

The Day After Trump: How Israel Should Prepare for the Expected Turmoil

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Main Points

Donald J. Trump is a unique president. So far, he has proven himself to be an enthusiastic supporter of the State of Israel, and who leads a transformative foreign policy in the Middle East and the global arena. Multiple reasons suggest Israel cannot simply assume such strong US alignment with its interests and policies will persist. Thus, and in light of current shifts in the global, regional, and Israeli-Palestinian contexts, it is necessary to consider which policy goals Israel should set for its relations with Washington for the remainder of President Trump's second term. This policy paper outlines changes occurring in the American system and its effects on Israel-United States relations, and concludes with policy recommendations to improve Israel's strategic posture for years to come.

The Trump plan to end the war in Gaza is highly consistent with Israel's interests: The return of the hostages from Hamas's captivity, ending the war, removing Hamas from power in the Strip, disarming Hamas, and facilitating a rapprochement between Israel and countries of the Middle East while halting the trend of Israel's isolation in the international arena. Furthermore, and even if it weren't the case, adopting the plan is essential for getting President Trump on board to promote additional initiatives that will bolster the State of Israel's national security.

President Trump's involvement in Israel's security, particularly the plan he presented to end the war in Gaza, are indicative of the a strong and deep relationship between Israel and the United States. (Some would say too deep—Israel almost becoming a protectorate). This impression is likely correct, but an analysis of long-term trends, points at challenging developments in the Israel-United States relations. Challenges that must be confronted in advance in order to mitigate their severity.

The reality is that the United States is undergoing fundamental internal changes, just as Israeli society is. Relations between the countries are deeply affected by these changes. These are demographic, social, and political changes. Broadly speaking, the progressive-radical voice is growing stronger within the left wing of the American political system. This is an extreme trend, which seeks to atone for the sins of the Founding Fathers (black slavery and the murder of indigenous peoples) by uplifting

the weak, the exploited, and through deep suspicion (including self-directed) toward white and “privileged” people. According to this perspective, the State of Israel is seen as a symbol of the strong and exploitative white colonialist in relation to the weak, oppressed, and exploited Palestinian people. Beyond these radical circles, frustration with Israel is deepening among broad circles of the American moderate left, including the perceived intervention of Israeli leadership in the domestic American arena.

The American conservative right is also changing. Many of its supporters long for the glory years of the 1950s, during which the United States also faced challenges in the international arena, yet enjoyed an undisputed status, at least in the West. President Trump himself, as his musical choices and cinematic references attest, admires the 1980s—the presidency of Ronald Reagan—which also expressed a longing for the 1950s. These circles view these years as a time in which the United States emerged as a mighty world power, led by male, white, and Christian dominance, and constituting the ultimate representation of this dominance. In this sense, the MAGA movement led by President Trump is an expression of fundamentalism (a longing for real or imagined foundations). American “greatness”, as its people see it, requires investments in the United States (and within this framework—a victory in the competition with China), while investment outside the United States is perceived as unnecessary and aiding global rivals. Among a radical part of this camp, Israel is perceived as an exploitative country that tries to manipulate the United States into fighting its wars—not necessarily in accordance with American interests—and thus weakens the United States in the competition for global hegemony. Moreover, there are loud voices in this camp expressing severe antisemitic views and tying them to Israel, and these voices are tolerated by more mainstream elements of the MAGA coalition.

Public opinion polls clearly track these trends: There is a significant and consistent decline in American citizens’ support for Israel, both among the general public and at the legislative level. According to [a poll conducted at the end of March 2025](#) by the Pew Research Center, the percentage of Americans who express a negative opinion toward Israel reached a high of 53%, and identification with Israel relative to identification with the Palestinians is at a 25-year low. Support for Israel among all adults in the United States dropped to only 46% [according to a Gallup poll](#) from March. This is also the lowest rate in the last 25 years. The connection created in Democratic public opinion and among senior party officials between the government of Israel and the Republican Party deepens these trends even further and could be translated into a different—much less pro-Israel—foreign policy by a future Democratic administration.

Additional polls indicate a similar trend: [In a University of Maryland poll](#), 41% of Americans believe that Israel is committing genocide or similar acts in the Gaza Strip. Support for the Palestinians has gradually increased, reaching 33% (compared to 15%

in 2016). Among Republicans, support for Israel is still high (75%), but a downward trend has begun here as well: Among 18–34-year-olds, support for Israel is particularly low: Only 13% support Israel compared to 67% of those 65+.

White evangelicals are still enthusiastic supporters of Israel, but studies show a consistent decline in their power and rate of the population. This community is shrinking: The percentage of Americans who identify as evangelicals dropped from 23% in 2006 to 14% in 2020. In addition, an erosion in Israel's status is also evident among this group. Among young evangelicals, support for Israel dropped from 69% in 2018 to 34% in 2021, and this trend continues. [New surveys indicate](#) that although support for Israel among young evangelicals remains higher than that of their non-evangelical peers, it is significantly lower than among older evangelicals. In short – looking ahead, Israel is standing on the edge of a precipice.

The conclusion: The unique window of opportunity offered by a special president must be seized. As long as President Trump is in the White House, Israel has a great opportunity for coordination with Washington. This opportunity should be capitalized on by acting along two avenues—an effort to shape the Middle East and an effort to strengthen Israel. These efforts could mitigate the negative trends Israel is facing and secure its vital interests in the likely event that negative trends will continue.

