

The Trump Administration's National Security Strategy: Implications for Israel

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Main Points

The Trump administration's National Security Strategy (NSS), released on December 4, 2025, reshapes the "America First" doctrine in ways that undermine the traditional conception of US hegemony. Rather than value-based leadership of the democratic-liberal camp, it emphasizes recognition of states' nationalism and non-interference in their internal affairs.

The Middle East is framed as a "case that has been handled": Iran has been weakened, the nuclear project has been "destroyed," the war in Gaza has ended, and regional normalization is advancing. Within this framework, Israel is defined as a core US interest and a central partner—alongside other states—in a new Middle East architecture, which is a primary objective of the administration in the region. At the same time, Israel is also seen as an actor capable of reopening broad fronts, thereby undermining the narrative of success that the administration seeks to establish.

Taken together, the National Security Strategy's emphases and the Trump administration's actual policy present Israel with a short, focused window of opportunity—lasting at most around three years, and potentially less—during which Washington is particularly committed to Israel. For Israel, the implication is not merely to "get along" with the administration but to use this limited period to advance long-term strategic objectives vis-à-vis the United States and the region, while managing risks stemming from the administration's tendency to declare "cases closed," shift burdens to partners, and avoid large-scale direct military involvement.

The formal anchoring of Israel's security as a US interest strengthens Israel's ability to demand the preservation and expansion of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the countries, ensure its qualitative military edge, deepen security-technological cooperation, and position Israel as a military intelligence hub within the pro-American axis—including integration into energy, civilian nuclear, and AI projects. Conversely, the narrative that threats from Iran, the Gaza arena, Syria, and Lebanon have been "handled" may reduce the legitimacy for large-scale Israeli military actions in the future. It could also widen the gap between the American vision for the Middle East and Israel's security needs. Finally, closer ties between the Trump administration and its allies in the Gulf and Turkey, as well as greater reliance on other regional partners, may translate into pressure on Israel to take political and security steps that run counter to its interests, especially in the Palestinian arena.

[The Trump administration's National Security Strategy \(NSS\)](#) reflects an attempt to recast the “America First” doctrine in the context of great-power competition, fatigue from “endless wars,” and the need to reinvest in US security and the US economy. The document seeks to “correct” five failures that the current administration has identified in US policy over recent decades:

- **Overexpansion of global commitments**—maintaining the “liberal order” worldwide, even when its direct contribution to US security is contested.
- **Neglect of domestic security and the domestic economy**—allocating resources to the Middle East, Europe, and East Asia at the expense of American infrastructure, borders, and industry.
- **Encouraging globalization and free trade**—the “bet” on globalization and free trade severely harmed the American middle class and eroded the industrial base, viewed as the center of gravity for US military and economic superiority.
- **Blurring values and interests**—promoting democracy and human rights as a central tool of foreign policy, even when it clashes with security and economic interests.
- **Reliance on multilateral organizations and institutions**—tying US foreign policy to international frameworks that the administration identifies as anti-American and as undermining US sovereignty.

Against this background, the document signals an abandonment of the American commitment to preserving and defending the liberal international order, which has been a pillar of bipartisan US foreign policy since World War II.

Guiding Principles and Recasting the Doctrine

The NSS sketches a new pattern of foreign policy that is not anchored in a coherent political ideology but rather focuses on what the Trump administration defines as the American national interest:

- **Economic security**—the central emphasis: strengthening economic superiority, rebuilding industry, reorganizing the global trading system, expanding defense capacity, and protecting the rights of the American worker. A central priority is to control natural resources, especially critical minerals and energy.
- **US interests over international/global interests**—prioritizing concrete American political and economic interests while reducing the weight of collective security and multilateral institutions.
- **A non-interventionist tendency and a realist approach**—setting a “high bar” for military intervention. The administration emphasizes it will not try to impose “social democratic changes” on other countries and will maintain

relations even with non-democratic regimes, describing this approach as realistic rather than hypocritical.

