

The American Jewish Community and Israel's National Security: Main Insights and Policy Recommendations

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Alienation between Israel and the Jewish community in the United States has long term ramifications for Israel's national security; Israel's identity as the nation-state of the Jewish people; the security of the entire Jewish people, and the internal cohesion of Jewish communities in the United States and Israel alike. The following pages present the central insights of a comprehensive research study conducted in 2017-2018 by INSS in cooperation with the Ruderman Family Foundation, and published in a 300-page book in Hebrew, on the relations between the two communities from a national security prism. We begin by analyzing the contribution of the Jewish community in the United States to Israel's national security, and in the second part, move to discuss the relationship between the two entities. In the third section, we relate to the strategic problem that surfaced from the research findings and propose an organizing concept for a broad systemic response. The research concludes with policy recommendations, including focused suggestions for the decision makers in Israel, its foreign affairs and defense systems, and the leadership of US Jewry.

We hope that the approach presented herein will serve as a starting point for the road ahead, and for a detailed planning process at the base of future action by both communities.



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) at the AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., March 26, 2019. Photo: Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg via Getty Images

The American Jewish Community and Israel's National Security

Since its establishment, the State of Israel has had unique security needs stemming from its physical inferiority in the hostile Arab and Muslim area in which it exists. In order to contend with its fundamental geographic, demographic, political, and economic resources asymmetry, Israel developed a unique security concept leveraging its human and economic assets to establish a qualitative technological-security edge over its rivals and to attain regional freedom of operation, while leveraging its network of connections and relations both in the international and regional arenas.

The implementation of Israel's security concept requires an alternative strategic depth compensating for its lack of physical strategic depth, enabling it to expand the resource and support base needed to advance its standing and its goals both regionally and internationally, and to afford it breathing space in both tangible and "soft" dimensions. The United States superpower support is the main pillar in Israel's strategic depth, enabling it to safeguard its existence and security and to promote its goals. The Jewish people in the diaspora, and

particularly the Jewish community in the United States, are a critical component of Israel's strategic depth, as a human and resource reserve, as a support base for international legitimacy, and as a key player in public and political affairs.

Although there is a tendency to attribute the influential capability of the Jewish community in the United States to the power of the pro-Israeli lobby and its influence on Capitol Hill and in the White House, pro-Israel lobbying organizations are only one part of a well-established organizational and community infrastructure. In essence, people, organizations, and communities who support Israel act, separately or in concert, to support Israel in the United States and in the international system. The ability to organize in such a manner is perhaps related to the American Jewish community's contribution to the United States in the public, political, economic, and cultural spheres. Noteworthy in this respect is that Jewish representation and contribution to the United States establishment far surpasses the community's ratio within the general American population (only about 2 percent of all residents of the United States).

The American Jewish community's contribution to the fortification of the relationship between Israel and the United States should not be measured by speculations about the influence of Jews on decision making processes in the administration or in the Congress, but rather by the Jewish community's ability, in reaching out to the United States leadership and public at large, to emphasize the foundation of values and interests shared by both countries. The connection

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between Israel and the American Jewish community, and the mere perception of the American Jewish community as influential in Washington, can also be argued to contribute to Israel's security and to its international standing. This is reflected, *inter alia*, by the attempts of countries and international players to develop and strengthen their connections with Israel as a means to obtain a foothold and influence in the United States (i.e., the common perception that "the road to Washington passes through Jerusalem").

Beyond this, an important and tangible contribution of the American Jewish community to Israel's national security can be found in this community's vast philanthropic undertaking. Although Jewish American philanthropy was Israel's lifeline in Israel's state-building period, nowadays contributions continue to be significant and are assessed at an annual \$2 billion. To exemplify, in recent decades, this philanthropy played a substantial part in the development of the educational and health sectors in Israel, and more recently in strengthening Israel's civil society.