The Required Policy for Shaping the Middle East:

1. The regional/Palestinian arena: The Israeli government is right to formally accept the Trump initiative, but it must go one step further and take advantage of the current period to draw the political outlines for a separation between the State of Israel and an independent Palestinian entity (one that is demilitarized and with limited sovereignty, subject to agreements with Israel, as Israel demanded in previous negotiations). In this sense, one can connect to the 2020 Trump initiative (the Deal of the Century). This initiative has elements that can serve Israel well, and it is even mentioned in the current plan. A bridge between the two Trump initiatives could pave the way for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
2. A two-tiered strategy toward Iran: Economic pressure that might destabilize the regime, but its real purpose is to push Iran to agree to a better nuclear deal than the previous one. This is a strategy that combines the policy of maximum economic and political pressure led by the United States, coupled with a credible military threat through the building of a renewed, joint Israeli-American strike capability. If there is a change in the Iranian regime—all the better, but if, despite all these actions, the Iranian regime remains intact, the end of Trump's term in office should be used to formulate a better nuclear agreement than the previous one, which will ensure that Iran will never have

a nuclear weapon. It is advisable not to leave this for the next president to handle, which is what the Iranian leadership hopes will happen.

3. Responsibly guiding Syria toward a moderate regime: The desired end-state in Syria is clear—a stable country that controls its territory, does not allow any threat toward Israel to develop, and maintains diplomatic relations with Israel up to the point of normalization. The path to get there is less clear. It is correct to push for a security agreement first, but one should not rush al-Sharaa (whose intentions are uncertain) to make premature decisions, which could lead to his downfall and his replacement by a more extreme Islamist-jihadi leader. In other words, in the special Syrian case, the path is no less important, and perhaps even more so, than the destination. Milestones must be established to assist in the stabilization of a moderate regime in Syria, including the end of Israeli military control in Syrian territories in exchange for a security agreement. This must be done while carefully examining the Syrian regime's attitude toward Israel, yet recognizes that for Israel to miss a historic turn in Damascus' orientation is itself a risk. Coordination with the US on this issue is necessary and possible because al-Sharaa requires American and Gulf assistance for his survival and to rebuild Syria. Thus, the United States has disproportionate power in the shaping the path forward.
4. Normalization with Lebanon and the disarmament of Hezbollah: The ongoing Israeli offensive, aimed at preventing Hezbollah's rehabilitation, is extremely important. The IDF weakening the organization militarily is what enabled the Lebanese government to demand the organization's disarmament. But more must be done, and much faster, as the window of opportunity in this context is set to close. Iran aspires to rehabilitate Hezbollah, and the moment it regains strength, the process that the Lebanese government is trying to advance will be halted. Therefore, the effort to dismantle Hezbollah must be accelerated with the help of American leverage: The United States military can support the Lebanese army and facilitate the dismantling of Hezbollah with close supervision and control (to the point of direct involvement), which will surely be more effective than that of UNIFIL, which is in its final year of existence. Currently, most of the activity in this domain is symbolic and ineffective. It is necessary to move from talk to action, preferably by the Lebanese army and the United States. At the same time, preparations must be made to adjust Israeli action in a way that will keep the window of Hezbollah's weakness open in order to exhaust the diplomatic initiative.

Strengthening Israel's Security:

1. A new memorandum of understanding with the United States: The effort to formulate a new memorandum of understanding must be intensified, built around a gradual transition from direct financial assistance to a business

partnership (in accordance with the approach the US administration is currently leading). In other words, a transition from a situation of Israel as a “supported state” to a “strategic partner”. Within this framework, a joint force buildup for defense must be promoted, including the removal of export and import barriers, the deepening of production capabilities in the United States and Israel, and Israel’s comprehensive and deep integration in American R&D. This move could strengthen the special relationship over time on the basis of a contractual business commitment that would reflect a shared interest, and not just on shared values. The current climate in the international arena is one that increasingly emphasizes business commitment as a basis for relations between states, and while Israel shouldn’t forgo a value based relationship, it should also be ready to emphasize shared interests, including business interests.

2. A joint research program on the subject of deep technology (DeepTech): Emerging technologies—quantum computing, artificial intelligence—will change the course of life around the world, including the future battlefield. In this context, Israel is currently still in the right position to get on board, but an American administration less favorable to Israel, combined with the continued negative trend of Israel being perceived as a politically and ethically tainted entity, could exclude it from the momentum of international development, thereby leaving it behind. A proactive policy by President Trump (a presidential declaration) or legislation in Congress as a basis for an Israeli partnership in R&D, coupled with better conditions in the United States for Israeli startup companies in the quantum computing field, could prevent this.
3. Israel joining the Five Eyes: The Five Eyes are an intelligence sharing alliance, a sort of prestigious, unique, and trust-based club among five countries—the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. Member states share intelligence sources and thus create a warning system much stronger than that of any country individually. Integrating Israel into this framework will improve Israeli intelligence capabilities and political standing—which in turn will help advance Israeli objectives in the Middle East and in the broader international arena. Israeli action in the regional dimension will contribute to its integration in global cooperation frameworks.

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In 2026, Israel will enter an election period. The United States will approach its midterm elections, and immediately afterward will find itself in a presidential election campaign in 2028. This timeline means that Israel does not have three full years to rest on its laurels and bask in Trump's support. The net time is very brief. Action must be taken now, and with a sense of urgency. It is necessary to advance technological cooperation and the new memorandum of understanding with the current American

administration, while concurrently creating a network of agreements that will anchor Israel's operational achievements in the war against Hamas and in the other conflict arenas. Halting the deterioration of the war in Gaza into an endless war of attrition and ending it is an important development. It is necessary to strive for the realization of the second part of the agreement and for the full implementation of President Trump's 20-point plan.