- **Centrality of sovereignty and the nation-state**—the nation-state is presented as the basis of the international order. Defending borders against large-scale, uncontrolled migration is perceived as foundational for order, social cohesion, and state resilience.
- **Balance of power and burden-sharing**—the administration seeks to work with allies to maintain a regional and global balance of power without acting as the “world’s policeman.” A new burden-sharing model is required: Wealthy states are expected to significantly increase their investment in their own security (NATO members; US partner states in the Indo-Pacific).

Hierarchy of Arenas and Policy Implementation

The Homeland and the Western Hemisphere

The NSS reformulates the prioritization of arenas: first the homeland and the Western Hemisphere; then economic and technological competition with China; and only thereafter Europe and the Middle East.

According to the administration, the focus on the Western Hemisphere stems from decades of neglect that enabled:

- extensive illegal migration;
- drug smuggling by cartels;
- growing Chinese presence and investment in Latin America.

Restoring US sovereignty aligns, among other things, with the Monroe Doctrine, which holds that any external intervention by foreign states in the political affairs of the Americas is a hostile act against the United States. This is reflected in the Trump administration’s adoption of the Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, which denies US competitors the ability to deploy military forces and seize control of critical infrastructure in the region. In practice, the focus on the Western Hemisphere is a direct response to decades of Chinese economic influence and investment in the United States’ “backyard,” setting the goal of removing competitors and achieving the “winding down” of “adversarial outside influence” from the American sphere of influence.

Asia and the Indo-Pacific: China as an Economic Challenge

The Indo-Pacific is described as the most important economic arena, with more than a third of the global GDP. The perspective on China is seen primarily through an economic lens:

- emphasis on maintaining a “free” Indo-Pacific, including freedom of navigation and preserving the status quo in Taiwan;
- threat of an economic and technological competition, not an overarching strategic confrontation;
- emphasis on coping with China’s control over critical-mineral supply chains and protecting a technological advantage.

The Trump administration stresses its desire to reach a “mutually advantageous economic relationship” with Beijing—indicating Washington’s intent to pursue a comprehensive trade deal and reduce tensions between the countries. At the same time, this pursuit of a limited “détente” is meant to proceed in parallel with strengthening US deterrence in the Indo-Pacific and pushing to “rebalance trade relationships” in order to protect the American worker from predatory trade and industrial practices. Given the arena’s economic importance, the administration underscores the value of public–private partnerships to expand US investment in the region and highlights American technological and economic power in order to be the “global partner of first choice” for states in the region. Notably, there is no reference to the strategic confrontation with North Korea and its nuclearization, leaving an opening for renewed talks between Washington and Pyongyang.

Europe and Russia

Europe is described as a continent facing “civilizational erasure.” Beyond familiar challenges of economic slowdown and low defense spending, the European Union is presented—according to the administration—as a body that:

- does not align with a nationalist agenda;
- undermines freedom of speech;
- suppresses nationalist opposition;
- harms sovereignty and national identities.

Washington seeks to return Europe “to the right track” by “promoting European greatness” in the face of multilateral bodies viewed as weakening the continent and considers the rise of “patriotic” parties a positive sign—hinting at public and active support for nationalist currents.

Regarding Russia, the declared goals are:

- ending the war in Ukraine;
- renewing stability on the continent and in relations with Moscow;
- limiting NATO’s expansion while keeping Ukraine sovereign and rebuilding it.

The strategy contains internal contradictions. On the one hand, it expresses a desire to end the war in Ukraine and stabilize relations with Russia; on the other hand, it

omits any reference to Russia as a “dominant adversary” and avoids any discussion of nuclear deterrence and nuclear proliferation—in contrast to previous US National Security Strategies (2017, 2022).

The Middle East

The Middle East is presented as an arena in which significant achievements have been attained:

- damage to Iran’s capabilities and its weakening, including the “destruction of the nuclear project”;
- ending the war in the Gaza Strip and returning the Israeli hostages from Hamas captivity;
- expanding normalization between Israel and Arab states.