As such, the American Jewish community can be said to contribute to the following components of Israel's national security:

1. **Fortifying the "special relations" and the strategic cooperation with the United States** by emphasizing the shared values and interests between the countries; working to increase the general public's knowledge and support for Israel, and lobbying for policies that will not peril Israel's national security.
2. **Highlighting the importance of US commitment to Israel's security.** This, arguably, indirectly contributes to US military assistance to Israel, including the sustaining of Israel's qualitative military edge (QME).
3. **Contributing to strengthening Israel's international and regional standing, in part by fighting against Israel's delegitimization.** This includes addressing activities geared toward deepening the rift between Israel and diaspora Jewry, and undermining the security of Jews outside of Israel.



Friends of the IDF Western Region Gala, Beverly Hills, California, November 3, 2018. Photo: Michael Kovac/WireImage

4. **Reinforcing Israel's economic, scientific, and technological power**, through investments, trade, and the promotion of economic cooperative efforts with Israel and Israeli corporations.
5. **Buttressing Israel's functional and social resilience**, through philanthropic activities and the initiation of projects in Israel.

Simultaneously, however, there has been a gradual decline in the contribution of the American Jewish community to Israel's national security. We relate this erosion to the following causes:

1. Polarization of **American society and the US political system** even on issues that are perceived to have been consensual over decades, such as support for Israel by both political parties.
2. **The slow erosion of the United States' international standing in recent years.** The rise of China, Russia's return to the global arena, and the United States policy of shifting focus to domestic issues at the expense of international issues are indicative of a trend of transition from the unipolar post-Cold War era to a multipolar world.

3. **Israel is stronger than ever and is gradually reducing its dependence** on the United States and its Jewish community, particularly with respect to direct financial support. Nevertheless, there appears to be no substitute for the United States' strategic, political, and security support of Israel, both nowadays and in the foreseeable future.
4. **In recent decades, the Jewish communities in Israel and in the United States have developed in opposite directions in terms of politics, values, and religion.** In Israel, the religious parties, particularly the Orthodox sector, and the right wing political camp are gradually strengthening, whereas in the United States the Jewish community is primarily non-Orthodox (with large Reform and Conservative denominations), has pluralist stances toward religiosity, and traditionally votes for the more liberal Democratic party. These trends, coupled with the continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the overt affinity between Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump, and the broad support that President Trump's policies receive among the Israeli public have become thorny for Jewish Americans.

Although disagreements and tensions have been a regular feature of the relations between Israel and the Jewish community in the United States over the past 70 years, nowadays, these frictions have amounted to the erosion of the pro-Zionist and pro-Israeli consensus among Jewish Americans. To this must be added the fracturing of bipartisan support for the State of Israel; the gradual loss of young Americans' support for Israel, mainly among the liberal-progressives, and the fact that emerging communities, such as the Hispanics and the Afro-Americans, are either oblivious to Israel or tend not to support it. These trends are liable to lead to an erosion of the US public and political support for Israel in the medium to long term.

In recent years, there has been a growing tendency in Israel to perceive the Evangelical community in the United States (numbering about eighty million people) as a possible alternative base of support to

compensate for the rift between Israel and the American Jewish community. Evangelical Christians constitute President Trump's largest political base, and most of them are also enthusiastic supporters of the State of Israel. Perceiving the Evangelical community as a substitute to the Jewish community's support is perceived as "abandoning" the American Jewish community, with all the ramifications that such a policy entails for Israel's mission and identity as the homeland of the Jewish people (thus transforming the state to "the state of the Israeli people"). Moreover, the Evangelical alternative cannot provide a response to Israel's greatest challenge in the United States – the erosion of its base of support among liberal-progressive populations, whose numbers and power are steadily growing. In fact, it is the American Jewish community, which is largely rooted in the liberal, progressive camp that can potentially mediate and assist Israel in reaching out to these communities.

Israel's relationship with America's Jewish community is, therefore, crucial not only by virtue of Israel's historic moral commitment to the Jewish people but also due to the substantial ramifications that it has on Israel's identity as the nation-state of the Jewish people, on Israel's national security, and on the future and the existence of the Jewish people as a whole. Moreover, the power and standing of the Jewish community in the United States and its relationship with Israel are a necessary condition for preserving the "special relations" between Israel and the United States.

