

## **A Strategic Threat: Israel's Deteriorating Standing in the United States**

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**Israel's standing with the American public has plunged to an unprecedented nadir. Traditional support among Democrats has collapsed, and support among Republicans has eroded. The decline is most pronounced among young people on both sides of the political map. Within the Jewish community as well, support has declined and criticism has mounted. American sentiment toward Israel has been directly and negatively affected by Israel's conduct in the war against Hamas, and particularly by the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Israel now finds itself dependent on an American president known for his unpredictability and on an increasingly divided Republican Party. These trends are likely to harm Israel's freedom of political and military maneuver and pose a severe threat to its security. Israel still has important bases of support in the United States—especially among Jews, older adults, conservatives, and Evangelical Christians—but these alone cannot guarantee the future of the alliance. A communications strategy unaccompanied by a tangible shift in policy will not restore Israel's standing. Israel must take clear steps to end the fighting and improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza and formulate a long-term strategy that ensures the stability of its vital relationship with the United States.**

Over many decades, the United States' alliance with Israel rested on a broad foundation of shared interests, values, and security ties. However, in recent years, and accelerated by the war in Gaza, American public opinion and the attitudes of political elites toward Israel have turned increasingly negative. Although the changes are most evident among Democrats, support among Republicans is also faltering, especially among young people affiliated with the party.

Last July, [Gallup published a new survey](#) finding that just 32% of Americans approved of Israel's military actions in Gaza—a drop of 10 percentage points compared to a similar poll conducted in September 2024. Sixty percent of Americans disapproved of Israel's military actions.

The survey was conducted shortly after the end of the Iran war and during negotiations between Israel and Hamas over a ceasefire and hostage deal. At that time, American media headlines were dominated by the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, including reports of mass starvation and a large number of civilians killed while trying to collect food from aid distribution centers. In addition, accounts of attacks against West Bank Palestinians by Jewish extremists, including the killing of an American citizen, were widely publicized.

As in the past, the July survey revealed large partisan gaps between Democrats (8% approval), Republicans (71% approval), and independents (25% approval). It also revealed low levels of support for Israel's conduct of the war among young adults, including Democrats and

Republicans alike. Only 9% of all respondents aged 18–34 expressed approval of Israel’s military actions in Gaza.

Other polls reinforce the picture:

- In April, [a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center](#) found that 53% of Americans expressed an unfavorable view of Israel—up ten points from January 2024. The rise in negative sentiment was sharpest among older Democrats and younger Republicans. Indeed, Republicans under age 50 were evenly divided between those who expressed favorable and unfavorable views of the Jewish state.
- In May, a survey of the [Chicago Council on Global Affairs](#) reported that Americans gave Israel a “lukewarm” rating of 50 on a 100-point scale—the lowest since 1978, with a significant decline in support among Democrats.
- In August, [a survey by the University of Maryland](#) reported that more Americans now sympathize with Palestinians than with Israelis, and 41% described Israel’s actions in Gaza as “genocide” or “similar to genocide.”
- Also in August, [a survey by Quinnipiac University](#) found that 60% of respondents opposed US military aid to Israel—the highest rate of opposition recorded since Hamas’s attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. The poll also found that 77% of Democrats and 20% of Republicans believed that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.

These results reflect a dramatic historic shift: Whereas support for Israel in the past was nearly equal across political parties, over the last quarter-century, the gaps have widened. Ideological change within the two parties has been accompanied by the growing politicization of the Israeli–Palestinian issue, whereby attitudes toward Israel have shifted from being a matter of national consensus to a general marker of party affiliation.

During President Trump’s first term, the dynamic intensified. Some progressive Democrats incorporated support for the Palestinians into a broad agenda of social justice struggles, including the Black Lives Matter protests. During the Biden years, many Democrats became increasingly critical of Israel’s conduct in the Gaza wars—particularly in relation to civilian casualties—and pro-Israel sentiment in the party’s rank-and-file further eroded. However, in recent surveys, party polarization is likely less severe than it might have been but only due to declining support for Israel among younger Republicans.

In the months since President Trump entered the White House, the war in Gaza has continued to shape public opinion:

- Among Democrats, the war is strengthening voices opposing Israel’s policies, including calls to suspend military aid or condition it on the fulfillment of humanitarian requirements.
- Among younger Evangelicals, the images coming out of Gaza of civilian suffering are causing many to question the traditional messages of the religious leadership.
- On the right, particularly among “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) supporters, the extent to which the United States benefits from unconditional aid to Israel is increasingly subject to debate.

### **Trends in the Democratic Party**

Despite growing criticism among Democratic voters, the Biden administration supported Israel in its multi-front war with emergency aid, weaponry, diplomatic protection, and direct military intervention against Iran. Since Trump's return to the White House, however, the Democratic Party leadership has moved closer to its voter base. In July 2025, forty Democratic senators demanded renewed ceasefire talks and criticized the Trump administration's humanitarian aid policy. Days later, a majority of Senate Democrats voted in favor of symbolic resolutions by Senator Bernie Sanders to restrict arms sales to Israel. The deep criticism within the Democratic base is expected to make it very difficult for future party leaders to restore the level of commitment made to Israel in the past. Notable in this context was a recent call by Jake Sullivan, who served as Biden's National Security Advisor, urging Democrats in Congress to vote against weapons transfers to Israel.

