

Netanyahu's speech won't reset US-Israel relations

Absent a diplomatic process with the Palestinians, the vision the PM conjured of a regional alliance against Iran is a pipe dream

By Ted Sasson and Chuck Freilich / 25 July 2024

Even aside from the political turmoil in the United States, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech before the joint session of the US Congress came at a charged moment. The war in Gaza is in its tenth month and Hamas still holds 120 hostages (of whom about half are still thought to be alive). A genocide case against Israel is playing out in the International Court of Justice and Israeli leaders, including Netanyahu himself, have been accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court. Among members of the US Congress – long Israel's most ardent bastion of support – opposition to supplying military aid has gained some momentum on both sides of the aisle.

Israel's standing in the court of American public opinion has also deteriorated. According to Gallup polls, between 2023 and 2024, overall favorability toward Israel dropped from 68% to 58%. Among Democratic voters, it fell below the halfway mark; among 18-34-year-olds, it plummeted from 64% to 38%. Given these trends, it is unsurprising that Israel has emerged as a divisive issue in the US presidential election.

American Jews have mostly stuck by Israel throughout the war, expressing strong support in opinion surveys, donating more than a billion dollars, and initially joining in vigils and the largest mass demonstration ever called by Jewish organizations, as we report in a new INSS study. This wartime solidarity, however, covers up deep cracks in American Jewish support for Israel, cracks that widened after the formation of the "full, full right-wing" government featuring Itamar Ben Gvir, and resurfaced as the war evolved.

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