Nowadays, external threats can be perceived as converging toward three focal points with relevance to the Jewish people: the security of Jews in the diaspora; the cohesion between Israel and diaspora Jewry; and Israel's legitimacy as the state of the Jewish people. The connection between rising anti-

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Semitism, felt mainly by diaspora Jews, and the phenomenon of the delegitimization of Israel are two challenges that encompass opportunities to revive cooperative efforts between Israel and the American Jewish community toward a joint cause.

The Relations between the Communities

The relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community is tied to deep trends and changes in the international system, Israel, and the United States, and in each of the two communities.

Our working assumption is that we live in a dynamic world, with tensions between trends, where events, actions, and policies in the short and medium term affect deep-rooted trends in the long term, and we perceive current trends as malleable and non-deterministic.

The Global and Regional Environment

Nowadays, humankind is caught between a universalist approach and values, such as liberalism and globalization, and a particularistic approach and values, such as nationalism. This tension creates conflicting trends of seclusion and the building of walls on the one hand and of openness and the building of bridges on the other hand, with many societies vacillating between the two polar opposites.

The State of Israel was established on the basis of a delicate balance between its being a particularistic nation-state of the Jewish people and its being a democracy based on universal values of liberty, justice, and equality. Similarly to other minority groups, the Jewish community in the United States constantly needs to balance between preserving the uniqueness of the community and its particularistic identity, and its integration and adoption of universal values characteristic of American society at large.

This internal challenge takes place in a larger ecosystem typified by global trends of radicalization; the penetration of ideological fringe groups into mainstream discourse, and social, ideological, and political polarization. The strengthening of the radicals challenges

the steadfastness of democracy and its institutions in Israel, the United States, and many other countries around the world.

One of the byproducts of the general polarization of the American public and political system is the breaking of the historic consensus and bipartisan support on Israel-related issues. While support for Israel among the conservative-Republican population in the United States appears to strengthen, it appears to be dropping among liberal-Democratic groups.

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The Internal Environment

While the Jewish community in the United States is a small minority, it is well-established and has successfully integrated into American society where equal opportunities and individual liberties are at the state's core. The secret to the Jewish community's success is its ability to integrate into the highest echelons of American society through education, excellence, and hard work – all the while preserving (to differing extents) its unique communal characteristics. A central challenge associated with Jewish integration is the erosion of Jewish identity and the significant rise in assimilation of American Jews

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(the rate of intermarriage is almost 60 percent since the turn of the century), posing a threat to the community's sustainment and cohesion. Addressing this challenge requires a perpetual balancing act between preserving the community's Jewish characteristics on the one hand and safeguarding its openness and integration into American society at-large on the other.

A prominent feature of America's Jewish community is its diverse and pluralistic (although sometimes divisive) nature, encompassing multiple religious and ideological movements, and independent and differentiated local communities. In general, Jewish Americans are mostly non-Orthodox (about 90 percent of the entire community), and tend to hold liberal or moderate viewpoints and political positions that are typical of the political center-left (about 70 percent traditionally support the Democratic party). Polls also show that most Jewish Americans have an emotional connection to Israel (about 70 percent) and perceive this connection to be a component of their Jewish identity (about 85 percent).¹

Another demographic trend is the gradual shrinking of the Jewish Conservative and Reform movements in the United States, alongside a rise in the number of Orthodox Jews on the one end, and Jews who do not identify with any religious denomination on the other end. Alienation from Jewish life, characterizing mainly millennials, is accompanied by waning community involvement and a minimal sense of connection to Israel. Simultaneously, in other cases where the connection to Israel is cultivated and preserved, the result is growing criticism, or estrangement and hostility toward Israel. The weakening of the community's established infrastructure and a generational shift add to the complex challenges it is facing.

As opposed to the Jewish community in the United States, Jewish Israelis have an absolute majority in their country. Israel's location in a hostile region coupled with the longstanding Jewish psyche of

1 The data is based on Pew Research (2013): A Portrait of Jewish Americans, Pew Research Center, October 2013, <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey>.

a persecuted people has resulted in heightened importance related to security and defense. Notwithstanding this ethos, Israel's economic prosperity and military superiority have enabled the public discourse to open up to deliberating challenges in the domestic arena, including social disparities and polarization among Israelis – positioning these as challenges relating to national security. Central challenges to the State of Israel nowadays, beyond external security threats, are associated with the tension between its being a Jewish state and a democracy; the repercussions of the continuing conflict with the Palestinians, and finding the balance between different sectors of Israeli society (i.e., the “four tribes” model described by Israel's President Reuven Rivlin: the ultra-Orthodox sector, the national-Zionist religious sector, the secular sector, and the Arab sector).