Hence, the primary objective is “managing stability” rather than investing additional resources.

Against this backdrop, the United States intends to:

- maintain a focused military presence (sea, air, intelligence, special forces), mainly around the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea to protect energy and shipping routes;
- avoid “major” wars and any prolonged ground presence;
- rely on strong regional partners—with Israel and the Gulf states as the first line.

The American security concept includes an explicit commitment to Israel’s security, defined as a core US interest in the Middle East. Israel is framed as a central strategic partner in Washington’s regional alliance network, alongside the Gulf states and Egypt. The message is that the administration views preserving Israel’s qualitative military edge and its ability to defend itself as a foundational condition for the new regional architecture. Accordingly, it provides a continuing rationale for US security assistance to Israel, intelligence cooperation, and diplomatic support in international forums.

However, this commitment is woven into another guiding principle: avoiding “forever wars” and shifting burdens to allies. In other words, the United States commits to Israel “remaining safe,” but it does not pledge to renew deep, sustained military involvement in the region, and it expects Israel and its regional partners to bear most of the security burden. The security commitment is simultaneously an anchor and a lever: It provides Israel strong US backing while also serving as a basis for pressuring Jerusalem to avoid steps that could draw the United States into a new cycle of wars and entanglements and to act, insofar as possible, within a framework of regional stability and normalization. Any Israeli move that reopens settled conflicts is viewed

as undermining the broader strategic project that President Trump has defined for himself.

Implications for Israel

The emphases in the security strategy and the actual policy pursued by the Trump administration place Israel before a short, focused window of opportunity—lasting at most about three years, and in practice perhaps less—during which Washington is unusually committed to Israel. The United States is dominant in the regional arena and operates according to a “peace through strength” doctrine: pursuing rapid political-economic achievements, branding successes, and leveraging the outputs of military confrontations to shape a new regional architecture. For Israel, the implication is not merely to “get along” with the administration but to use this limited period to advance long-term strategic objectives vis-à-vis the United States and the region, while managing risks stemming from the administration’s tendency to declare “cases closed,” shift burdens to partners, and avoid large-scale direct military involvement. The more the US objective of consolidating regional stability is realized, the greater the US incentive will be to sustain its regional presence and advance interests shared by the United States, Israel, and the Gulf states.

Objectives and Opportunities for Israel

Formal anchoring of Israel’s security as a US interest—Defining Israel’s security as a US core interest provides a strong basis for demanding continued assurance of Israel’s qualitative edge, preserving and upgrading security assistance, and strengthening cooperation in intelligence, cyber, air defense, and technology. Moreover, as Washington seeks to shift burdens to partners, Israel can position itself as a security and technological hub within the pro-US axis—combining intelligence and strike capabilities with an advanced defense industry.

A new regional architecture—The administration’s drive to expand the Abraham Accords as a central component of the new architecture and as a foundation for long-term regional stability creates a strategic opportunity for Israel. This would rest on integrating Israel’s shared interests with key states (primarily Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, alongside Egypt and Jordan) into security arrangements, infrastructure, energy, trade corridors, and technology—in ways that generate interdependence and reduce Iran and its proxies’ room for maneuver.

Improving Israel’s bargaining position vis-à-vis Washington—The more the United States defines Israel as irreplaceable within the regional framework, the more Israel’s leverage grows—both in securing long-term assurances on aid and armaments, and in obtaining written understandings on freedom of action (primarily vis-à-vis Iran and its proxies).

Leveraging the agenda of energy, civilian nuclear, and AI—The emphasis on energy partnerships (including civilian nuclear) and AI- and innovation-based projects creates space for Israel to integrate into regional initiatives, strengthening partners' reliance on Israel and the US interest in ensuring Israel's security.

