

Scholars Circle Resource Guide

Double-sided

From Washington to Jerusalem: The Dynamics of US-Israel Relations

SCHOLARS CIRCLE



About Dr. Saltzman

Dr. Ilai Saltzman is an Associate Research Professor of Israel Studies, and the Director of the Gildenhorn Institute for Israel Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. His scholarship and teaching focus on international security, Israeli foreign and security policy, US foreign policy, and political psychology. Dr. Saltzman is the author of *Securitizing Balance of Power Theory: A Polymorphic Reconceptualization* (2012). He has also written numerous scholarly articles, and book chapters, as well as commentaries in the Los Angeles Times, Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post, and other prominent outlets. Dr. Saltzman earned his Ph.D. in International Relations in 2010 from the University of Haifa and was a postdoctoral research fellow at the International Security Program (ISP), Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (2009-2010).

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Common Q&A's

In what ways do domestic politics in the U.S. and Israel influence their bilateral relationship?

Domestic politics play a critical role, as leaders in each country must respond to internal pressures while maintaining the alliance. In the U.S., shifts in party priorities and public opinion have led to new debates about the level and nature of support for Israel. Similarly, in Israel, policies shaped by coalition politics and societal divides can impact the tone of U.S.-Israel relations. Despite occasional policy differences, shared democratic values and security interests often help maintain the alliance across political cycles.

How does U.S. military aid to Israel impact their strategic partnership and regional security?

U.S. military aid has long been a cornerstone of the U.S.-Israel alliance, providing Israel with advanced defense capabilities and contributing to shared security goals. This aid strengthens Israel's ability to defend itself against regional threats, which in turn supports U.S. interests by helping maintain stability in a volatile region. While it remains a pillar of the relationship, U.S. military aid is occasionally scrutinized within both countries, where some debate the balance of dependence versus self-reliance for Israel.

How are shared democratic values both a strength and a challenge in the U.S.-Israel relationship?

Shared democratic values underpin the U.S.-Israel alliance, contributing to a strong cultural and ideological foundation. However, differing interpretations of these values sometimes create tensions, especially when policies in one country are perceived as misaligned with democratic principles by the other. For example, debates around judicial reforms or policies impacting minority rights in Israel can influence U.S. public opinion and political support. Nonetheless, these shared values generally reinforce mutual understanding and dialogue between the two nations.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ What is oftentimes referred to as the US-Israel special relationship was not always as robust and intimate as it is now.
- ✓ Some of the foundational pillars of the US-Israel relationship have been changing more rapidly in the last decade than ever before.
- ✓ While there are structural factors that shape and inform the alliance, there is a great deal that depends on the personalities of the leaders in Washington and Jerusalem.
- ✓ American involvement in the Middle East is crucial to efforts to bring an end to the current conflict as well as to reimagine the political realities in the region in the foreseeable future.

The views expressed by the speaker don't necessarily reflect Chai Mitzvah's official position.