Israeli society, similar to American society, is heterogeneous and diverse, but unlike the American Jewish community, there is little representation of non-Orthodox denominations, and a large group of Jews in Israel is secular (about 45 percent). On the political axis, Jewish Israelis are more conservative than Jewish Americans and mostly support center-right political stances. The two communities also differ in terms of demographics, with the Jewish population in Israel significantly growing.

Notwithstanding these contrasting trends, the two communities have much in common: both are prosperous and successful, and both are encountering internal predicaments concerning their identity and purpose: for Jews in Israel – preserving and updating the Zionist vision as a foundation

Both the American Jewish community and Israeli society are encountering internal predicaments concerning their identity and purpose: for Jews in Israel – preserving and updating the Zionist vision as a foundation for the future of the Jewish and democratic state; for Jews in the United States – preserving and updating their Jewish identity as a foundation for the continuity of the community.

for the future of the Jewish and democratic state; for Jews in the United States – preserving and updating their Jewish identity as a foundation for the continuity of the community. It appears that while both communities are aware of these challenges, neither is driven by a sense of an impending crisis and neither is organizing to respond to these challenges.

Efforts that do occur and can potentially and partially mend some of the gaps are people to people interactions (in established programs such as Taglit and Masa) and initiatives in the digital sphere. In fact, despite the deep-seated diverging demographic trends and tensions

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on the level of the political echelon, people to people interactions between members of the Israeli and American Jewish communities are more abundant and frequent than ever before. Perhaps this is the reason for the relative lowering of historic barriers that used to shape the relations between the two Jewish communities, such as the idea of “negating the diaspora,” which characterized the central Zionist

movement since its founding. Other bridging factors are the organizational strengthening of the Israeli-American community and growing religious openness among Israeli civil-society (even though the state Orthodox establishment has thus far blocked substantial change).

A Shared Heritage but Different Stories?

Despite ad hoc or established programs to mitigate the gaps, the two communities appear to be gravitating toward different directions in several dimensions. These revolve primarily around the following issues: **religion and state**, at the core of which is the question of Israel's recognition of the American Jewish community's religious

pluralism; the issue of **shared values**, at the center of which are the values of liberal democracy, and primarily, the rights of minorities and individual liberties; and the issue of **Israel's character as a state striving for peace**, at the crux of which is the deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Israel's policies vis-à-vis the territories.

In addition, Israelis to a large extent perceive Israel as the center of the Jewish people and the Jewish world, with the diaspora perceived as Israel's periphery. In contrast, the American Jewish community is more inclined to perceive the relations between the two Jewish centers (in Israel and in the United States) as reciprocal and symmetrical. There are historic tensions and grudges on both sides, with feelings of mutual patronage and underlying tensions between the short term instrumental approach according to which the relations provide Israel with immediate advantages in capital, support, and influence; and the long term value-based approach that scrutinizes these relations through introspection on the future of the Jewish people.

Hence, among the conceptual challenges that require attention, discourse, and ultimately a response are the following issues:

1. **The perception among some constituencies of Jews in Israel (primarily the religious-Zionists)** that the American Jewish community is of lessening importance and relevance to Israel. This is because of the alienation that Reform and Conservative Jews feel toward Israel; this constituency's declining size (owing to assimilation); and the paradigm that Israel's natural partner in the United States is the Evangelical Christian community.
2. **The perception among the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish community in Israel** that negates the "Jewishness" of non-Orthodox Jewish movements in the United States and considers them the greatest threat to the survival of the Jewish people.
3. **The perception among some American Jewish groups** whereby Israel is distancing itself from their values and worldviews and thus no longer has a place as a component in their identity. This implies, at a minimum, a disregard for Israel and, at most,

alienation from it to the point of objecting to Israel's existence in its current format as the homeland of the Jewish people.