It is important to note that the conduct of Israel's government directly affects the decline in support—not only because of the Gaza war, but also due to a sense of growing gaps in shared values, particularly regarding democratic norms and human rights, and the perception that the Israeli government has abandoned the principle of maintaining bipartisan consensus, opting instead to focus primarily on ties with the Republicans. Additional contributing factors include:

- Accusations against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of continuing the war in Gaza to preserve his governing coalition;
- Opposition to the Israeli government's intention to transfer the Palestinian population out of Gaza and annex the territory;
- Claims that Israel is violating international law and committing war crimes and crimes against humanity through severe restrictions on humanitarian aid to Gaza and the use of force against civilians;
- Accusations that Israel is lenient toward Jewish extremists attacking Palestinians in the West Bank.

### **Trends in the Republican Party**

President Trump and his administration continue to provide broad military and diplomatic support to Israel. Despite their interest in advancing a new Middle East architecture centered on expanding the Abraham Accords, the Trump administration has not pressured Israel to immediately end the Gaza war—a condition for advancing this strategy. President Trump's decision in June to strike the Iranian nuclear facilities at Natanz and Fordow was a clear expression of this support.

However, there is also growing criticism within the Republican Party regarding Israel's conduct and questions about the logic of continued aid. While the American right still largely expresses support for Israel, many younger conservatives embrace an "America First" discourse that challenges the value of traditional alliances and foreign aid, including for Israel. Republican activists and media personalities, such as Tucker Carlson, have warned against AIPAC's excessive influence and charged the lobby with a history of pushing the United States into wars for Israel's sake. While most of the Republican establishment remains committed to supporting Israel, some members of the party's congressional delegation have broken ranks, including Marjorie Taylor Greene, a representative from the state of Georgia, who accused Israel of committing genocide in Gaza.

A gap is thus opening up between the party leadership, which continues to strongly support Israel, and parts of the party base, activist leadership, and congressional delegation, which are willing to support Israel only when it is seen as acting in line with direct American interests. The erosion of support for Israel among some Republicans, including within the Evangelical community, is putting pressure on the party's leadership, which recognizes the shift in domestic public opinion.

### **American Jewry**

Few reliable surveys exist on American Jewish attitudes toward the ongoing Gaza war. A [survey by the Jewish Voters Resource Center](#) conducted in May 2025 found that the sense of connection to Israel spiked to 82% immediately after Hamas's attack on October 7, 2023, but had since declined to 69%—the pre-war level.

Major Jewish organizations, such as the larger federations, the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, have avoided publicly criticizing Israel's management of the war. But the liberal camp, led by the Reform Movement, [issued a strong statement](#) in July condemning the "pervasive hunger experienced by thousands of Gazans" and declaring that the denial of food, water, and medicine, especially to children, cannot be justified. The UJA Federation of New York followed with an [announcement of a \\$1 million grant](#) to the Israeli aid organization IsraAid, earmarked for humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

The decision by Israel's Security Cabinet to expand fighting and capture Gaza City prompted the American Jewish Committee (AJC), a moderate and influential organization, [to issue an unusual warning](#) about the "profound risks" of the operation for the hostages and Israeli soldiers and Palestinian civilians. Behind the scenes, Jewish leaders are warning of an unprecedented crisis in Israel's standing in the United States.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Israel's standing in the United States is precarious, to say the least. While some of the traditional support base—mainly older Republicans—remains stable, declining support among Democrats, independents, and even some Republicans raises major warning signs. At present, Israel finds itself dependent on an American president who is perceived as unpredictable and on a Republican party that is increasingly divided.

These trends reflect not only criticism of Israel's military and political conduct but also a shift in the values and priorities of American society. The decline of bipartisan solidarity regarding Israel may harm its strategic and operational capabilities, restrict its diplomatic flexibility, and leave it exposed to regional challenges. Therefore, the erosion of US support is not merely a political issue but also a tangible threat to Israel's security.

The capacity of the pro-Israel lobby to counter this threat is limited, a state of affairs that [President Trump attested to in an interview](#) in September: "There was a time when ...if you wanted to be a politician, you couldn't speak badly [about Israel]" said President Trump. "Israel was the strongest lobby I've ever seen. They had total control over Congress, and now they don't."

In this reality, Israel requires a tailored strategy to prevent additional damage and ensure future strategic and diplomatic resilience. A communications strategy not openly and transparently tied to actual policy changes will fail to arrest the dramatic deterioration of Israel's standing. Without concrete steps to end the Gaza war, Israel will struggle to restore its position with the American public and its political leadership.

Rebuilding US support for Israel will take time, but Israel still has important allies—among American Jews, older Americans, Evangelical Christians, and conservatives. To build on this foundation and restore bipartisan support, Israel must urgently take the following steps:

- Present to both the US administration and the public a clear plan, including political-security objectives, timelines, and milestones that demonstrate intent to end the campaign in Gaza, not perpetuate it;
- Allow large-scale humanitarian aid into Gaza (food, medicine, fuel) in coordination with international actors, and report transparently to the American public and Congress on measures taken to reduce harm to civilians;
- Re-establish direct channels of dialogue with the leadership of the Democratic Party, while also increasing engagement with Jewish communities, progressive communities, and student groups, to try to reduce alienation and strengthen the understanding that Israel listens to the moral concerns and value-based needs of the Democratic Party's supporters;
- Show readiness to promote political initiatives (for example, strengthening the Palestinian Authority, participating in a US-sponsored regional process) as proof of its commitment to advancing a future resolution of the Palestinian issue, rather than settling for ongoing management of the conflict.

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