energy infrastructure.
- Assist all involved governments in overcoming the geopolitical, regulatory and security hurdles hampering the expansion of overland trade and connectivity.
- Shape a US-led Middle East Defense Alliance (MEDA), which should include expanded US-Israel-Arab cooperation on air and missile defense, counter-drone technologies, space and satellite defense, maritime security, cyber security, homeland security, joint military exercises, enhanced intelligence sharing, and shared defense R&D and manufacturing. A country's inclusion in MEDA should be predicated on that country ensuring that its defense, intelligence and other strategic systems are disconnected from, and protected against, actors hostile to the United States.
- Promote ground-breaking water and food security partnerships between Abraham Accords countries. These should include multi-partner agricultural initiatives in Sudan, which could transform the country from a food insecure nation into a major food exporter. Such initiatives should also include water technology projects aimed at assisting Abraham Accords countries in meeting the challenges of drought and water scarcity, potentially through the Oman-based Middle East Desalination Research Center.
- Reestablish the Abraham Fund to support Abraham Accords-related projects. The Abraham Fund should be a public-private partnership bringing together diverse actors from Abraham Accords members and other countries set to benefit from enhanced regional cooperation.
- Strengthen and expand the I2U2 framework, encompassing India, Israel, the UAE and USA, including through convening a four-way Leaders Summit, providing concrete assistance to joint projects in the fields of space, energy, water, agriculture, transportation, defense and health, and establishing platforms for collaboration between business entities, academic institutions, governmental bodies and civil society actors.
- Expand the Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) program to encompass additional areas related to innovation and sustainable technologies.
- Launch initiatives aimed at promoting interfaith dialogue, expanding tolerance education, and countering antisemitism and incitement in regional education

and media. Build on the important efforts already being conducted by institutions such as the UAE's Abrahamic Family House and Manara Centre, and Bahrain's King Hamad Global Center for Peaceful Coexistence.

- Develop action plans for advancing bilateral ties between Israel and a broad range of Arab and Muslim countries in Asia and Africa, including a mapping of the countries' needs and shared interests with the US and Israel.
- Fulfill all commitments made by previous Administrations to current Abraham Accords countries.
- Impose economic and diplomatic pressure on Qatar until it ceases propagating anti-normalization, anti-Israel and antisemitic incitement, and ends all support for terror groups.



4. COUNTERING AND DEFUNDING ANTI-AMERICAN, ANTI-ISRAELI AND PRO-TERROR ACTIVITY IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS



United Nations Headquarters
(Photo Credit: Shutterstock/Victor_IS)

The UN and its agencies have become a central arena not just for anti-Israel, but also anti-American and pro-terror activity. Nevertheless, the wasteful and corrupt UN system continues to enjoy billions in American taxpayer funding (more than \$18 billion in 2022.)

International courts, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), have been weaponized in order to threaten the ability of democracies to fight terror. While the ICC has currently issued arrest warrants for Israel's Prime Minister and former Defense Minister, it threatens American officials and soldiers as well. This despite the fact that neither the United States nor Israel is a party to the Rome Statute or the ICC. In fact, the Court's assertion of jurisdiction in the case of a non-member state such as Israel not only contradicts US positions regarding the status of the Palestinian Authority, but is also an assault on the very concept of state sovereignty.

The steps against Israel at the UN, ICC, ICJ and other international institutions are helping fuel the global rise of antisemitism, including the antisemitic BDS movement.

The US should end this waste of taxpayer money by defunding all international institutions and bodies that promote anti-American and anti-Israel agendas, serve to perpetuate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or aim to make it more difficult for democracies to defend themselves against terror. The US should also place far-reaching sanctions on the ICC in order to counter the weaponization of the Court and its violations of state sovereignty, and take appropriate measures to combat the antisemitic BDS campaign. Additionally, the US should end foreign aid to all countries and entities that support, incite or are infiltrated by terror.

Key Steps:

- Enact and enforce sanctions on employees and agents of the International Criminal Court and their immediate family members, including the blocking of property (in accordance with President Trump's Executive Order 13928 from June 2020), denial of visas and admissions, and other relevant sanctions.
- Enact and enforce sanctions on countries which cooperate or support the ICC's actions against the US or against US Allies that are not members of the Court.
- Actively encourage countries to leave the ICC and cease their funding of it.
- Defund all UN bodies that promote anti-American, anti-Israel or pro-terror agendas and interests. Permanently end all funding and support to UNRWA, whose main purpose is to perpetuate and exacerbate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and which has been infiltrated by terrorists. Declare that the US opposes the sui generis criteria used by UNRWA to define Palestinian refugees, and that the same criteria used by the UNHCR in other parts of the world should be applied to the Palestinians.
- Permanently end all funding and support to the ICJ and encourage other countries to do so as well.
- Additional UN bodies that should be considered for direct or indirect defunding include UNHRC, OCHA, UNESCO, UN Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian Territories, CEIRPP, UNISPAL, UN Division of Palestinian Rights and the anti-Israel departments of the UN Department of Political and Peace-Building Affairs, Department of Global Communications, and Department of Public Information.
- Allow American victims of terror to sue international organizations that provide resources to US-designated terrorist groups and that would otherwise be immune pursuant to the International Organization Immunity Act.
- Counter the systemic culture of anti-Israel delegitimization at the UN by nominating Israel for a WEOG Security Council seat.
- BDS - Prohibit federal agencies from contracting with or investing in companies engaged in a boycott of Israel.

- Expand existing US federal anti-boycott laws, which prohibit participation in a boycott of a US ally by a foreign government, to prohibit participation in a boycott led by an international organization as well.
- Adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism across all relevant federal agencies and bodies.
- Explicitly return to the position enunciated by the first Trump Administration that “The establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not per se inconsistent with international law”. Ensure that this determination finds expression in all US government activities and departments as they relate to both cooperation with, and sanctions against, Israeli entities.



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The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author.