The changes in attitudes are extremely disturbing. It appears that American Jews are finding it increasingly difficult to separate their emotional connection to the State of Israel from their political positions regarding the Israeli government's policies. Some Jews in the United States have developed harsh feelings toward Israel, to the point that Israel has become a divisive factor and a source of major controversy within the American Jewish community. As we close the second decade of the twenty-first century, it appears that Jewish Americans and Israelis have reached a seminal moment in the relationship, reflective of the future of their communities. While each community is an unprecedented success story, both are experiencing wide disparities in their paths and identities; are preoccupied with internal issues; and are moving in different directions.

From a Lack of Familiarity to Policy-Shaping

Evident in both Jewish communities – mainly in Israel, but also in the United States – is the lack of familiarity and considerable ignorance regarding one another. Approximately half of American

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American Jewish community in strengthening these relations or in contributing to Israel's security. Israeli media coverage and public discourse about diaspora Jewry in general, and American Jewry in particular, are relatively sparse – generally triggered by tensions and crises, and completely disconnected from discourse regarding national security. This is despite the fact that certain professional circles, including individuals in the decision making echelon in Israel, are well aware of the importance that America's Jewish community has for Israel; and despite the reasonable expectation that the Israeli security establishment would have included American Jewry as a consideration in the state's national security paradigm. These trends can perhaps be explained by the fact that Israel's policy agenda is mostly dominated by domestic issues, and the many challenges that pose more immediate and tangible threats. Importantly, there is no official, semi-official, or non-government entity in Israel that represents the interests of the American Jewish community or of diaspora Jewry in general in state decision making processes, particularly on issues without direct connection to the relations between the two communities.

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The Strategic Problem

Our research illustrates that the Jewish community in the United States has made instrumental contributions to the establishment of the State of Israel, its formation, development, and national security. We perceive the future of this community and its connection to Israel to be crucial components of Israel's mission as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and to the national security of the Jewish people as a whole.

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If these trends continue, they are likely to generate a series of medium and long term risks to the State of Israel and to the Jewish people:

1. **Damage to Israel's special relationship with the United States.**
2. **Jeopardizing of the purpose, character, and identity of the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.** To a great extent, these elements depend upon the intensity of Israel's connection with the Jewish communities in the diaspora, particularly in the United States, and upon the extent of these communities' support of Israel.
3. **Negative impact on American Jewry's contribution to Israel's national security,** and more specifically to Israel's strategic depth, which compensates for its size constraints and expands its security margins and defensive freedom of action. American Jewry constitutes a large human reserve and a foundation of value-based, public, economic, and political support for the State of Israel, both within the United States and in the international arena.
4. **A threat to the cohesiveness of the global Jewish community to the point of a break in the relations between its two major centers** in Israel and in the United States, along with major challenges facing each community separately.

Because the leadership echelon in Israel is cognizant of the importance of the connection with diaspora Jewry but prioritizes what is happening in Israel itself, a systemic and long term change in the attitude toward United States Jewry necessitates a profound change in the mindsets of the Israeli public. This is based on the assumption that should the political leadership grasp this issue as important to its electorate, its weight in national decision making processes will increase.

Nowadays, various approaches, actions, and methods are either discussed or implemented in order to mitigate the gaps and provide a response to the problems specified above. An effective response will require strategic, systemic, and long term efforts. To this end, we present a comprehensive ideological framework based on a **strategic goal**

that defines the desired future, followed by an **organizing concept** that oversees the course of action in service of the strategic goal.

