

A Democratic Vision for a Modern U.S.-Israel Partnership

The U.S.-Israel partnership has long been a pillar of Democratic foreign policy because it advances American interests and reflects shared commitments to our values of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law. Democrats recognize Israel's historic significance as the homeland of the Jewish people and are committed to its future as a secure, Jewish, and democratic state. We also recognize the Palestinian people's legitimate right to self-determination, including through a viable Palestinian state, and believe that both peoples have the right to live side-by-side in peace, security, and dignity.

The October 7 attacks and the regional upheaval that followed tested the U.S.-Israel relationship, exposed difficult questions about how the partnership should operate, and demonstrated the need to adapt it for a new era. While some in the Democratic Party now argue for fundamentally reducing or ending U.S. support for Israel, we believe the United States and the region have far more to gain from a stronger and more effective partnership—one that advances American interests, enhances Israel's security, protects Israeli and Palestinian civilians, strengthens regional cooperation, and helps create the conditions for an eventual two-state solution.

A modern U.S.-Israel partnership can help consolidate recent military gains against Iran and its proxies, prevent those threats from reconstituting, strengthen intelligence and defense cooperation, accelerate technologies that protect American forces and civilians, and build a network of capable regional partners. Achieving that vision will require Israeli and Palestinian leaders to fulfill their respective responsibilities, committed regional partners, sustained American engagement, and practical steps toward a negotiated two-state solution. The objectives are clear: security for Israel, statehood for Palestinians, stability for the Middle East.

1. Modernize the U.S.-Israel Partnership to Advance American Interests

The U.S.-Israel partnership strengthens American security by improving our ability to deter and confront shared adversaries, understand regional threats, protect U.S. forces, and develop advanced technologies. It also gives the United States a capable partner in confronting transnational threats, including terrorism, cyberattacks, and weapons proliferation. Israel provides unique intelligence and operational expertise on Iran, terrorist organizations, missile and drone threats, cyber activity, and other evolving security challenges; provides operational experience that improves U.S. military planning and readiness; and works with the United States to develop technologies that protect American forces and strengthen our defense industrial base. This cooperation gives the United States access to capabilities, operational experience, and regional insights that would be difficult and costly to replicate independently. By enabling Israel and other capable partners to shoulder more of the security burden, the United States can preserve finite military, intelligence, technological, and industrial resources for other strategic priorities, including deterring China in the Indo-Pacific.

We support full implementation of the current U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Understanding through Fiscal Year 2028 while building the next iteration of the agreement around joint development and production, cybersecurity, missile defense, intelligence cooperation, and other emerging technologies. Combining American industrial capacity with Israeli operational experience and technological ingenuity improves security for both countries.

The U.S.-Israel relationship has evolved before as Israel's circumstances and capabilities have changed. Beginning in the late 1990s, at Israel's initiative, the United States gradually phased out U.S. economic assistance to Israel, completing that transition by Fiscal Year 2008 as security cooperation deepened. Israel may continue to need some Foreign Military Financing

and missile defense funding beyond Fiscal Year 2028; however, over time, and by mutual agreement, today's partnership should be capable of evolving beyond the traditional assistance framework toward an increasingly reciprocal relationship centered on joint investment, innovation, and technological advantage. The objective should be to build the partnership both countries will need to confront the threats and seize the opportunities of the coming decades.

2. Ensure Israel Can Defend Itself

Israel has significantly degraded the military capabilities of Hamas, Hezbollah, and other Iranian-backed organizations, but the threats they represent endure. The challenge now is to prevent Iran and its partners from rebuilding those capabilities and to translate military gains into lasting security and political outcomes. The U.S.-Israel security partnership remains essential to consolidating those gains and preventing renewed conflict.

The United States has a strategic and moral interest in ensuring that Israel can deter and defend against threats to Israel's fundamental security, and America's commitment to Israel's fundamental security must remain ironclad. We support preserving Israel's Qualitative Military Edge, ensuring timely access to needed defense capabilities, and strengthening cooperation on air and missile defense, intelligence, military readiness, and countering emerging threats.