Risks for Israel

Entrenchment of a “case closed” narrative on the Middle East—An overly optimistic assessment that Iran's “nuclear project was destroyed,” Iran was weakened, and the war in the Gaza Strip ended reinforces a “case closed” narrative. A future Israeli effort to argue that the Iranian threat is reemerging, or that an additional large-scale action is required in Gaza, may be met with skepticism and the perception that Israel is undermining a major achievement that the administration is eager to tout. In this context, Israel may be seen as the primary actor liable to open major new fronts (against Iran, in Lebanon, or in the Gaza Strip).

Backlash against deals—Trump's tendency to pursue deals that can be presented as achievements even if not fully detailed—and his ability to pressure Israel to accept them—could result in Israel being compelled to agree to arrangements that serve the administration's short-term interests but carry long-term negative implications for Israel and constrain its room for maneuver in future crises.

Erosion of practical willingness to use force on Israel's behalf—Despite the declaration that Israel's security is a core interest, the guiding principle of avoiding major wars and shifting burdens to partners may widen the gap between declared commitment and the willingness to employ direct military force—especially against Iran and Hezbollah. The administration presents the US strike on Iran's nuclear facilities as a success, but the decision also drew criticism even from some supporters; and in general, the administration is wary of active US involvement in combat arenas.

Growing dependence on regional partners whose interests do not fully overlap—As the United States shifts the security burden to a “pro-US axis” (Israel, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Egypt, and Turkey)—a move requiring significantly closer coordination among them—Israel may be expected to pay security or political costs to preserve the alliance framework even when its interests do not fully align with those of its partners.

Harm to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME)—The more the administration pursues regional deals (including sales of advanced systems), the greater the risk of erosion of Israel's qualitative edge unless compensatory measures/exceptions/limitations are clearly defined.

Deepening gaps with Europe and with parts of the American political system—De-emphasizing democracy and human rights arouses opposition in Europe and among Democratic circles in the United States itself. An overly visible Israeli alignment with this ideological envelope guiding the Trump administration could exacerbate tensions

between Israel and Europe, between Israel and the Democratic Party, and also with parts of Jewish communities, and could deepen Israel's own socio-political divide.

Policy Recommendations

Maximizing opportunities to advance Israel's objectives and address challenges requires focused preparation: a clear formulation of goals and strategy, a credible assessment of risks, and decisions on which positions can be made more flexible to help the administration realize its objectives. Israel's successes against Hamas and Iran enabled Washington to advance strategic goals and present foreign-policy achievements, thereby strengthening Israel's perceived value in the eyes of the administration—but that is not enough. Israel can and should continue to demonstrate its value in the process of reshaping the region and through its contributions in intelligence, technology, and cyber defense—not only in the Middle East but also in arenas important to US national security, such as East Asia and Latin America.

Vis-à-vis Washington

- **Re-anchoring assistance and commitment**—Promote the renewal and expansion of the multi-year security assistance MOU, adapting it to evolving threats (precision missiles, advanced defense systems, cyber). At the same time, ensure preservation of Israel's QME in accordance with the language of the 2008 US congressional legislation.
- **Upgrading the technological partnership (AI and quantum computing) as a strategic force multiplier**—Establish a dedicated track to advance joint R&D projects with measurable outputs in defense AI, cyber, and critical infrastructure protection, alongside joint preparation for the quantum era. Advance regulation of classification mechanisms, export controls, and IP protection to prevent regulatory friction and strengthen trust and information sharing.
- **A permanent strategic coordination mechanism**—Establish a standing senior-level forum to address three issues: Iran; the northern arena—Israel–Lebanon and Syria; and the Palestinian arena. The forum would coordinate escalation scenarios and “breaking-the-balance” moves and define shared red lines.
- **Iran**—Formulate, together with the administration, a work package defining practical objectives vis-à-vis Iran: halting nuclear progress; reducing the missile and UAV project; and damaging the proxy network. If a diplomatic track with Tehran advances, insist on effective verification and enforcement and on preserving leverage until actual compliance—while addressing components of military capabilities and not only the nuclear dimension.