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The Strategic Goal and the Organizing Concept

The strategic goal: **preserving, strengthening, and fortifying the relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community, as a crucial component of Israel's national security, the future and security of the Jewish people, and the cohesiveness of Jewish communities in the United States and Israel.**

The organizing concept: **systemic, ongoing, coordinated, and joint action by the State of Israel, Israeli civil society, and the Jewish community in the United States, to rehabilitate the strong relations between the two communities and mutually help one another contend with internal challenges.**

This systemic course of action should include the following layers, which will be adjusted to the characteristics of the communities and the various groups comprising them:

1. Promoting education to reinforce mutual awareness, familiarity, and knowledge.
2. Organizing personal and group experiences (particularly visits and delegations) to gain familiarity, develop awareness, and shape identity.
3. Increasing the number of joint encounters as a means to forge contacts, shape identity, and acquire shared experiences.
4. Institutionalizing and expanding channels of official and informal dialogue and consultations.
5. Designing common goals and identity components, and cultivating joint narratives.
6. Harnessing people for joint action on the local, sectoral, and national levels.

These measures should particularly target millennials of both communities, by integrating the following components:

1. Inter-generational discourse and inter-community discourse.
2. The establishment of institutionalized frameworks for the leaderships of both sides, to direct efforts, channel resources, and build suitable communication platforms to facilitate ongoing communication between and within the two communities.
3. Activities at the national, sectoral, local, and inter-personal levels.
4. Tangible dimensions combined with online activities.

A broad and systemic course of action of this type should be a guiding, synchronizing, connecting, and enabling entity in terms of resources and infrastructure. It requires leadership by persons (officials and civil society) with wide-scale public and political recognition on both

sides of the ocean and with the capability of serving as a source of inspiration for scattered efforts in this field.

One possible format is a steering committee that will lead the joint action, representing broad population segments with assistance from a designated headquarters or “national administration.” Given such a structure, efforts must continue to be carried out in a dispersed manner through existing organizations, alongside new ones.

We propose the following basic principles as a compass for moving forward:

1. Jewish and democratic Israel is the national homeland of the entire Jewish people.
2. The Jewish people will continue living in independent Jewish communities in the diaspora.
3. Israel’s connection to Jewish communities in the diaspora is essential to the existence and future of the Jewish people.
4. Jewish peoplehood (the spectrum of collective identities that reflects a belonging to the Jewish people) is a wide and open tent with room for a variety of voices with a shared foundation.
5. All of the above requires mutual acquaintance, concern, responsibility and engagement.

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Recommendations for Action

Transforming the strategic goal and the organizing concept into a comprehensive, detailed action plan requires additional planning

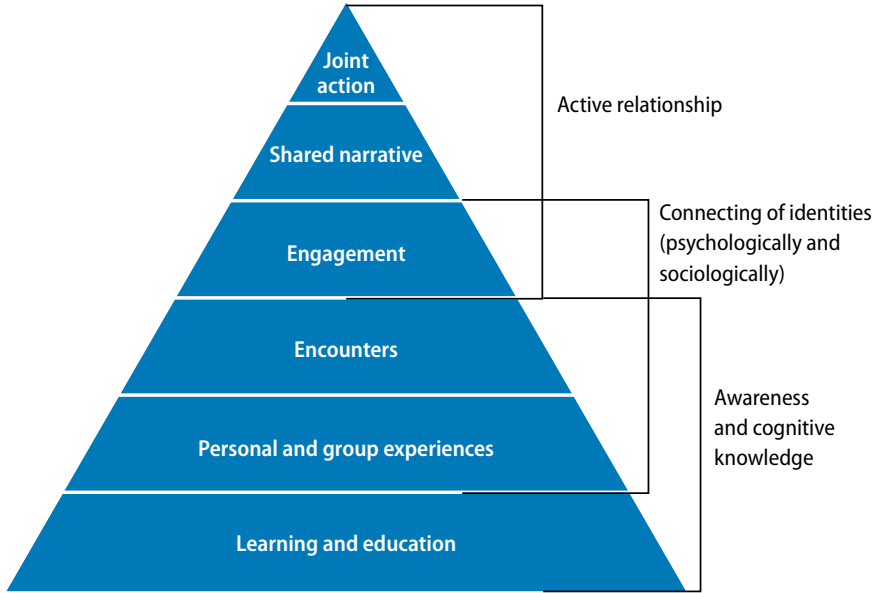


Figure 1: Layers required to build a strong relationship between the Jewish communities

work that exceeds the scope of the undertaken study. Nevertheless, in this section we propose action according to the abovementioned layers – education, encounters, dialogue, and joint activities – for decision makers in both Israel and the leadership of the Jewish community in the United States.