Support for Israel's security does not require support for every decision made by an Israeli government. The United States should speak directly when Israeli policies or actions undermine shared interests, democratic values, prospects for peace, or Israel's own long-term security. The United States and Israel should work together to ensure that American security assistance continues to be used in accordance with U.S. law and that military operations incorporate effective measures to minimize civilian harm.

3. Preserve the Path to Two States through Shared Responsibility

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is fundamentally a conflict between two peoples with legitimate aspirations for statehood and deep historical attachments to the same land. Any durable resolution must recognize both realities and allow both peoples to realize their aspirations in peace, security, and dignity.

We remain committed to the longstanding Democratic vision of Israel as a secure, Jewish, and democratic state living alongside a viable, peaceful, and demilitarized Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with final borders, security arrangements, and other permanent-status issues resolved through negotiations between the parties. This remains the only realistic alternative to permanent conflict or a single state incapable of fulfilling both the Jewish people's right to self-determination and legitimate Palestinian national aspirations.

The Hamas attacks against Israel on October 7 profoundly deepened Israeli fears that territorial withdrawal or Palestinian statehood could create new security threats. Those concerns are rooted in lived experience and cannot simply be dismissed. A credible two-state strategy must address these matters through security arrangements that give Israelis confidence that a future Palestinian state will not become another base for terrorism.

Achieving that outcome will require responsibility from Palestinians, Israelis, Arab states, and the United States. None can achieve it alone, and none should be exempt from fulfilling their obligations. Israelis should not be defined by every decision of their government; nor should innocent Palestinian civilians be held collectively responsible for Hamas's terrorism. At the same time, support for Hamas and the celebration of the October 7 attacks within Palestinian society remain serious obstacles to reconciliation and peace. Israeli skepticism also reflects a longer history in which Palestinian leaders have repeatedly rejected living alongside a Jewish state.

There will be no Palestinian state without credible Palestinian governance. The Palestinian Authority (PA) must reject terrorism, support the disarmament and removal of Hamas from power, end pay-to-slay policies, confront incitement, reform educational materials that glorify violence or deny Israel's legitimacy, combat corruption, and build transparent and effective governing institutions. A reformed PA must demonstrate that it can serve its population, maintain security, govern responsibly, and act as a credible partner for peace before assuming responsibility for Gaza. The United States and its regional partners should help the PA undertake these reforms while establishing clear benchmarks to measure and verify progress.

There will be no lasting peace without Israeli responsibility. Israel should act decisively against settler threats, intimidation, and violence; preserve the territorial integrity, economic viability, and institutional capacity necessary for legitimate Palestinian governance and eventual statehood; and avoid policies that weaken the PA or foreclose pathways to a negotiated two-state outcome. Israel also has an interest and responsibility in strengthening Palestinian institutions and economic conditions that can provide a viable alternative to Hamas and other extremists. The United States should be candid when Israeli policies undermine Israel's own long-term security or make a negotiated two-state outcome more difficult.

Arab states should work with the United States to strengthen responsible Palestinian governance while offering Israel greater diplomatic, economic, and security integration alongside steps that preserve the possibility of two states. Even when final-status negotiations are not imminent, the United States should press Israelis, Palestinians, and regional partners to take measures that improve conditions on the ground and keep a negotiated outcome possible.

The Abraham Accords demonstrated that regional cooperation can transform relationships once thought impossible. Before October 7, U.S.-brokered negotiations toward normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia created the possibility of a historic regional breakthrough—one Hamas sought to derail. The endurance of the existing accords nevertheless demonstrated the resilience of regional integration. Renewed progress toward normalization should remain a central objective of American policy.

