

Re-energizing U.S.-Israeli Special Relations

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The special relationship between Israel and the United States is one of the rocks of Israel's existence. Since the mid 1980's there has been, more or less, no fundamental change in the operational components between these two countries- not regarding assistance, and also not in the parameters of the dialogue between the two countries.

The question is, is there in essence a need for a new dynamic? Sometimes the tendency to fiddle with things, and to develop things within some kind of bureaucratic dynamic can cause more harm than benefit ("if it ain't broke, don't fix it"). This warning is not trivial; it is important.

Special relationships have strong bases; in this case they are strategic reality, moral aspects and the unique character of Jewish demography. Israelis and Jewish Americans make up more than 80% of the Jewish people.

Furthermore, in the American political arena, we are currently experiencing an almost unprecedented situation of deep and ongoing support which is expressed, for example, in the stance taken by President Bush in his exchange of letters with Prime Minister Sharon on the 14th of April, 2004. Israel, in political terms, enjoys all-encompassing bi-party support. There are very few subjects on the American political agenda of our time with a greater degree of unity than the depth of support towards Israel.

However, we need to beware of stagnation, which extinguishes the positive forces essential for the existence of this special relationship. Stagnation perpetuates a lack of awareness in Israel and in American society.

We now find ourselves in a stage of out of the ordinary threats and unusual challenges in the Middle East. In the next few months there will hopefully be positive transformational challenges with the two upcoming elections in January, both in which the special relationship between Israel and the United States will play a critical role. There is also a split between the Jews in the United States between the Right and the Left, which creates dilemmas in its own, and reminds us of the need of continual maintenance (of our relationship with the U.S.).

We have three options, and we need to seriously consider what we want to concentrate on. One option is to continue and, I say this harshly, to raid the American public coffers. It is very easy to be enticed. I believe this is the wrong approach.

The second option is a formal upgrading of the relations to a level of a defense treaty. This (option) has come up time and time again in discussions which touched on types of permanent agreements, whether with Syria or others. I feel that there are also certain

risks involved in this option, and I will touch on one of them: the formation of a formal commitment to the Ministry of Defense and the US army to the State of Israel will obligate them to allocate the necessary resources to address the issue. This is not a system built on "dependence". And it is better that we don't get thrown into this situation.

The third option is to utilize the unique relationship which Israel has with the American system in order to develop wider relationships within which the Israeli-American alliance is a part of the steps toward building the legitimacy of the state of Israel in the International arena, strengthening her strategic relationships, and situating her in the strategic point in the camp of what needs to be defined with like minded nations (democratic, liberal, westernized, who have a bond between them). I am talking about strategic triads- Israel, the U.S., and another nation (within, and maybe even without the Middle East). Also, multilateral frameworks in which Israel needs to be a part.

It is very important to transition American strategy to bilateral between the U.S. and the TransAtlantic Arena. It is important to turn our strategic connections with the States and to nurture the awareness. This is an all American issue with strategic, not political awareness.