Education

At issue is the promotion of curricula, training, ongoing educational courses, and research projects in Israel and the United States, within and outside of the formal education system. Target constituents for educational activities are millennials and decision makers:

1. **In Israel** – the state’s formal education, for all ages, should include a component about Jewish peoplehood; thriving Jewish communities; similarities and differences within them and between them and Israeli society; and the importance of the relations with

them for the continuing existence of the Jewish people. Beyond the formal education system, this should be incorporated into youth movements and programs for professionals in the public sector (the National Security Council, the foreign affairs and security establishment, and more). In implementing these educational units, partnering with educators and experts from the United States and from additional Jewish communities in the diaspora will have added value.

2. **In the United States** – educational programs should be part of the Jewish education system (mainly Jewish day schools), in cooperation with professionals from Israel. Programs should focus on Israeli history, society and culture, and Hebrew language classes. The challenge here is to develop and preserve the Zionist narrative and the connection of American Jews to Israel through inculcating the importance of Israel to their Jewish identity and through education about Israel’s challenges (inter alia, as preparation for coping with anti-Israeli activities on college campuses in the United States).
3. **Together** – expanding joint study programs, reciprocal visits, and shared projects, such as twinning of schools, joint online classes, joint educational activities in youth movements, student exchange programs, and US-Israel teacher exchange programs.

Encounters

At issue is an expansion of channels for meeting and of frameworks for dialogue between Israelis and American Jews. Inter-personal communication as part of a meaningful personal experience is extremely important for strengthening relations and mitigating indifference and alienation.

Although successful encounters and delegations promoting Israel among young American Jews are well underway (e.g., the Taglit and Masa programs), we propose the following improvements and additions:

1. "Taglit America" for Israeli adolescents to visit Jewish communities in the United States, perhaps based on the infrastructure of Jewish summer camps in the United States.
2. Expanding academic programs and increasing scholarships that fund Israelis' academic education in the United States; student exchange programs for annual/semester studies.
3. Cultivating and strengthening alumni networks of existing programs (namely Taglit and Masa), for example, through reciprocal meetings of Taglit alumni in the United States; online, and personalized activities.
4. Enhancing the delegation projects (in both directions) according to targeted and strategic population segments.
5. Expanding meetings within the frameworks of twinned communities and twinned schools.
6. Use of technological links and global networks to innovate mutual dialogue through utilizing the fact that the young generations in both communities conduct their lives and shape their identities, connections, and experiences through these means.

Dialogue

At issue are the formulation of joint mechanisms and the building of organizational, resource, and methodological infrastructure that will enable dialogue and consultations, alongside the design, planning, decision making, and performance processes for dealing with shared issues and projects, both at the leadership and grassroots levels.

Fruitful dialogue, based on open discussions regarding each side's sensitivities, requires mechanisms for conveying and receiving criticism; designated boundaries of legitimate conversation, and the identification of both common ground and issues in dispute.



Celebrate Israel Parade in New York City, June 5, 2011. Photo: Michael Stewart/WireImage

Our impression is that official frameworks of dialogue suffer from multiple shortcomings. To this end, we propose a variety of possible formats:

1. A forum under the auspices of the President of Israel and the head of the Jewish Agency.
2. An institutionalized channel between Israel's Prime Minister and the Jewish leadership in the United States.
3. A defined role for the Israeli Minister for Diaspora Affairs and for additional relevant ministers in processes of periodic, institutionalized dialogue with the Jewish communities.
4. A joint forum comprised of Knesset members and representatives of the Jewish community in the United States.
5. A joint entity (forum/committee/headquarters) that will engage in providing advice, planning, and performance-checking.

Narratives

It is nearly impossible to maintain a close relationship when each party is preoccupied with its internal affairs, and therefore important that the sides develop a sense of shared fate. While a shared historic heritage is important, what is needed is the co-authoring of current shared stories as a basis for a shared vision and mission. As such, a joint pact may be valuable, both as an educational foundation and as a compass for concrete activities.