Regional integration and Israeli-Palestinian peace talks can reinforce one another rather than proceed on separate tracks. Greater Arab-Israeli cooperation can create incentives, resources, and political space for Israeli-Palestinian progress, while meaningful movement toward resolving the conflict can unlock deeper regional integration.

4. Build a Secure and Peaceful Future for Gaza

Hamas bears responsibility for initiating the war on October 7 and for embedding its military infrastructure in densely populated civilian areas, placing Palestinian civilians at extraordinary risk. That reality does not diminish Israel's obligation to minimize civilian casualties. Humanitarian and recovery assistance should reach civilians rapidly and impartially, with effective safeguards against diversion by Hamas or other armed groups.

The United States and its partners must follow through on efforts to disarm and demobilize Hamas, establish credible transitional governance, facilitate humanitarian assistance and reconstruction, and implement durable security arrangements. Achieving those objectives will require sustained American leadership and diplomatic engagement over many years.

Early recovery and reconstruction should begin in areas where Hamas no longer exercises effective control and expand as disarmament, demilitarization, credible civilian governance, and international oversight take hold. Reconstruction should improve Palestinian lives without enabling Hamas to reconstitute its military capabilities or political control. Over time, Gaza's governance should be integrated into a reformed and legitimate Palestinian political framework

encompassing both Gaza and the West Bank and capable of supporting a negotiated two-state solution.

5. Lead with Strength, Diplomacy, and Democratic Values

The setbacks inflicted on Iran and its proxies have created an opportunity to translate military gains into a more durable regional security architecture. The United States and Israel should continue to coordinate closely on intelligence, diplomacy, economic pressure, and deterrence to prevent Iran from rebuilding its nuclear, missile, drone, and proxy capabilities.

Diplomacy should remain an essential tool to dealing with Iran's nuclear, missile, and drone programs, backed by credible deterrence, rigorous verification, economic pressure, and close coordination with allies and regional partners. When military force is necessary, it should serve clear objectives and be subject to appropriate congressional authorization and oversight. American leadership should also reflect our commitment to democracy, human rights, the protection of civilians, and the rule of law.

This vision also requires Israel's neighbors to exercise effective sovereignty over their territory and prevent armed groups or outside powers from turning fragile states into arenas for regional conflict. In Lebanon, that means disarming Hezbollah and extending effective state control throughout the country; in Syria, it means supporting stable governance while preventing Iran, terrorist groups, and others from using its territory to threaten Israel or fuel regional conflict.

Support for Israel transcends any one Israeli government. It reflects America's enduring strategic partnership with a democratic ally, the Jewish people's right to national self-determination, and a vision of the future in which Israelis and Palestinians can each realize their legitimate national aspirations. We reject holding double standards that single out Israel for treatment or expectations not applied consistently to other countries.

Confronting antisemitism must also remain a core democratic commitment. Criticism of Israeli governments and policies is legitimate, but political debate about Israel must never become a vehicle for antisemitism or collective blame of Jews.

Democrats should champion engagement over isolation, dialogue over boycotts, and cooperation over exclusion. We reject the BDS movement and other efforts to delegitimize Israel or deny the Jewish people's right to national self-determination. Academic, scientific, cultural, and commercial exchanges foster innovation, deepen understanding, and build relationships that can contribute to long-term peace. Efforts to exclude Israeli scholars and scientists from international forums, boycott Israeli institutions, or sever academic and professional collaboration undermine those goals and make coexistence more difficult.

The U.S.-Israel partnership is strongest when it advances both American interests and democratic values. Israel's security, responsible Palestinian governance, deeper regional integration, and sustained American leadership are mutually reinforcing objectives.

That is the Democratic vision: an Israel strong enough to defend itself; Palestinians able to exercise self-determination through peaceful and responsible statehood; a Middle East increasingly defined by stability, integration, and cooperation rather than conflict; and a United States that uses its strength, diplomacy, and influence to bring those objectives closer together. It is an ambitious vision, but it offers the most credible path toward a more secure and peaceful Middle East.