In the Regional Arena

- **Advancing normalization with Saudi Arabia**—Normalization would constitute a dramatic achievement for Israel’s status and its integration into the Arab and Muslim world. It is likely that any normalization framework between Israel and Saudi Arabia will include a Palestinian component. In principle, Israel can choose between automatic opposition, which would cast it as “the spoiler,” and attempting to shape the price so that it is more reasonable from Israel’s perspective. The strategic choice is between a phased, reasonable price based on Israel’s own initiative and a price dictated externally as a threshold condition for normalization.
- **Regional initiatives led by Israel**—Present joint initiatives for integrated air defense with Gulf states, cooperation in protecting shipping routes in the Red Sea and the Gulf, and intelligence frameworks targeting Iran’s and its proxies’ missile and UAV networks.
- **Controlled integration into energy and civilian nuclear projects**—Integrate into regional initiatives in ways that do not harm Israel’s qualitative edge while strengthening interdependence between Israel, its regional partners, and the United States. President Trump’s vision of a new Middle East architecture should serve as a basis for expanding regional cooperation, thereby also responding to the administration’s aspirations for the region.

In the Palestinian Arena

- **Leveraging the Trump plan to promote a political framework**—After receiving the Trump plan, Israel should take an additional step to outline political parameters for separation between the State of Israel and an independent Palestinian entity (demilitarized and with limited sovereignty, subject to understandings with Israel, as Israel has demanded in previous negotiations). In this sense, Israel can connect to Trump’s 2020 “Deal of the Century,” which contains elements that can serve Israel’s interests and is referenced in the current proposal. Bridging the two initiatives could pave a path toward resolving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.
- **Prudent management of conduct vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria**—Avoid unilateral steps that could trigger confrontation with the White House and jeopardize the regional normalization project.
- **A phased package of steps**—Develop a basket of security, civil, and economic steps that will allow the administration to present “progress toward stability” in the Palestinian arena without binding Israel to a permanent-status arrangement it does not accept. Such steps are critical to continuing the normalization process, especially with Saudi Arabia. However, without progress in discourse toward a political outcome to the Palestinian issue, prospects for advancing normalization with Saudi Arabia will remain limited.

In the US Domestic Arena

Balancing political identification and maintaining bridges to “post-Trump America”—Reduce exclusive identification with the Trump camp, even if it remains a key ally. Israel should maintain ties with central power centers (the Pentagon, the State Department) and with the Jewish community in the United States. Particular emphasis should be placed on rehabilitating as much as possible relations with the Democratic Party. Although this is a complex task requiring sensitivity and careful navigation in an already polarized US system, success is critical to Israel’s long-term security.

Conclusion

The Trump administration’s National Security Strategy does not break the strategic partnership between Israel and the United States, but it does significantly alter the rules of the game: reduced direct US involvement, greater reliance on regional partners for security, and the entrenchment of a narrative that the “Middle East has been handled” and is on a path to stability. In this context, Israel’s security remains a declared US interest, but Israel is expected to conduct itself in ways that do not reopen broad regional fronts.

Israel has a limited window to maximize opportunities during the remainder of President Trump’s term. Its central challenge is to strike a careful balance among the following tensions: strengthening and deepening US backing while leveraging the new regional architecture led by the United States, even as it prepares for a reality in which the primary security burden falls on Israel and its partners; integrating into regional economic and technological initiatives while preserving strategic freedom of action vis-à-vis Iran and its proxies; and cultivating ties with the current administration without undermining Israel’s ability to cooperate with future administrations—Democratic and Republican alike.

In the long term, the trends reflected in the strategy document—reducing global commitments, shifting burdens to allies, and reducing reliance on the liberal order—are not merely a function of Trump’s personality. Rather, they reflect deeper processes within the international system and in American society itself. For Israel, this necessitates a dual strategy: maximizing the preservation of the special alliance with the United States while simultaneously strengthening strategic independence, deterrent capabilities, and careful judgment in the use of force, so as not to be perceived as undermining the US project of reshaping the Middle East.