Beyond these proposed activities, we recommend initiating joint projects as a response to broad national issues and to the shared sectoral and local needs. The venture “Tikva Israelit – Israeli Hope” initiated by the President of Israel, which serves as an umbrella organization for activities and the creation of a “new Israeli order” by establishing a partnership between the various segments of Israeli society, can serve as a model (and perhaps even as a host) for such activities.

Other options for creating channels and joint spheres of action within the framework of national, sectoral, and local agendas are:

1. Young Israeli and American Jews joining forces in the battle against anti-Semitism and against efforts to delegitimize Israel in the United States and in other countries around the world.
2. Joint efforts to address the challenges of the continuity of the Jewish communities in the United States.
3. Joint *tikkun olam* projects in Israel, in the United States, and throughout the world.
4. Promotion of religious pluralism in Israel.
5. Promotion of minority rights in Israel and in the United States.
6. Sectoral and local projects, such as joint theme-related communities (art, academia, media, and the like) and twinned local communities.

Israeli Policy-Shapers

The directions for action that our study recommends require an extensive national plan. A precondition to formulating and implementing such a plan is broad support from the Israeli government, national institutions, and civil society organizations. The expansion of the activities of the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs in recent years and the addition of budgets for the purpose of assisting Jewish communities in the diaspora are welcome measures. However, the challenges we face require far more extensive actions, both in Israel and across the ocean.

Israeli policies and public discourse have a tremendous impact on the lives of American Jewry and on their perceptions and positions vis-à-vis Israel. These are not only issues that directly concern them but also affect their Jewish identity and their moral and emotional identification with Israel. As such, national decision making processes in Israel, not only on issues that directly address diaspora Jewry, require awareness and sensitivity as well as a built-in mechanism which considers policies' ramifications on diaspora Jewry and on Israel's relations with them. The situation today is far from satisfactory and contributes to exacerbating the strategic problem.

Consequently, we recommend the establishment of an advisory and coordinating body that will engage in the subject of the relations with diaspora Jewry, for example, in the National Security Council, with the assistance of the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, and a senior ministerial echelon to take permanent responsibility over the matter.

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Foreign Affairs and Security Establishments

Our study proposes that the State of Israel's relationship with the Jewish community in the United States be treated as a major asset to Israel's national security. Recommended directions for action in this field are as follows:

1. Introducing the subject of American Jewry and its connection to Israel's national security into training courses for senior personnel in the National Security Council, the IDF, other organizations in the security establishment, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
2. Building a relevant knowledge base and installing mechanisms for ongoing engagement with this issue within the relevant staff units of the IDF and the security establishment, beyond the current engagement of the National Security Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
3. Expanding and institutionalizing briefings from executives in the foreign affairs and security establishments to relevant people and groups from the United States, including civil society groups organized by pro-Israel organizations. Greater utilization can be made of retired executives from these systems in order to accommodate the volume of such briefings and their expansion.
4. The IDF, as part of its educational and social role in Israeli society, serves as a key partner in the Taglit program. About 100,000 officers and soldiers have already escorted Taglit delegations in Israel. This engagement should be broadened to additional endeavors. One possible direction is by sending delegations of Israeli officers and soldiers to visit Jewish communities in the United States.

Leaderships of Jewish Communities in the United States

To the best of our understanding, the leadership of United States Jewry is well aware of the major challenges ahead but often disagrees on the appropriate modes of response, and encounters difficulties in joining forces on a nationwide scale. Institutionalized cooperation

with parties in Israel could potentially alleviate the task of organizing within the United States in order to tackle challenges.

One such challenge is how to divide investments (philanthropic and others) between non-Jewish American causes (currently, the vast majority of the philanthropic contributions), the Jewish communities themselves, and the State of Israel. Another issue is the indifference (and indeed alienation) on the part of Israelis toward diaspora Jews, as exemplified by the lack of success, to date, to raise the issue of Israeli religious pluralism (or lack thereof) into a more prominent issue in Israeli discourse. More involvement on the part of American Jewry is warranted in this regard.

These and other issues necessitate channels of influence of the American Jewish community in Israel, through advocacy, recruiting agents of change in the relevant sectors, and creating partnerships and coalitions with relevant groups in Israeli society.